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Three faces of imperial China

Barbara Shepardson
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THREE FACES OF IMPERIAL CHINA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Barbara Shepardson

May, 1990

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Dr. George Moore

Dr. Irma Eichhorn

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APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

THREE FACES OF IMPERIAL CHINA

By Barbara Shepardson

This study applies Karen Horney's personality concepts of aggressiveness, compliance and detachment to aspects of Chinese history. The philosophies of Legalism, Confucianism and Taoism were selected as examples of these three trends.

Three emperors were studied--Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, T'ang T'ai-tsung and Sung Hui-tsung--as examples of rulers whose personalities were similar to the three types mentioned above and who strived to behave in accordance with Legalist, Confucian and Taoist principles respectively. The consequences to the people of these different styles of political rule were evaluated in their historical contexts.

The conclusion is that the ideal political philosophy must include the best qualities of all three trends: aggressiveness, compliance and detachment.

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I wish to express my gratitude to Professors George Moore, Irma Eichhorn and Harris Martin for their continuing help and support throughout the writing of this thesis. George Moore sparked my interest in Chinese history, Irma Eichhorn encouraged my intent to make a social-psychological analysis and Harris Martin helped particularly with the historical bibliography and editing. Thanks also to my family and friends who contributed in many ways.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE PHILOSOPHIES	.17
III. CH'IN SHIH HUANG-TI - LEGALIST EMPEROR	.37
IV. T'ANG T'AI-TSUNG - CONFUCIAN EMPEROR	.53
V. SUNG HUI-TSUNG - TAOIST EMPEROR	.69
VI. CONCLUSIONS	.84
WORKS CITED	.94

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Chinese history can be of particular interest to a psychologist because the basic philosophies of China, reportedly developed in the 6th to 3rd centuries B.C., are more human-centered and secular than mystical or spiritual. This makes it possible for a humanistically oriented psycho-historian to analyze these philosophies and the behavior of various emperors in Chinese history exemplifying these philosophies on the basis of Western psychological concepts. The personality theory of Karen Horney (1885-1952) is particularly suited to this task.

This thesis will look at the lives of three Chinese emperors--Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (r. 221-210 B.C.), T'ang T'ai-tsung (r. A.D. 627-649), and Sung Hui-tsung (r. A.D. 1100-1125), the three philosophies which most influenced them (Legalism, Confucianism, and Taoism), the times in which they lived, which tended to foster the development of these philosophies, and the consequences for the people of China of their behavior. Each of the three emperors as well as the three philosophies were chosen as examples of the three personality trends described by Karen Horney--the aggressive, the compliant and the detached. From this

analysis it may be possible to conceive of a political philosophy which could utilize the best parts of each of these philosophies and mitigate the more destructive aspects.

This writer has long thought that within the writings of Karen Horney there exists a positive social philosophy, in addition to her penetrating analyses of neurotic behavior. The major task of this thesis will be the analysis of the three Chinese philosophies and emperors in order to suggest a model for an ideal political philosophy based on Horney's ideas. Through an analysis of the social consequences of each ruler's behavior one can begin to sort out the good and bad aspects of each philosophy and personality trend. This type of analysis can also be useful in interpreting and evaluating contemporary social and political problems.

Horney believes that in situations involving stress and anxiety there are three main ways of reacting, moving against, toward and away from people, any one of which may become the predominant tendency. These three ways of reacting will be used to analyze the personalities and behavior of the emperors.

In addition, since Horney thinks that each of these personality trends--aggressiveness, compliance, and detachment--will have a concomitant view of the world, a

corresponding philosophy of life that in effect rationalizes the behavior involved, her ideas will also be used to analyze the three Chinese philosophies selected. It is the contention of this writer that these three tendencies are universal ways of handling stress and that it can be instructive to look at their expression in a totally different cultural and historical context from our own, i.e., Imperial China.

Karen Horney was born in 1885 in Hamburg, Germany, studied medicine at the University of Berlin, and became a psychoanalyst as one of the members of Freud's inner circle. She gradually moved away from Freud's ideas because she believed that he did not understand feminine psychology. Freud considered the feminine personality to be anatomically determined ("anatomy is destiny"). In 1932 she moved to the United States and later set up her own institute to reflect her idea that personality is basically culturally determined learned behavior.

Karen Horney wrote five books, all of them in English, and beautiful English at that. The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (1937)¹ was a great popular success at the time and introduces her idea that neuroses were culturally determined rather than instinctually based as had been postulated by Freud. "When we focus our attention on the actual neurotic difficulties we recognize that neuroses are generated not

only by incidental individual experiences, but also by the specific cultural conditions under which we live."²

In New Ways in Psychoanalysis (1939)³ she spells out in greater detail her departures from the ideas of Freud. In Self-Analysis (1942)⁴ she discusses the feasibility of self-analysis and problems of therapy in general.

In Our Inner Conflicts (1945)⁵ and Neurosis and Human Growth (1950)⁶ she goes into great detail about the three personality trends--moving against, moving toward and moving away from people--that she says are the primary ways people have of reacting to anxiety. The examples she gives in Neurosis and Human Growth are very vivid and powerful.

Actually her theories are fairly complicated and include a lot of Freudian ideas, particularly those of the defense mechanisms which tend to obscure the actual personality structure. There will not be an attempt here to explain her complete theories. This thesis will essentially be using her descriptions of the three personality trends, aggressive, compliant and detached. Most people usually develop all three trends; however, in some people the mechanisms are streamlined and one trend appears to dominate.

For Horney, these neurotic personality trends are learned reactions about ways of dealing with people. The child if treated lovingly will develop his real self, will

actualize his individual potentialities. If the child is subjected to traumatic experiences, unloving treatment by his parents and society, the child will develop the neurotic trends which Horney has described as moving against, toward, and away from people. Any or all of these trends will pull the person away from actualizing his real self into primarily defensive activities and maneuvers. Which of these maneuvers will predominate and how they will be expressed will depend on the culture and circumstances in which the child grows up.

The main personality conflict is between the compliant and aggressive trends. One way of dealing with this conflict is to suppress the conflicting side. Therefore, the compliant person will attempt to suppress the aggressive side of his personality and the aggressive person will suppress the compliant side. Another way is chosen by the detached person who suppresses both, not wishing to become involved either in love or fighting, thereby putting the conflict out of operation.

The values of the compliant, or "moving toward," person lie in the direction of goodness, sympathy, love, generosity, unselfishness, and humility. These values, as will be shown later, are very similar to both Christian and Confucian values. Egotism, ambition, callousness, unscrupulousness, and the wielding of power are abhorred.

The aggressive person on the contrary assumes that people are hostile, that life is a jungle, and determines consciously or unconsciously to fight. "He rebels in whatever ways are open to him. He wants to be the stronger and defeat them, partly for his own protection, partly for revenge."⁷

The detached person moves away from people. He develops very elaborate distancing mechanisms. He wants neither to belong nor to fight. "He builds up a world of his own--with nature, with his dolls, his books, his dreams."⁸

Each of these basic attitudes toward others has its positive value.

In moving toward people the person tries to create for himself a friendly relation to his world. In moving against people he equips himself for survival in a competitive society. In moving away from people he hopes to attain a certain integrity and serenity. As a matter of fact, all three attitudes are not only desirable but necessary to our development as human beings. It is only when they appear and operate in a neurotic framework that they become compulsive, rigid, indiscriminate, and mutually exclusive.⁹

It is this last conception of Horney's that has stimulated this writer to undertake an examination of Chinese history to see whether these ideas can be applied to philosophies and political personalities.

The three great Chinese philosophies (Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism) were developed during a period of great stress--the Later Chou Dynasty (779-221 B.C.)--a period of almost continuous warfare accompanying the

breakdown of feudalism in China. These can be seen to represent ways of coping with the chaos and disorder of that time in much the same way that individual personality trends represent ways of coping with stress in a person's early life.

All three of these philosophies continued to exert important influence throughout the history of Imperial China regardless of which one seemed to be predominant at any particular time. As a matter of fact in China the three philosophies are not held to be mutually exclusive. Most educated men studied all three and chose whichever suited their particular needs at a given time. A person could be a Confucianist and a Taoist at the same time and frequently was. There have been no philosophical wars in China as there have been religious wars in other parts of the world.

Legalism is seen by this writer as an aggressive philosophy, advocating an aggressive way for the ruler to behave. The Legalists believed that might makes right and that the ruler must be strong and rule by means of laws and extreme rewards and punishments.

Confucianism is seen as not only a compliant way of relating to people but also as advocating a compassionate way for the ruler to behave. The values of the compliant personality, involving caring and concern for others, seem

most similar to the Confucian ideal-- "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you."

Taoism clearly advocates moving away from people as a way of dealing with a stressful environment. This involves withdrawing, letting go of earthly pursuits, resignation and communing with nature. This philosophy has been frequently associated with artistic pursuits in China, particularly painting and poetry. These philosophies will be more fully discussed in the next chapter.

The three emperors selected represent examples of the three personality trends. Actually, two of the emperors, Ch'in Shih-Huang ti and Sung Hui-tsung, are good examples of the aggressive and the detached personalities, respectively. The middle emperor, T'ang T'ai-tsung, was really an aggressive type but modified his own behavior in a compliant direction to fit the ideal Confucian model. It might have been possible to find a more compliant emperor, but since this writer also desires to show that the ideal political situation is one which has the positive values of all three personality trends, she decided to show this emperor as representing a combination of both the aggressive and compliant trends.

This thesis will not attempt to analyze all the motivations or even the personalities of the three emperors selected, much less those of the philosophers whose ideas

will be discussed. Very little is known of the early lives of the emperors. There is also very little written about their personalities. One can speculate from the little evidence there is, but it cannot be more than speculation. One can, however, look at the behavior of the emperors as recorded by historians and at the apparent consequences of their behavior for the people they were supposed to rule.

