

## Preface

Chinese civilization is the only surviving ancient civilization and Confucianism has been its predominant value system throughout the ups and downs in China's long history. Starting from the Zhou Dynasty, China had experienced a total of 13 dynasties or about 3,000 years. Archeological evidence, however, indicated that China had emerged as a civilization long before that. When the Shang and its earlier pre-history period are added, then China's process of civilized development has stretched over a length of 5,000 years.

As two commonly used terms, "civilization" and "culture" have often been taken to mean the same thing. In this volume, I have adopted a narrow definition of "culture" by referring it to a local region, i.e. a local culture, or a situation before the emergence of civilization. Hence, I have implied that "culture" is under and within civilization. That is to say, there may be an urban culture, or urban culture of the Song within Chinese civilization, or that there existed several regional cultures in the Yangshao Period before the emergence of civilization in China in the Longshan Period.

Chinese civilization rests on the pact of values generally known as Confucianism which had its roots in Late Neolithic and was systematized and codified by Confucians in Eastern Zhou. It was contained in the Confucian collection of the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*. In brief, the Confucian ideology is about man-land relations, or the relationship between Man, Earth and Heaven. Such a model of relations is extended to Man and his past world (ancestral worship), and men with men (the *five relationships*). Its main principles are

harmony, respect and rank orderliness. Confucianism had supported a thriving agricultural economy in China, leading to its material progress, expansion and relative stability. It had also been the basic principles behind the evolution of institutions and policies of the Chinese government in various dynasties, as well as the code of behavior of ordinary citizens. These principles had also been reflected in the role, planning, and structure of the city in traditional China, as the city was the most important container, platform, and seat for administration, education, and services for the vast Chinese countryside. In this volume, the central role of the Chinese city in spreading and implementing Confucianism has been given repeated treatment. It serves to underline that, to a large extent, the evolution of the city in traditional China may be equated with the evolution of Chinese civilization.

It is generally accepted that Chinese civilization is distinct from many other civilizations, particularly the Western civilization. Thus, logically, the Chinese city is dissimilar to the Western city. It is futile to claim either the Chinese or Western city as “true” city, the same way as one should not treat either Chinese or Western civilization as “true” civilization. In fact the Chinese city is a subset of cities and possesses unique features and roles to reflect the uniqueness of Chinese civilization.

As Chinese civilization had emerged from a village based agricultural economy, the Chinese city has all along been left aside in the study of Chinese civilization. The Chinese city as a container and node of Chinese civilization has not been adequately understood nor studied. However, in the study and understanding of a civilization, to approach and analyze related issues through its major containers or most concentrated nodes is an effective means. Indeed, to apprehend Chinese civilization and Confucianism from the rural side is inadequate and indirect. In the city where the traits of civilization are dense, numerous, and highly concentrated, one can track the evolution and identify the traits of civilization much more effectively.

For the above reasons, the present volume has adopted the city-approach in viewing and analyzing the evolution of Chinese

history and its civilization. I have also used a large amount of maps, particularly city landuse maps, of different historical times in China to portray more vividly the evolution and special features of Chinese civilization.

It has been my long cherished ambition to thoroughly examine the nature of the Chinese city and its evolution, against the context of basic concepts in urban geography developed in the West since World War Two. Throughout my long teaching career in University of Hong Kong, I had taught the course of Urban Geography to Geography undergraduates. In the meantime, I researched on the Chinese city and broadened my reading on cities in other ancient civilizations. I later developed these into the specialist courses of "Chinese Cities", and "City in History". My efforts also yielded an edited work: *Chinese Cities*, published by Oxford University Press in 1985. Then, a detailed exposition and analysis of the Chinese city, using the national capital, was published by Wiley in 1993, entitled *Beijing: the Nature and Planning of a Chinese Capital City*. The present volume represents the culmination of my life-long interest and research on the Chinese City.

I am grateful to many of my colleagues and friends in the academic and non-academic circles who have been giving me encouragement all along, and to University of Hong Kong for providing me with an excellent research environment and support.

However, my most important support has come from my wife and children. My wife, in particular, has taken an important part in reading and improving the draft innumerable times and shared the pride in my work which formed a significant psychological boost that enabled me to engage steadfastly in the research and writing of this volume.

Since 1978, China has re-emerged as a global power. This volume may contribute a part in helping people to understand the complicated root system that has supported this gigantic "China tree" in millenniums since the "big house" in the middle reach of the Yellow River in Yangshao Period of Late Neolithic.

Finally, let me dedicate this volume to the Chinese people, and peoples of the world, in the hope that Heaven, Earth, and Man

(*Tian, di, ren*) will play their respective role properly, so that we may advance into the ideal world of the Great Unity (*Datong*).

Victor F.S. Sit  
Director & Chair Professor of Geography  
Advanced Institute for Contemporary China Studies  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
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