The aggressive Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (r. 221-210 B.C.) was a successful general and the first to succeed in conquering the other Chinese states and in unifying China under imperial rule. He then proceeded to go on to other expansive projects--further wars, huge palaces, his tomb with the 1500 life-size terracotta warriors, the Great Wall--all of which impoverished the country and cost a great many lives.

The second emperor, T'ang T'ai-tsung (r. A.D. 627-649), tried to be an ideal Confucian emperor and in part succeeded. However, he was really an aggressive person; although through the influence of his beloved wife the Empress Chang-sun, as well as his Confucian advisor Wei Cheng, his behavior was modified in a more compassionate direction, at least for the early part of his reign. He kept the taxes at the lowest point in history, did not undertake extravagant building projects, provided his country with a

fair and peaceful administration, and in general behaved fairly considerately toward his subjects.

The Taoist Sung Hui-tsung (r. A.D. 1100-1125), last of the Northern Sung emperors, might have been considered a "renaissance man"--as painter, poet, musician and patron of the arts--in another context. He was considered by later Chinese historians to be a weak and shameful emperor who abdicated his responsibilities for his people and engaged in activities, albeit artistic, that were predominantly self-indulgent and hedonistic.

It is Horney's contention that personality is largely determined by culture. Therefore, each of the three Chinese emperors will be shown in his historical context so that they can be seen to be truly products of their times.

Obtaining primary source material is of considerable difficulty for the non-Chinese reading writer. The main problem with sources is the fact that the primary source material is written in Chinese. This means that this writer has been dependent upon source material that has been translated into English or summaries, paraphrases, and analyses written by Western China scholars who were able to read the original Chinese. There is an additional problem due to the fact that many of the secondary sources written in English do not give footnotes or references to the

Chinese material. The problem of sources also will vary with the type of material being discussed.

A second problem with sources, particularly regarding the philosophers, is that there are many different translations of the primary source material. For example, there are over forty English translations of the major Taoist document, the Tao Te Ching. The problem then becomes one of selection. Each translation gives a somewhat different meaning or impression to the reader. Arthur Waley will be the major translator used for the philosophers. He is one of the best known of the translators and writes very beautiful English. His translations are a joy to read.

Another problem involves the differences between Chinese and English in terms of structure. The Chinese written language consists of a number of characters or ideographs which are very evocative. The character for peace for example is a woman under a roof. The philosophies themselves are written in a very evocative way. The Analects¹⁰ of Confucius and the Tao Te Ching¹¹ are simply collections of aphorisms. They do not follow any logical sequence and are frequently contradictory in meaning and can be interpreted in many different ways.

For the historical sections, this writer will rely primarily on East Asia: Tradition and Transformation by Fairbank, Reischauer and Craig (1978)¹². For general

discussions of the philosophers, the works of Fung Yu-lan¹³ and Benjamin Schwartz¹⁴ will be used.

The basic Western biographies for Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (the aggressive emperor) are Arthur Cotterell's The First Emperor of China (1981)¹⁵ and Derk Bodde's China's First Unifier (1936)¹⁶, the biography of the First Emperor's prime minister Li Ssu. Bodde is a well-known China scholar. Cotterell, also a historian, wrote his book about the great archeological excavations of the tomb of Ch'in Shih Huang-ti at Sian, much visited by modern tourists. They both cover the biographies of Ch'in Shih Huang-ti and his prime minister Li Ssu, but from different perspectives. Both have drawn heavily on the work of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (145?-90? B.C.), China's first great historian writing in the first century B.C. Unfortunately, there is no complete translation of the Shih Chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien in English. Bodde relied primarily on the French translations by Edouard Chavannes and his own translations while Cotterell relied upon the translations of his wife, Yap Gap. Burton Watson's translation of the Shih Chi¹⁷ covers primarily the next dynasty, the Han.

The basic and most recent work on T'ang T'ai-tsung (the Confucian Emperor) has been done by Howard Wechsler, particularly in the Cambridge History of China¹⁸ There is also an earlier biography written in 1938 by C.P. Fitzgerald¹⁹ presenting a somewhat different picture. It

seems that T'ang T'ai-tsung was able to "influence" the writing of the standard histories prepared at the time by Chinese scholars in order to enhance his image in history. After the discovery of the Wen-ta Ya diary²⁰ written by a contemporary of T'ang T'ai-tsung, a different picture has emerged which is reflected in the later biographies.

The most difficult emperor to find material about was Sung Hui-tsung (r. A.D. 1100-1125). There are the "standard histories" of course, but these for the most part have not been translated into English. The only biographies that this writer was able to find were the Master's thesis (1966)²¹ and doctoral dissertation (1972)²² of Betty Tseng Yu-ho Ecke, an art historian. She has collected a great deal of material on Sung Hui-tsung, mostly in Chinese. This subject has really been her life's work. Most of the information on Sung Hui-tsung will be taken from her works. There are some bits and pieces of information and anecdotes available in other history or art history books.

The creative part of this thesis will be the analysis developed throughout using Horney's ideas and the examples from the history, philosophies and biographies. This thesis is in a sense philosophical in intent. There will be an attempt to evaluate the philosophies as to their "good" and "bad" aspects, according to this writer, and to see the consequences of the behavior of these three emperors as to

whether or not they seem to be beneficial to the Chinese people of their particular times. From this, there will be an attempt to draw conclusions that might be relevant for other historical periods.

NOTES

¹Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (New York: W.W. Norton, 1937).

²Ibid., viii.

³Karen Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis (New York: W.W. Norton, 1939).

⁴Karen Horney, Self-Analysis (New York: W.W. Norton, 1942).

⁵Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: W.W. Norton, 1945).

⁶Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950).

⁷Horney, Our Inner Conflicts, 43.

⁸Ibid., 43.

⁹Ibid., 89.

¹⁰Arthur Waley, The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and its Place in Chinese Thought (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1934).

¹¹Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1938).

¹²John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, East Asia: Tradition and Transformation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978).

¹³Fung Yu-lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: The Free Press, 1948).

¹⁴Benjamin Isadore Schwartz, The World of Thought in Ancient China (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985).

¹⁵Arthur Cotterell, The First Emperor of China (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).

¹⁶Derk Bodde, China's First Unifier: Li Ssu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967; repr., Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1938).

¹⁷Burton Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

¹⁸Howard K. Wechsler, T'ai-tsung (Reign 626-49) The Consolidator, In The Cambridge History of China, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, vol. 3, Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I., ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

¹⁹Charles Patrick Fitzgerald, Son of Heaven: A Biography of Li Shih-Min, Founder of the T'ang Dynasty (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985; repr., Cambridge: At the University Press, 1933).

²⁰Woodridge Bingham, "Wen Ta-ya: the first recorder of T'ang history," Journal of American Oriental Society, 57 (1937): 368-74.

²¹Betty Tseng Yu-ho Ecke, "Emperor Hui-tsung and His Time" (M.A. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1966).

²²Betty Tseng Yu-ho Ecke, "Emperor Hui-tsung the Artist" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1972).

Chapter Two

THE PHILOSOPHIES

This chapter will attempt to do three things: (1) describe the geographical conditions which set the stage for the Imperial type of government in China, (2) describe the decline of the Chou dynasty leading to the efflorescence of Chinese philosophies during the Warring States Period (481-221 B.C.), and (3) describe the three philosophies as examples of aggressive, compliant and detached "personality" trends.

Since this thesis is going to be concerned primarily with emperors and the philosophies which most influenced them, it is important to be aware of some of the geographical influences which determined the kind of power and wealth the emperors had. In the first place, China is a large land mass basically used for agriculture. The north with its lower rainfall is a dry farming wheat and millet area. The south with its higher rainfall is a more intensive wet-rice agricultural area. China is also dominated by two large rivers, cutting across it from west to east, the Yellow River and the Yangtze.

China is surrounded by natural boundaries--the South China Sea to the south, the East China Sea and the Yellow

Sea to the east, and the mountains and Tibetan plateau, over 10,000 feet, to the west. The boundary in the north is marked by the change in amount of rainfall creating a different type of economy. This area with its lower rainfall, below fifteen inches per year, is characterized by steppe land devoted to the grazing of sheep, goats and horses. The culture is pastoral and nomadic, much less "civilized" than the settled agricultural land to the south.

This border area has been very unstable and a source of conflict throughout Chinese history, and it continues to be a source of conflict between China and the Soviet Union to this day. The northern barbarians have repeatedly invaded the more prosperous agricultural civilization to the south and the Chinese have continually mounted military campaigns to invade and take over the northern territories. This conflict stimulated the Chinese early on to build the Great Wall, some two to three thousand miles in length, to keep out the mounted archer warriors who were superior militarily to the peasant foot soldiers.

This continual threat from the north, as well as the needs of the agricultural economy in the south to tame and channel the great rivers for irrigation purposes, created the need for a strong centralized government and an autocratic all-powerful emperor to command the large numbers of peasants to work on these projects. It could be argued

that China "had to have" an autocratic and therefore despotic emperor to take care of the needs of this large agricultural area.

Each of the great rivers is about 3,000 miles long. The Yellow River could rise as much as forty feet in flood times causing much devastation if not contained by huge dikes and irrigation systems. These could be accomplished only by a massive organization of labor. Later, of course, there was the building of a huge canal system connecting the Yellow and the Yangtze Rivers. Chinese civilization began in the last great downriver bend of the Yellow River. As with the other great early civilizations, China had a fertile river valley which gave rise to its agricultural economy.

It is hard for the Western mind to conceive of the amount of wealth and power that the Chinese emperors had because of the land that was available to them for taxation. Both the need for the Great Wall defenses and the huge irrigation projects created the basis for amassing that much land under a single power. It is also important to consider these geographical influences as important for the development of the three Chinese philosophies selected for consideration. All of the main Chinese philosophies directed their attention to the role of the ruler. Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism all developed their ideas essentially as advice to rulers.

For the purposes of this thesis, the discussion of Chinese history will begin with the Chou dynasty in 1129 B.C. According to the mythology and the historical records available, the early Chou dynasty (1125-771 B.C.) was relatively stable and peaceful. The founders, King Wen and the Duke of Chou, were idealized figures in Chinese history. This was the period Confucius went back to to develop his philosophy. He wanted to return to the peaceful ways of that time. Herrlee Creel has even suggested that the venerated Duke of Chou originated many of the ideas that Confucius was later to use. These ideas are particularly to be found in the Book of Poetry and the Book of History written in the Spring and Autumn period (771-481 B.C.).¹

Western historians consider the Early Chou period as the beginning of feudalism in China. The rulers parceled out their land to various relatives and rulers who had assisted them in conquest. They were permitted to govern their own lands as long as they assisted the king in time of war. In effect, vassals of the king were placed in charge of garrisons throughout the land of the Chou king. Creel suggests that the tenuous nature of the relationships between the king and his vassals was the reason for the relatively benevolent philosophy of the rulers of that time. The Duke of Chou, in later documents, "repeatedly insisted on the importance of justice and even mercy in deciding

criminal cases, of treating the people indulgently, and of not oppressing the helpless and solitary."²

With the beginning of the Chou dynasty, there was a shift from a mystical conception of life to a more pragmatic conception that focused on the behavior of the ruler in relation to the people. The founders of the Chou dynasty developed the concept of the "mandate of heaven" to legitimize their reign. This is quite different from the western concept of the "divine right of kings." The mandate of heaven was a "concept of moral responsibilities of the ruler and the way in which the ruler should discharge these responsibilities so as not to lose the favor and protection of Heaven. . . ."³ The Chou king was supposed to have received the "mandate of heaven." Essentially, by this doctrine the ruler received or lost the "mandate" depending upon whether or not he was successful. It was also an essential part of the conception of the dynastic cycle.

In 771 B.C., the Chou ruler was forced by a barbarian invasion to flee from his capital and move his court to a new capital in the East. From then on his power steadily diminished and the vassals or rulers of the feudal states began to ignore any responsibility to their sovereign and began to fight among themselves. Their previous arrangements of negotiations and gentlemen's agreements began to break down. "All was violence and disorder among the ruling class

and there seemed to be no higher power, temporal or spiritual, to which men might appeal."⁴ This period is called the Spring and Autumn Period and was the beginning of a long period of chaos which lasted until China was finally unified in 221 B.C.

Confucius lived during the last years of this Spring and Autumn period, as did the putative philosopher Lao Tzu. These two philosophers and many others within the next several hundred years began to try to deal with the problems of their times. Their ideas were man-centered and were concerned with giving direction to the ruler so that he could bring about peace and unity in the land. They each had different ways of going about this, more or less along the lines that Karen Horney has suggested in her moving toward, against and away from people.

According to Fung Yu-lan, Confucius was born in 551 B.C., a descendant of the royal house of Shang (rulers of the previous dynasty). However, the family had lost its status. Confucius was poor in his youth, but still was one of the gentleman scholars (literati) and entered government service in one of the smaller states.⁵ Many of the literati were descendants of old families who were debarred from feudal rank and social importance under the Chou. "This floating population of wandering specialists succeeded, as time went on, in dominating the hereditary aristocracy by

the superiority of its own ideas and interests."⁶ They had sought employment from the various courts of feudal princes.

Some say that Confucius reached high rank, perhaps prime minister by the time he was fifty. One story has it that within three months he had managed to eliminate crime and had established harmonious order throughout the land. A neighboring state, however, became jealous of Confucius' success and sent eighty beautiful women to the king of Lu. The king subsequently neglected the affairs of the country in favor of carousing with the beautiful women, and Confucius resigned in disgust.⁷

For the next thirteen years Confucius traveled from state to state hoping to influence another ruler to accept his reforms. He was unsuccessful in this and returned to his native state of Lu where he died three years later in 479 B.C.

Confucius was most successful in his chosen role as private teacher. He gathered around him a group of young literati who became his disciples and followed him around on his travels. Many of them were later to take important positions in various state governments.

This group of disciples and their disciples supposedly were the ones who collected the Analects of Confucius which is the best source of his ideas. In Confucius' time there was not yet a tradition of writing books in a private rather

than an official capacity. The six classics which existed before Confucius constituted the legacy of the past and formed the basis of education for the aristocrats. The Analects is a collection of sayings of Confucius in response to questions of his disciples. It was probably written down a couple of hundred years after his death.

As feudalism declined a bureaucracy of the educated emerged in response to political needs, and Confucius as teacher came along at the propitious time to provide this group with a philosophy. In some ways Confucius was an arch conservative. He believed that the disorder of his day could be corrected if men would return to the political and social order created by the founders of the Chou dynasty. He believed that men should play their assigned roles in a fixed society of authority. He never challenged the hereditary right of the rulers to rule. This basic conservatism made him popular later with most subsequent rulers in East Asia.

On the other hand, Confucius was a great innovator; he was the articulator of a great ethical tradition. He was China's first ethical philosopher. Before Confucius, China was premoral. People believed in auguries and sacrifices. With the beginning of the Chou dynasty, the focus shifted to a belief that the ruler could solve human problems if only he had the correct theory and behavior. Confucius

inaugurated the idea that the ruler's first duty was to set a proper example of sound ethical conduct and that the contentment of the people should be the true measure of political success.

The most important theme in Confucian philosophy is the concept of jen or human-heartedness, also translated as love or benevolence. The man of jen is the perfect man. He is the man of the golden rule. "Do not do unto others what you would not like for yourself."⁸ And "wishing to establish his own character, he also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, he also helps others to be prominent."⁹

It is this concept that is closest to that of the compliant personality of Karen Horney as well as to many Western Christian conceptions. Another important aspect of Confucianism is the idea of finding values within oneself, out of one's own compassion. ". . . in fact, the ability to take one's own feelings as a guide--that is the sort of thing that lies in the way of Goodness."¹⁰

The most controversial concept in Confucianism is the concept of li, which can be translated as culture, polish, or understanding of proper etiquette and social usage. According to the Book of History Confucius became so interested in good manners as a child that he paid great attention to them even while playing. Another story has it

that he would not eat unless the meal was presented and the seats arranged in the proper manner.¹¹

This gave rise to a rather oppressive emphasis on ritual and etiquette and the reliance in East Asia on inculcating inner attitudes through the practice of external forms. Confucius actually believed that only forms of propriety which reflected the inner person were appropriate. He believed in the Chinese concept of "rectification of names"--the ruler should act like a ruler, the father like a father, and so on. He was basically against formalism in theory. This, however, was mostly forgotten in later years by others trying to practice his teachings who believed that persistent practices of forms was the way to rectitude.

Another of his controversial teachings was his emphasis on filial piety or filial considerateness. This came to mean that the son should obey his father in all things, and that after the father's death nothing important may be done for the next three years. Another reading of Confucius is that what is important after the father's death is not the formal type of respect but rather the fulfilling of the desires of one's father and perpetuating his achievements as if he were alive.

Confucianism raises some interesting questions in terms of modern social and political philosophy. On the one hand Confucius was considered China's first ethical

philosopher. His concepts are similar to some of our basic Christian tenets. On the other hand, the subservient roles, particularly those ascribed to women and children (women and children are supposed to obey the husband and father, respectively), are considered anathema to the modern Western mind.

According to tradition, Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, lived in the 6th century B.C. and was a slightly older contemporary of Confucius. Confucius was said to have visited him to learn more about ceremonies and was impressed by him.

The earliest Taoists may have been the anti-social recluses who figured in the Confucian Analects. The early Taoists through "sitting and forgetting" and "fasts of the mind" tried to achieve trance-like ecstasies in which they could arrive at the state of the "true man" and apprehend the oneness of the universe. Taoism was a direct refutation of both Confucian formalism and the Legalist emphasis on war and punishment.

Basically it was a philosophy of retreat and withdrawal on the part of thinkers who were appalled by perpetual warfare, instability and death and so turned away from the struggle for power, status and wealth. Some people see Taoism as mystical and some, like this writer, prefer to see Taoism as part of the secular humanism characteristic of

Chinese philosophy in general. Taoism, unlike other mystical religions, stressed the union of the individual with an impersonal order.

According to the Han historian, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, who lived in the second century B.C., Lao Tzu was a librarian of the Chou dynasty but left that position because of the declining status of the Chou dynasty. On his way over a mountain pass a warden persuaded him, so the story goes, to write the Tao Te Ching, a short book of some 5,000 words. After that he was not heard of again.¹²

The Tao Te Ching, meaning "book of the way and the power" or sometimes "book of Taoist virtue," was likely to have been actually written in the third or fourth century B.C., probably by more than one person. Since that was during the Warring States Period, it was undoubtedly a reaction against the increasing despotism of the rulers and the growing rigidity of the Confucian moralists.

Like Confucius, the Taoists looked back to a golden age, but their golden age was a much earlier one when life was much less complicated. A simple primitive society was preferable to one where luxury bred envy and envy strife. An ideal society was one which was economically self-sufficient and where the people's minds were to be kept empty and their bellies full. The ideal leader was one who did not rule but where everything was nonetheless done.

The basic idea was wu wei, which means doing nothing or not striving. It did not mean literally doing nothing, but only doing what was natural, in accordance with the natural laws of the Tao. "Do nothing and nothing will be not done." The Tao Te Ching is written throughout in this cryptic style. "If left to itself, the universe proceeds smoothly according to its own harmonies. Man's efforts to change or improve nature only destroy these harmonies and produce chaos."¹³

It condemned all values which contemporary society held dear--power, fame, wealth, certainly, but also laws, wisdom, knowledge, and education. Under this kind of society, wars would cease. The ideal man in this society would be oblivious to gains or losses, honor or shame, ambitions or disappointments. A man of Tao, therefore, preferred a constant state of inactivity.

The Tao is founded on a nameless, formless "non-being"; it "cannot be heard," "cannot be seen," and "cannot be spoken." But it is, in essence, the totality of the natural processes to which man must conform. Nothingness was the essence of Tao. Nothingness was the mother of all things. The book did not attempt to explain the unexplainable; nor did it deal with the supernatural. Life and death was to be accepted with resignation and acquiescence. Arthur Waley waxes very eloquent on the

subject of this acceptance of death calling it a "lyrical, almost ecstatic acceptance which has inspired some of the most moving passages in Taoist literature."¹⁴

Legalism became the primary philosophy, the most powerful and influential philosophy, in the Warring States Period (B.C. 481-221). It is also the philosophy that is most similar to the values of the "aggressive" personality of Karen Horney.

After the three centuries of the Spring and Autumn Period (781-481 B.C.), during which time the Chou dynasty had fallen and the feudal lords had fragmented the empire and were bent on numerous and frequent conquests and annexations, only seven major states remained. The Warring States Period was characterized by a great intensification of violence and the breakdown of any semblance of rational or moral order. Dun J. Li describes this period as follows:

During this period military force alone decided interstate issues--gone were the days of interstate conferences and sophisticated diplomacy. Agreements were made to be broken, and diplomats were experts in treachery and deceit. Every prince was bent on conquest, and might had become right. One besieged city was so starved that people were forced to exchange their children for food.

Casualties ran to hundreds of thousands in each of the many military campaigns, and no mercy was shown to prisoners-of-war who were often slaughtered en masse. Bloodshed increased by the improvement in weapons and methods of war. Cavalry and infantry replaced war chariots, and the wide use of iron had made the new weapons more deadly.¹⁵

The state of Ch'in was to become the state to eventually conquer the other states and unify China in 221 B.C. One of the great leaders of Ch'in during this period was Shang Yang who died in 338 B.C. Shang Yang was chief minister and a great organizer. He ordered all households to be organized into small groups of ten and then held that each household was to be responsible for the words and deeds of the other households within the same group. Every acre was to be tilled and every man was to produce to his utmost. He ruled with an efficient system of laws, punishments and rewards. Everything was to be mobilized to improve agriculture and effectiveness in war. Within ten years "every family was economically sufficient, banditry and thievery were completely eliminated, and Ch'in became one of the best governed states."¹⁶

The philosophy of Legalism was designed to aid the ruler in consolidating his position and power. With the breakdown of the old feudal order, the states that did not institute the necessary reforms--increasing the effectiveness of agriculture and the armies, strengthening the central control of the ruler, and replacing the old hereditary bureaucracy with a bureaucracy appointed by the ruler--tended to be the ones that fell by the wayside.

Han Fei Tzu, the most noted Legalist philosopher, describes Shang Yang's contribution:

[He provides] a clear vision of the historic goals to be attained--the creation of a state sufficiently wealthy and powerful to achieve a clear hegemony within the anarchy of the Chinese international arena. He provides the basic plan for creating the agricultural and military organizations which are required, and with his integrated system of penal laws and rewards, he provides the engine for effectively channeling the behavior of the people.¹⁷

Reischauer describes the rationale for such a policy in the following terms which are similar to Horney's conception that the aggressive personality has a negative view of the motives of others and that the world is essentially a jungle where might makes right.

Since the people are stupidly selfish and the bureaucrats untrustworthy self-seekers, the ruler cannot rely on their moral values but must control all alike by clearly defined rewards and punishments Right, to the Legalists, consisted simply in what the ruler desired.¹⁸

Ironically, the philosopher who was responsible for teaching the most important later Legalist philosophers, Han Fei Tzu and Li Ssu, was a Confucian philosopher, Hsun-tzu (c. 330-237 B.C.). Hsun-tzu had a pessimistic view of human nature and felt that man's nature had to be controlled by education. This paved the way for the more authoritarian view of politics.

Han Fei Tzu (c. 280-233 B.C.) was the most important of the Legalist philosophers. His book, the Han Fei Tzu,¹⁹ has been preserved almost completely intact, something that is not true of the other philosophers such as Confucius and Lao Tzu whose ideas were written down much later by others.

Han Fei was a prince of the royal family of the State of Han and his essays on political science were written for the King of the State of Han. He stuttered badly, which was a great disadvantage for someone who wanted to be a great influence at court. This may have been what stimulated his need to write.

His writings reached the King of Ch'in (the future First Emperor) who was very much impressed by them. However, the King of Ch'in had attacked the State of Han in 234 B.C. and the King of Han had sent Han Fei to Ch'in to try to influence the King. Li Ssu, an important minister to the King of Ch'in, succeeded in persuading the King of Ch'in that Han Fei was dangerous, so Han Fei was imprisoned and forced to commit suicide in 233 B.C. It is possible that Li Ssu was jealous of the impressive Han Fei and therefore was moved to eliminate his competition.

Han Fei's system included not only the concept of law and methods of administering it, but also the arts of governing (reminiscent of those of Machiavelli): power, control and manipulation of those under the ruler. Burton Watson describes the role of the Han Fei Tzu in history as follows:

Generations of Chinese scholars have professed to be shocked by its contents--the rejection of all moral values, the call to harshness and deceit in politics,

the assertion that even one's own wife and children are not to be trusted--and have taken up their brushes to denounce it. But there has never been an age when the book was unread, and the text appears to have come down to us complete. It is one of those books that will compel attention in any age, for it deals with a problem of unchanging importance--the nature and use of power.²⁰

The Legalist philosophy was clearly at work in the lives of Ch'in Shih-Huang ti, China's First Emperor, and his prime minister, the Legalist Li Ssu. To be sure, they accomplished great things, possibly the greatest in all of China's history up until the revolution of Mao Tse Tung. However, the cost to the people of these accomplishments was so great that the Ch'in Dynasty was very short lived and its downfall was swift and violent.

NOTES

¹Herrlee Creel, Confucius: the Man and the Myth (New York: The John Day Company, 1949), 146.

²Ibid., 147.

³William Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan and Burton Watson, Sources of Chinese Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 1:7.

⁴Ibid., 16.

⁵Fung Yu-lan, Short History, 38.

⁶Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, Science and Civilization in China, vol. 2, History of Scientific Thought (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 3.

⁷Archie Bahn, The Heart of Confucius (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1977), 88.

⁸Waley, Analects, 162.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 122.

¹¹Bahn, Confucius, 33.

¹²Dun J. Li, The Ageless Chinese (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 86.

¹³Fairbank, Reischauer & Craig, East Asia, 48.

¹⁴Waley, Analects, 54.

¹⁵Li, Ageless Chinese, 54-55.

¹⁶Ibid., 58.

¹⁷Schwartz, World of Thought, 335.

¹⁸Fairbank, Reischauer & Craig, East Asia, 53.

¹⁹Han Fei Tzu, The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu
trans. W. K. Liao (London: A. Probsthain, 1959).

²⁰Arthur Waley, Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China
(London: G. Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1939), 14.

Chapter III

CH'IN SHIH HUANG-TI - LEGALIST EMPEROR

The unification of China in the third century B.C. took place in one of the most aggressive periods in Chinese history, the Warring States Period. Not only was it spectacular in terms of military conquest, but it was also the only time in Chinese history when the particularly aggressive philosophy - Legalism - was dominant. Certainly after unification, the much more gentle and humane ideas of Confucius were ascendant. Fighting of course was continuous throughout Chinese history. Historians are in general agreement regarding the limited facts in this period, probably because one of the few primary sources is the Han historian, Ssu-ma Ch'ien (149-90 B.C.?).

Chinese historians call the century and a half prior to the unification of China the period of the Warring States. By this time the Chou dynasty had ceased to have any real power and all the various small states fought to conquer and annex each other. By 350 B.C., there were seven remaining warring states. The state of Ch'in was the most backward of the seven states, being the most westerly and most culturally intermixed with the neighboring "barbarians." Scholars were distrusted and literary men were

barred from the country. However, because of their continuous fighting with the surrounding barbarians, the Ch'in warriors were some of the fiercest and most skilled in China.

The state of Ch'in was favorably placed to conquer the others and unify the country. It was frequently called the Land within the Passes, referring to its natural mountain defenses. It was situated between the Wei and Yellow Rivers, accessible only by mountain passes. However, the effective development of agriculture was what was most responsible for the great strength which enabled Ch'in to conquer the other six states.

Inadvertently the King of Han provided Ch'in with the agricultural strength to succeed. The neighboring state of Han was afraid of the eastern expansion of the Ch'in so it tried to exhaust it with expansive projects. The King of Han sent the water engineer Cheng Kuo to the King of Ch'in to persuade him to build a canal a hundred miles long for irrigation purposes. When the King of Ch'in found out about the plot, he was very angry, but the water engineer persuaded him that in the long run it would make the state of Ch'in very powerful, so the project was continued. The erratic rainfall in the Wei River valley was not adequate and the Cheng Kuo canal transformed poor land into a "fertile plain without bad years."¹ It also provided the

King of Ch'in with an enormous tax base with which to pursue his aggressive expansionist policies. The Cheng Kuo canal was opened in 246 B.C., the year that the future first emperor assumed the throne of Ch'in at the age of thirteen.

The parentage of the future first emperor is somewhat in doubt. The story (from Ssu-ma Ch'ien) has it that a wealthy merchant from the state of Chao, Lu Pu-wei, decided to befriend an impoverished exiled Ch'in prince in order to make it possible for him to become King of Ch'in. This would elevate Lu Pu-wei into a position of enormous power. The prince was encouraged to live in high style, his relatives in Ch'in were showered with presents, and the childless wife of the King of Ch'in was persuaded to adopt the prince as her son and heir. In due time, the prince became king and Lu Pu-wei became Grand Councillor and received the revenues of 100,000 households.

Lu Pu-wei also had a concubine who attracted the attention of the new king who desired to make her his queen. She happened to be pregnant at the time, although this was kept secret. According to this story, the future first emperor was actually fathered by Lu Pu-wei. He was thus the illegitimate son of a wanton woman, a matter of great disgrace in ancestor worshipping China.

When this king died and Lu Pu-wei became regent for the young King Cheng (our future first emperor), Lu Pu-wei

resumed relations with the queen and tried to disguise this by providing the queen with a lover. This lover later conspired against the throne, was discovered and killed. The king's mother was exiled, and Lu Pu-wei was debased and later committed suicide. These reasons in addition to three assassination attempts may be responsible for the future first emperor's paranoid qualities.

It any event, when King Cheng reached his majority and took over power from Lu Pu-wei, he began his struggle to conquer the other states and unify China. From 230 to 221 B.C. the King of Ch'in managed to conquer militarily, one after another, the six other states. He then declared himself the First Emperor of China. In this task, he was ably assisted by his prime minister Li Ssu, one of the 3,000 scholars taken into the service of Lu Pu-wei when he became Regent or Grand Councillor. Although the First Emperor was an indefatigable ruler, he left most of the administrative reforms and policies to Li Ssu.²

Very little is known of the early life of Li Ssu. The historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien describes him as a petty clerk in his district, a typical but minor position for one of the literati of that period. He apparently considered this a "mean position" from his statement:

There is no greater shame than meanness of position, nor deeper grief than poverty. To remain long in a mean position or in a condition of privation, . . . such is not the nature of a gentleman.³

The birth date of Li Ssu is unknown but Derk Bodde speculates that it was about 280 B.C., so that he would be about twenty years older than the First Emperor.⁴ He supposedly very early decided that he could control his own destiny and so he went to study with the great Confucian philosopher Hsun Tzu. Li Ssu and Han Fei Tzu, the great Legalist philosopher, were two of his most famous students.

According to Derk Bodde, Hsun Tzu lived during the last decades of the Warring States period, at a time when the conflicts among the different states had reached their height and when a centralized authority was more needed than before.⁵ His famous doctrine of the original evilness of human nature, therefore, is not a surprising conclusion, in view of the disorder that surrounded him. Hsun Tzu believed that because of this evilness peace could only be achieved when a strong and centralized authority existed, which through education and nurture could correct the evilness of man's nature. The comments of Li Ssu upon his departure from Hsun Tzu are reported by Ssu-ma Ch'ien:

I have heard that when one obtains the opportune moment one should not be tardy. Now is the time when ten thousand chariots are at war, and when the travelling [politicians] control affairs. At present the King of Ch'in desires to swallow up the world and to rule with the title of Emperor. This is the time for the commoners to be busy, and is the golden age of the travelling politicians. One who [at such a time], abiding in a mean position, decides to remain passive, is like a bird or deer that will merely look at meat [but not touch it]. But one who possesses a human countenance can act

vigorously. . . . Therefore I intend to go westward to give counsel to the King of Ch'in.⁶

Here one can see the expansive, active and aggressive tendencies at work. He obviously saw himself as the opposite of the Taoist and detached "non-activity" kind of person.

The historian Derk Bodde describes Li Ssu as cold, calculating, and eminently rational. "He who waits on others misses his opportunities, while a man aiming at great achievements takes advantage of a critical juncture and relentlessly follows it through."⁷ This would be an example of Horney's view that the aggressive person must suppress feelings and may use intellect to gain power. Li Ssu must have been a very persuasive person. Ssu-ma Ch'ien quotes him as saying:

Now, with the might of Ch'in and the virtues of Your Highness, at one stroke, . . . the feudal lords can be annihilated, imperial rule can be established, and unification of the world can be brought about. This is the one moment in ten thousand ages.⁸

Li Ssu arrived in Ch'in just at the time the young future first emperor became king of Ch'in. He became a member of the establishment of Lu Pu-wei, the acting regent for the young king. He became a retainer of Lu Pu-wei and later, after talking with the King, was given the office of Senior Scribe. Still later, he became Alien Minister. According to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Li Ssu advised the king to send plotters bearing gold and precious stones to win over those feudal lords who could be bribed, and if that was not

successful to stab the unwilling. The king's generals were to be sent to follow in the rear.

Another famous episode in the life of Li Ssu concerned his fellow student, Han Fei Tzu. Han Fei Tzu was considered to be the most famous legalist philosopher and had greatly impressed the King of Ch'in with his writings. Li Ssu was assumed to be jealous of Han Fei Tzu or at least did not want any competition. Li Ssu therefore said that Han Fei Tzu was really an agent of the King of Han and should not be trusted. He then had Han Fei Tzu imprisoned and forced him to commit suicide.⁹

At about this time, Li Ssu wrote his famous memorial regarding the expulsion of aliens. Because the King of Han was alleged to have tried to bankrupt Ch'in with the construction of the Cheng Kuo Canal, some members of the Ch'in government advocated the expulsion of all aliens as being too likely to be working on behalf of their own governments to the detriment of Ch'in. Li Ssu was successful in pointing out all the instances where foreign experts had been of immense help. He was thereafter made Grand Councillor, the highest position possible next to the Emperor.

During the years 230-221 B.C. the king of Ch'in managed to conquer all of the other states and unified China

under his rule as Ch'in Shih Huang-ti. At Li Ssu's urging the First Emperor carried out a series of sweeping changes and innovations that, in the course of a few years, radically affected the entire structure of Chinese life and society. One of these was the complete abolition of all feudal ranks and privileges and the disarming of all private individuals. Li Ssu was most concerned about any possible coalition between the feudal nobles and the Confucianists. Some in the government were advocating that the Emperor set up his sons as princes in various of the outlying states. However, Li Ssu was adamant in rejecting that in favor of a centralized bureaucratic government appointed and controlled by the emperor.

The entire area of China was brought under the direct control of the central government through an administrative system of prefectures and counties. With this unification of the nation came measures for the standardization of weights, measures and writing script, the destruction of all feudal barriers between districts, and the construction of better roads and communications. From the capital five trunk roads fifty feet in width were constructed, extending a total of almost 5,000 miles, plus numerous side roads to enable troops to move quickly and also to facilitate the collection of taxes.

In order to facilitate the abolition of feudalism and to prevent any recurrence of other warring states, 120,000 wealthy families were brought to the capital. Each time Ch'in conquered a feudal state, a replica of its ruler's palace was built near the capital.

The First Emperor ordered the most extensive building program recorded in Chinese history--Imperial ancestral temples, palaces, and gardens were constructed. As soon as he had become king of Ch'in in 246 B.C. work was begun on his mausoleum at Mount Li, the famous tomb with the terracotta warriors. After unification more than 700,000 conscripts from all parts of China worked on it. Also the A-fang palace was started. He sent his most famous general to complete the Great Wall, a task employing millions of men. The First Emperor also used his building program to provide employment for the reservoir of labor made idle by the end of the wars of unification and the abolition of serfdom.

Later in his reign, this extensive use of corvee labor and taxes was very destructive for the people.

When the world was at last united by Ch'in, the First Emperor set about constructing great public works within the country and driving the barbarians from its borders. He collected in taxes more than half of the people's produce and dispatched half of the men of each village to guard the frontiers. Though the farmers labored in their fields they could not produce enough grain to eat; though the women spun and wove they could not provide enough clothing. The Emperor exhausted the resources of the empire to supply his government, and yet they were

still insufficient to meet his desires. All people within the seas grieved and were angry so that at last they fled or revolted.¹⁰

Li Ssu tried unsuccessfully to restrain some of the First Emperor's expansive projects. His attempt at preventing attacks on the northern barbarians, the Hsiung-nu, was described by Ssu-ma Ch'ien:

. . . . It is impossible. The Hsiung-nu have no fixed cities or forts and no stores of provisions or grain. They move from place to place like flocks of birds and are just as difficult to catch and control. Now if we send parties of lightly equipped soldiers deep into their territory, our men will soon run out of food, and if we try to send provisions after them, the baggage trains will never reach them in time. Even if we were to seize control of the Hsiung-nu lands, they would bring us no profit, Surely this is not a wise policy!¹¹

The other main effort on the part of Li Ssu was to prevent any recurrence of feudalism and to forestall any Confucianist influence by ordering the burning of books in 213 B.C. The Confucianists had opposed the abolition of feudalism because of the emphasis their school of philosophy placed on familial relationships.

'These scholars,' he said, 'learn only from the old, not from the new, and employ their learning to oppose our rule and confuse the black-headed people. . . . Let all historical records but those of Ch'in be destroyed.'¹²

There is considerable evidence that most of the accomplishments of the First Emperor were attributable to Li Ssu, the man behind the throne. After the death of the First Emperor in 210 B.C. Li Ssu sent the following memorial to the Second Emperor:

Your servant utilized his small abilities to the utmost, carefully founding laws; clandestinely dispatching plotters supplied with gold and jewels, and causing them to misadvise the feudal lords; and clandestinely to manufacture armour and weapons. He broadcast the teaching of the imperial government, promoted military men, and rewarded good officials. . . . By these methods it was eventually possible to annex all rival states, make captive their kings, and establish the king of Ch'in as the Son of Heaven. . . . He also expelled the nomads along the north, and subjugated the Yueh peoples of the south. . . . He changed harmful policies, . . . standardized weights and measures, and the written characters. . . . He laid out the imperial highways and inaugurated imperial tours of inspection.¹³

What kind of a person was the First Emperor? One of his army commanders describes him as having:

a waspish nose, eyes like slits, a chicken breast and a voice like a jackal. He is merciless, When in difficulties he willingly humbles himself, when successful he swallows men up without a scruple.¹⁴

Some magicians described him as:

a man whose nature is violent, cruel and despotic. . . . He thinks that since antiquity there has been nobody to equal him. . . . The Emperor delights in showing his intimidating power by means of punishments and executions. . . .¹⁵ To such a stage has his thirst for power reached.

Derk Bodde analyzes his personality:

Ch'in Shih-huang was not entirely a normal person. In the first place, like many powerful but relatively uncultured conquerors, he must have had an intense fear of death, as shown by his several eager attempts to find the elixir of immortality. . . .

The desire for grandeur appears in almost everything we read about Shih-huang: the title he assumed of 'First Sovereign Emperor,' . . . his attempts to make of himself a semi-divine being; and his construction of tremendous palace buildings, as well as the Great Wall itself. . . .¹⁶

On the other hand, the First Emperor was efficient and hard-working. He handled a hundred pounds of reports daily and undertook frequent tours of the empire. His own personal drive was the engine which drove the empire. He also had great outbursts of fury whenever he encountered obstacles. An example of the vindictive rage of the First Emperor is described by Ssu-ma Ch'ien:

I assembled a host of scholars and alchemists to start a reign of peace, hoping the latter would find marvellous herbs . . . [Instead they have] wasted millions without obtaining any elixir. . . [while! the other scholars are libelling me, saying that I lack virtue. I have had inquiries made about the scholars in the capital and I find that some of them are spreading vicious rumors to confuse the people.]¹⁷

Four hundred and sixty scholars were found guilty of defaming the emperor and buried alive as a warning to others.

Very early in his reign, the First Emperor became fascinated with Taoist theories of immortality. He had a great fear of dying. Personal contact with scholars and magicians of some of the states he conquered stimulated this interest. In the northeast there was a strong tradition of sorcery connected with the shamanism of the steppe peoples. These superstitious tendencies of the First Emperor were not shared by Li Ssu who managed his administration firmly according to Legalist principles.

The First Emperor spent a great deal of both time and money in the search for herbs of deathlessness. In 219 B.C. "the First Emperor wandered about the shore of the Eastern Sea, and offered sacrifices to the famous mountains and the great rivers and the Eight Spirits; and searched for immortals."¹⁸ In 210 B.C., the First Emperor fell ill and died on a trip searching for a giant fish supposed to be the embodiment of a Sea God. This fish was supposed to be keeping the people from finding the magic herbs of deathlessness.

After the First Emperor's death, Li Ssu conspired with the eunuch Chao Kao to conceal the fact and to forge a message to the emperor's first son and favorite general who were off in the northern provinces, obliging them to commit suicide. This left the way open for the weak second son to become emperor with Chao Kao firmly in command. Li Ssu later regretted this, as the Second Emperor destroyed the empire with his extravagances. In 208 B.C. Chao Kao had Li Ssu tortured and cut in half with a sword and his family exterminated to the third degree. The Ch'in empire collapsed shortly thereafter.

Two peasants on their way to corvee assignments were delayed by weather. Since any delay in arriving at a corvee assignment was punishable by death, they decided instead to rebel and persuaded the other conscripts to join them. This

rebellion spread like wildfire and before long there were rebellions all over the country. The capital was razed and a new dynasty, the Han dynasty, was begun in 206 B.C.¹⁹

It is possible to see in these two men, the First Emperor and Li Ssu, examples of the aggressive personality type of Karen Horney. The First Emperor seemed to be somewhat psychotic and his excesses were destructive to the country. Li Ssu, on the other hand, was cold and lacking in compassion. He was able to set up an administrative system which would prove to be one of the most stable frameworks for social order ever devised. The time was ripe for the success of these two men. Kings were expected to be aggressive warriors, to conquer other states, as well as to contain the barbarian invaders from the north. They had the power to indulge in extravagant excesses. Li Ssu, as one of the lesser literati, had the opportunity in that period to attach himself to a ruler and obtain great personal wealth and power. With that power, he was able to utilize his talents in some very constructive ways.

Both Ch'in Shih-huang-ti and Li Ssu were aggressive personalities. However, one was much more disturbed than the other, and consequently was more destructive in terms of the historical legacy. The record of the Ch'in period of ancient China also shows that aggressiveness in government, when

carried too far, can produce a violent reaction by a victimized people against their aggressors.

NOTES

¹Cotterell, First Emperor, 78.

²Szuma Chien, Records of the Historian, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, Limited, 1974), 152-96.

³Bodde, China's First Unifier, 13.

⁴Ibid., 86.

⁵Ibid., 188.

⁶Ibid., 12-13.

⁷De Bary, Sources, 137.

⁸Ibid., 137-38.

⁹Bodde, China's First Unifier, 64.

¹⁰Ibid., 212.

¹¹Watson, Records, 1:226-27.

¹²Cotterell, First Emperor, 153.

¹³Ibid., 160.

¹⁴Yang and Yang, Records, 162.

¹⁵Bodde, China's First Unifier, 117.

¹⁶Ibid., 119-20.

¹⁷Cotterell, First Emperor, 154.

¹⁸Ibid., 130.

¹⁹Li, Ageless Chinese, 103.

Chapter IV

T'ANG T'AI-TSUNG - CONFUCIAN EMPEROR

The second emperor, T'ang T'ai-tsung (r. A.D. 626-649), was also an aggressive personality, a vigorous and effective fighter and ruler. However, the basic philosophy he espoused was not Legalism, but Confucianism. T'ai-tsung ranks high among China's historical leaders not so much for his military conquests or domestic construction as for his attempt to live up to the Confucian ideal, namely, that the purpose of governing was to bring maximum benefit to the governed. In the early part of the reign of T'ang T'ai-tsung, there were many examples of his consideration for the needs of the people. He was considered by some historians to have been the greatest Confucian emperor.

Before a discussion of T'ang T'ai-tsung can begin, the history of the preceding 800 years must be considered. After the violent fall of the Ch'in dynasty, the next dynasty was founded by a general of humble peasant origin who rose through the ranks. He defeated a competing noble general whose brutal ways ensured his failure. The new ruler succeeded in commanding respect both from the army and the Confucian literati. The Han dynastic rule was as Legalist and autocratic as the previous Ch'in dynasty, but the new

ruler lessened the oppressive practices of the previous dynasty by lowering taxes and reducing the amount of forced labor and severity of punishments. He also reintroduced a modest amount of feudalism by giving relatives land and titles.

The main change that occurred during the Han dynasty was the gradual increase in the influence of Confucianism. The new bureaucratic administrative structure needed trained men to take the posts, so the first Han emperor turned to the literati for help. Books were found, schools were opened and a modified Confucian education came into being. This also became the basis for the training of the bureaucracy via the examination system for the next two thousand years, almost two thousand years before the development of a similar civil service system in Western culture.

The civil service examination system was very important in counteracting the effects of feudalism where family background was the determining factor in choosing administrators. By emphasizing talent and ability in the selection of prospective officials, the imperial government was able to counteract both the localism, which was held responsible for the warring states' divisiveness, and the power of the feudal nobility. This also helped to bring a sense of national purpose and solidarity to the country.

By the time of Han Wu-ti (147-87 B.C.) the experiment with partial feudalism was abandoned, Confucianism was made the state philosophy, and Legalist studies were forbidden. However, Han Wu-ti was himself a very Legalist emperor in practice. The Han dynasty lasted for over four hundred years (206 B.C. to A.D. 220).

With the collapse of the Han dynasty, Taoism and increasingly Buddhism became the dominant philosophic forces. The next four hundred years (A.D. 220 to 589) saw the breakdown of centralized government as developed by the Han and the splintering of the country into various kingdoms, none of which was capable of reuniting the country until the Sui dynasty in A.D. 589. The period between the Han dynasty and the Sui dynasty was characterized by barbarian conquests from the North and much fighting among the domains of the large landholding nobles.

When the first emperor of the Sui dynasty succeeded in reuniting the country, a number of projects were started which greatly contributed to the success and strength of the following T'ang dynasty. The first Sui emperor limited the policy of hereditary privilege, instituted an examination system for qualification for public office, built an empire-wide system of canals and roads as well as a granary system to protect against famine in less profitable times. These were completed by his son. However, due to the

extravagance and profligacy of the second Sui emperor, this dynasty fell to the first T'ang emperor in A.D. 618.

After the setting up in 618 of the new T'ang dynasty, there immediately began a fierce succession battle among the sons of the new emperor. The first son was the heir apparent; the future T'ang T'ai-tsung was the second son. T'ai-tsung, as a prince, had gathered around him a group of outstanding Confucian scholars who were to advise him about affairs of government. This was threatening to the heir apparent who saw it as a move to displace him. He tried to undermine T'ai-tsung's importance by getting some of his staff transferred to other posts and even plotting to assassinate him. When T'ai-tsung learned of the assassination plot, he and a small group of his closest advisors took over the main gate to the capital, lured his two brothers into the capital and murdered them when they tried to enter the gate.¹

There is considerable controversy about the character of T'ang T'ai-tsung's father and also of his two brothers. In the first place, the standard histories commissioned by the court were probably edited or influenced by T'ai-tsung to suggest that the father was weak and the brothers dissolute. T'ang T'ai-tsung was also given full credit for the founding of the dynasty and was for some time considered by historians to be the real first emperor of the T'ang

dynasty. It was this murder of his brothers (he personally killed the heir apparent) and his "unfilial" (un-Confucian) behavior in forcing his father to abdicate in his favor that were supposed to have caused T'ai-tsung to be so concerned about his historical image.

Much later, however, a diary was found, Diary of the Founding of the T'ang² by Wen Ta-ya who was on the staff of T'ai-tsung's father and was a witness to the period just before the founding of the T'ang. T'ai-tsung and his brothers are barely mentioned and the father is seen as a man of powerful ambition, inexhaustible energy, and indomitable will. The diary describes him as follows:

He overwhelms his adversaries with dazzling displays of his martial power and swaggering bravado in the face of danger. He is so adept at employing military strategies against his enemies that even the fierce Eastern Turks are loath to face him on the battlefield.³

But the Wen Ta-ya Diary may be as biased as the standard histories because Wen Ta-ya was a secretary in the service of the first T'ang emperor.

After his triumph over the intrigues of his brothers and the abdication of his father, T'ai-tsung at once proceeded to found Confucian schools. One became so famous that students came from foreign capitals to attend it. The emperor also gathered a collection of 200,000 volumes for the school library. He also erected temples to Confucius all over the country and made them halls of fame for men of

literary distinction. Confucius not only became the patron saint of scholars, he became the patron deity of the civil administration. The emperor sacrificed to Confucius whenever visiting one of the temple districts and also received offerings from important people in the district.⁴

One of the first things T'ai-tsung did to encourage acceptance of his reign was to distribute rewards to various groups in the populace. He ordered a general amnesty, pardoning all crimes that had been committed prior to his accession, and permitted all banished for crimes under his father to return home. All of the empire was excused from taxes and labor for one year and grain and silk were granted to the very aged. Last but not least, he released the more than three thousand of Kao-tsu's (his father's) harem women, sent them home with permission to marry. In part this was an accusation against his father and in part his own desire to set a higher moral tone to his reign.⁵

Also, the early T'ang dynasty practiced a land distribution system that was designed to reduce feudal control and to gain the loyalty of the people. The land law of 624 granted each adult male one ch'ing of land. For this, the farmer was to give as payment a certain amount of grain, cloth and corvee labor. Twenty working days a year constituted the labor service.

In 628 a series of prefectural relief granaries were established which gave the population some insurance against natural disasters. These granaries stored up grain in anticipation of famine or crop failures. Prices for grain in the granaries were regulated in some major cities in 629 in order to reduce excessive fluctuations of grain prices.

As a result of several years of internal peace and good harvests coupled with sound administrative policies, the situation markedly improved. The state grew prosperous and began to build up large reserves. On the basis of this new prosperity, T'ai-tsung was able to undertake a far more activist and interventionist foreign policy and to mount campaigns which ranged over much of central Asia and into Korea.⁶

Little is known of T'ai-tsung's early years. He was born in A.D. 600 of racially mixed noble parentage. His mother was of a leading northern family and was brought up at the court of her uncle, the Northern Chou emperor. The women of the culturally mixed northern elite were typically strong and independent.

. . . [I]n the city of Yeh it was the custom for women to handle all family business, to demand justice and to straighten out legal disputes, to make calls and curry favor with the powerful. They filled the streets with their carriages, occupied the government offices with their fancy dresses, begged official posts for their sons, and made complaints about the injustice done to their husbands.

There was also a strong father-son rivalry in the northern ruling families and the mothers had considerable influence particularly on their favorite sons. T'ai-tsung's mother died when he was only fourteen, long before he became emperor at age twenty-six.

His education, as was customary of the northern elite, was primarily in the military tradition. He accompanied his father on military expeditions in his early teens and spent most of his time in the field. He became a powerful archer, swordsman and horseman. He probably inherited from his grandmother's family his passionate love of horses. His tomb is guarded by bas-reliefs of his war-horses killed in battle beneath him. He was also a superb archer, the most famous of his age, a skill to which he was to owe his life on several occasions.⁸

Wechsler describes him as a dashing and successful commander:

He had a truly imperial bearing and cut an intimidating and magnificent figure at court. Highly emotional and easily provoked, his face would turn purple with rage and strike fear into those around him.

Although he probably only received a modest amount of Confucian education, after he became emperor he wrote poetry and became a well-known calligrapher, as was expected of a Chinese monarch. Many specimens of his calligraphy, engraved on stone tablets, are still used for rubbings as models for students.¹⁰

Early in his reign he adopted a humble mien before his subordinates. Years of military training as a youth, he frequently explained, had ill-prepared him for the arduous tasks he now faced as a ruler, and he had much to learn. However, he had a sharply inquisitive mind and vast quantities of energy. When he first came to power he is said to have asked his most important officials to sleep in shifts at their offices so that he could question them at any time. He also pasted memorials (communications) from his officials on the walls of his chambers so that he could ponder them during his comings and goings, well into the night. His humility delighted the Confucians, particularly the following speech:

The ruler depends on the state and the state depends on the people. Oppressing the people to make them serve the ruler is like cutting one's flesh to fill one's stomach. The stomach is filled but the body is injured; the ruler is made wealthy but the state is destroyed. Therefore, when calamity strikes the ruler it comes not from outside but always from within himself. If he desires grandeur, then expenditures must be increased; if expenditures are increased, then taxes must be made heavier; if taxes are made heavier, then the people become resentful; if the people become resentful, then the state is in danger; if the state is in danger, then the ruler is lost. I often think of this and thus do not dare indulge my desires.¹¹

Early in his reign he relied very heavily on the advice of his scholar-ministers. He established a deep personal rapport with them and was seen as unusually sensitive and responsive to their advice.

He gathered around him an unusually talented group of ministers responsible for perfecting the basic system of executive administration. They became synonymous with fair yet efficient administration. One of them had passed the prestigious chin-shih exam under the Sui at the age of seventeen. Another was responsible for recruiting many men into his administration and also was responsible for drafting many of the emperor's edicts.

T'ai-tsung tried to recruit ministers from all parts of the empire in order to prevent any one regional group from dominating the principal ministries. He also tried to create a general attitude of brotherhood and encouraged members of the elite to act compassionately to those less fortunate than themselves.¹²

His most esteemed advisor was his childhood friend and brother-in-law Chang-sun Wu-chi. Chang-sun Wu-chi had accompanied T'ai-tsung on many of his military campaigns and he helped plan and carry out the coup against his brothers. He occupied many posts, formal and otherwise, during T'ai-tsung's reign. His younger sister became the principal consort of T'ai-tsung probably when T'ai-tsung was in his middle teens. She too was to be very influential in the emperor's life. Chang-sun Wu-chi had continual intimate access to the emperor, was influential in resolving the succession dispute in favor of the next emperor Kao-tsung,

and was the one chosen to receive the emperor's last will and testament just before his death in 649. This can be cited as an example of T'ai-tsung's strong Confucian feeling for family and friendship relationships.

The Emperor's most valued counselor, according to later historians who were Confucian in orientation, was Wei Ching. He had been an active partisan of the previous heir apparent, but was pardoned after the morning of the murders and became one of the most influential members of the new emperor's council. He was both minister and remonstrator and was also put in charge of compiling the standard histories.

Indeed, Wei's versatility was impressive even by standards of the Confucians, who held up for emulation the ideal of a talented generalist who copes effortlessly with a wide range of problems and situations. . . . During the next sixteen years Wei successively (often concurrently) assumed the roles of remonstrator, bibliographer, historian, jurist, compiler, ritualist encyclopedist, poet, and tutor to the crown prince, in addition to his regular duties in various organs of the central government.¹³

There was some ambivalence in T'ai-tsung's attitude toward this new minister. Wei Ching's value to T'ai-tsung was his total, fearless, and devastating frankness. He never hesitated to oppose any project he did not approve of and he criticized the emperor's conduct in most outspoken terms. This obviously could cause a certain amount of irritation in T'ai-tsung. A story about Wei Cheng and T'ai-tsung illustrates this:

On one occasion the emperor left the council in a state of great irritation with Wei Cheng, who had consistently and vigorously opposed him in the discussion. As he entered the apartments of the empress, she heard him exclaim. "I will never be the master as long as that wretch, whom I have raised from the dust, is alive!"

'Who is the wretch, then?' inquired the empress.

'Wei Cheng, who contradicts me in front of the whole court.'

The empress made no further comment, but withdrew to her own room, presently reappearing dressed in her most magnificent robes of ceremony. [T'ai-tsung], surprised, asked the reason for this elaborate toilet. The empress replied, 'I have often heard it said that an enlightened emperor will find a faithful minister, upright and sincere. Your Majesty has just admitted that Wei Cheng is such an one. Is this not proof that you are an enlightened emperor? I have robed myself in honour of the fact, to congratulate you.'

The esteem in which the empress held Wei Cheng weighed greatly with [T'ai-tsung], who never subsequently spoke of dismissing the outspoken minister.¹⁴

Sometimes Wei Cheng is portrayed by historians as dry and humorless, whose incessant moralizing and admonitions were often in the end ignored. In any event, the fact that he had such a minister, not to mention such a wife, is strong evidence of the powerful influence that the Confucian philosophy had on T'ai-tsung. It is also quite a positive statement about his character.

One of the interesting and appealing things about T'ai-tsung to this writer was the fact that there were three strong women in his life -- his mother, his wife, and a concubine in his later years who became the Empress Wu, the only reigning empress in Chinese history. The future Empress

Wu became the consort of the next emperor and after his death, through considerable intrigue and manipulation, if not also murder, proclaimed herself Empress in 672. She is considered to be one of the "strong" and effective T'ang rulers.¹⁵

Both T'ai-tsung's mother and wife were Buddhists, and although he himself was not a Buddhist, he performed Buddhist ceremonies to honor them. His wife died in 636. She was always referred to by the historians as his beloved wife and confidante, an outstanding model for future generations and a worthy companion for someone as outstanding as T'ai-tsung.¹⁶ She undoubtedly did represent a restraining influence on him. Particularly after her death in 636, T'ai-tsung reverted to his previous aggressive behavior.

Once state power had been consolidated and the boundaries of China broadly extended, T'ai-tsung, as had previous emperors, fell victim to the seductions of the grand imperium. His earlier modesty gradually gave way to a swaggering arrogance and he became far less disposed to seek the frank counsel of his subordinates. At the same time, his initial policy of frugality and restrictions on corvee was replaced by a more expansive program of palace construction and renovation.¹⁷ The later years of T'ai-tsung were also marred by massive failures in his military endeavors, particularly his attempts to conquer Korea.

Curiously enough a similar scenario was acted out in the succession struggle at the end of his reign. The heir apparent was considered somewhat "strange." He reverted back to his Turkish origins in his behavior and was later exiled for, among other things, a homosexual relationship. He had also been accused of plotting to take over the government from T'ai-tsung. His young homosexual lover was executed and the heir apparent died a little later.

T'ai-tsung's favorite son, by a concubine prior to his marriage to the Empress Chang-sun, was the one he wanted to succeed him. He was the most like him in temperament. He made some attempts to strengthen his ambiguous position and was exiled for supposed attempts to usurp the throne. T'ai-tsung later gave in to the wishes of his brother-in-law Chang-sun Wu-chi and a weak third son of the Empress Chang-sun became the next emperor. T'ai-tsung died in 649 of a lingering illness.

One can see in T'ai-tsung evidence of the compliant side of his personality in his warm relationships with his wife, his best friend and his ministers. He was also more subservient to the advice of his ministers early in his reign. At the same time one can see T'ai-tsung as a very strong and energetic emperor and also someone who succumbed in later years to the attractions of the extravagance of wealth, as well as his unsuccessful wars against Korea, much

like the expansive types described by Horney. On the other hand, this combination of qualities made him one of the most successful Chinese emperors and someone well thought of by most historians.

NOTES

¹Wechsler, Cambridge History, 3:185.

²Bingham, "Wen Ta-ya."

³Ibid., 396.

⁴John K. Shryock, The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp. 1966; repr., American Historical Association, 1932).

⁵Howard J. Wechsler, Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 101.

⁶Wechsler, Cambridge History, 3:209.

⁷Arthur F. Wright, Perspectives on the T'ang, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Dennis Twitchett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 240.

⁸Howard J. Wechsler, Mirror to the Son of Heaven: Wei Cheng at the Court of T'ang T'ai-tsung (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 187.

⁹Wechsler, Cambridge History, 3:189.

¹⁰Ibid., 3:188.

¹¹Wechsler, Mirror, 83.

¹²Wechsler, Cambridge History, 3:201-02.

¹³Wechsler, Mirror, 106-07.

¹⁴Fitzgerald, Son of Heaven, 158.

¹⁵Li, Ageless Chinese, 170.

¹⁶Fitzgerald, Son of Heaven, 158.

¹⁷Wechsler, Cambridge History, 3:191-93.

Chapter V

SUNG HUI-TSUNG - TAOIST EMPEROR

Sung Hui-tsung (r. A.D. 1100-1125), the third emperor in this study, was the eighth Sung emperor and was to preside over the downfall of the Northern Sung in A.D. 1125. Historians consider him to be an example of the typical weak "last emperor" in the Chinese dynastic cycle. In this study, he has been selected as an example of a detached personality as well as a Taoist emperor. However, before discussing Sung Hui-tsung, what happened between T'ang T'ai-tsung and the eighth Sung emperor must be understood.

The middle of the T'ang dynasty represented the beginning of a steady five-century decline in Chinese military effectiveness, culminating in 1279 with the conquest of China by the Mongols. The defeat in 751 of the Chinese by the Arabs in the Far Western part of the empire was the turning point. Later, the An Lu-shan rebellion in 755 by a commander of one of the regional provinces seriously strained the T'ang dynasty. The emperor was able to regain power over the region but the dynasty was much weakened.

The final breakup of the T'ang dynasty occurred in 874. This was due to the combined strength of the Northern

barbarians and the lack of control by the central government over the regional commanders. What then ensued was the Five Dynasties Period when no one dynasty was able to regain control over the whole of China. China was finally reunited under the Sung in 960. The period of the late T'ang and early Sung was a period of transition.

The Sung dynasty was established by a scholar-general, handpicked by the previous ruler because of his love of learning. He was once accused of taking bribes. To try to prove this, officials opened up some of his large trunks, but only found a collection of books that he had rescued on some of his military missions. The previous ruler when dying had chosen this general to lead the campaign against the barbarians threatening from the north. After a successful military campaign, the other officers proclaimed him their new sovereign. The young successor emperor was persuaded to abdicate and this general became the first emperor of the new Sung dynasty. In order to forestall any fighting among his generals and to prevent any continuance of the warlordism that had plagued the previous dynasty, the new emperor persuaded his generals ("over a wine cup") to give up their arms and to go back to their lands.¹

In the previous period there had been a great advance in printing techniques. The Confucian classics were printed and learning was much more available to everyone than ever

before. Thus the route to political success and power was more open through the examination system started in the Han period and further developed in the T'ang. Under the Sung dynasty, anyone who could pass the highest examination was assured of wealth and prestige whether there was any post available for him or not. This meant that those in political power during the Sung were highly educated and cultivated men. The great increase in numbers of those who had passed the chin shih examination created a great financial drain on the treasury. There was also a disadvantage in that the generals who were supposed to lead the military were scholars with no military experience. The early Sung emperors were determined to prevent a reappearance of the kind of warlordism that characterized a divided China after 755. The Sung emperors began to try to achieve peaceful relations with their northern neighbors by giving them large sums in tribute to keep from having to go to war. In the end, these factors contributed to the fall of the Northern Sung.

In general, the Sung dynasty was characterized by an anti-military attitude -- no self-respecting family would allow their sons to join the army. Only the rural unemployed were desperate enough to volunteer for that kind of duty. The elite men of the time were supposed to be educated, sophisticated, cultured and somewhat effeminate by our

standards. Parents taught their children not to play "wild games" that required physical exertion; in their literature, the hero was a delicately built, pretty-faced and sophisticated scholar. Prior to the Sung dynasty, a model man was supposed to combine physical valor with cultural refinement.

Buddhism had been introduced into China before the T'ang dynasty and remained popular in the country in spite of the persecutions against the Buddhists in 841-846. However, there was a steady movement toward a more secular neo-Confucianism that still contained some of the mystical elements of both Buddhism and Taoism. In general, the Sung emperors were devout Taoists, consistent with the anti-military attitude as well as the scholarly and artistic tenor of the period.² Through all of these periods, Taoism remained the inspiration of poets and artists, however closely identified with Confucianism they might have been. China never made any one philosophy exclusive.

Confucianism, however, was increasingly the philosophy of the landowning "gentry" and the civil service examinations were the route to higher office and power in the Chinese bureaucracy. Actually, the "gentry" were expected to aspire to some kind of public service.

It was in this kind of anti-military, Taoist and artistic atmosphere that the future Sung Hui-tsung was born

in 1082. He was the eleventh son of the Emperor Shen-tsung. He probably never expected to become emperor. He spent most of his life preoccupied with artistic pursuits and turned over the responsibilities of governing to others. In the end, he tried to run away and become a Taoist monk. All of this, it can be argued, fit the picture of the detached personality.

His father died when he was three years old. His mother, a concubine, not wanting to survive her husband, refused to eat and died shortly after him. Thus, Hui-tsung was an orphan at an early age. The earlier sons of Shen-tsung had died and the sixth son became emperor at the age of eight. He died in 1100 leaving no male heirs. Because the only other available son had an eye disease, Hui-tsung became the next emperor. The Prime Minister had considered Hui-tsung to be too frivolous to be emperor, but the Empress Dowager of Shen-tsung, Hui-tsung's father, preferred Hui-tsung and he was selected. She described him as having "humanity and a filial nature. He is very different from the other princes."³

Another view of Hui-tsung's personality is given by the art historian J. Ferguson:

The Emperor was a man of amiable character but weak and prone to dissipation. He was easily influenced by any powerful man who could get his ear. . . . He was superstitious, weak, devoted to pleasure, a tool in the hands of scheming men, prodigal in the use of public money.⁴

As a boy, Hui-tsung's major interests were his hobbies, various artistic pursuits, and extensive collecting of stones, flowers and arts of all kinds. He played with kites and balls, and amused himself with chess, musical instruments and song. He was supposedly a known poet outside the palace by the age of sixteen or seventeen. He lived in his own palace and was attended by eunuchs.

According to early reports of his reign, Hui-tsung tried to fulfill his responsibilities as Emperor, participating in ceremonies and listening to his advisors. But there were also early signs of his dislike of his role and his desire to pursue his pleasures and artistic wishes as he wished. The prudent Confucian advisors, the true moralists, Hui-tsung found to be obnoxious. When upright officials submitted suggestions to his face, he would approve them and then ignore them as soon as they were gone.

The eunuch T'ung Kuang was very early a servant of the young Hui-tsung and typically was very indulgent of whatever Hui-tsung's fancies were. He encouraged what some have called the dissipated life of Hui-tsung--beautiful women, artistic entertainment, and his collecting. T'ung Kuang was put in charge of his collections and served Hui-tsung throughout his reign. He was a talented calligrapher, a master of casual ink painting. He was athletically built,

bearded (unusual for a eunuch) and was later put in charge of defense.

In general, the ministers of Hui-tsung were considered corrupt because they kept the emperor occupied with pleasure-seeking activities, enriched themselves at the country's expense and did not attend to the real needs of the country. Also, there was a tradition in Chinese history that eunuchs should not be allowed to assume power. In Hui-tsung's time, there was a great deal of collusion between the Prime Ministers and the palace eunuchs.

An example of the practice of deception by T'ung Kuang occurred when Hui-tsung gave him a message for the Commissioner of Military Affairs assigning the generalship of an expedition to someone else. T'ung Kuang insubordinately pocketed the memo and left with the troops. T'ung Kuang was successful in this expedition and Hui-tsung forgave him and considered him a great war hero. T'ung Kuang was to hold the foremost military position for twenty years. He was honored with many titles and finally made a Prince.

Another of the corrupt men around Hui-tsung was the Prime Minister, Ts'ai Chin. He was forty years older than Hui-tsung and probably represented a father figure for him. Ts'ai Chin was introduced to the Emperor by the eunuch T'ung Kuang. Ts'ai Chin was an excellent calligrapher and connoisseur of art. He had been helpful to T'ung Kuang in

these matters. T'ung Kuang had presented to the Emperor, among other objects, some fans and screens incrimed by Ts'ai Chin. The Emperor was impressed and Ts'ai Chin was appointed to a high post. Later he became Premier and served in that capacity for most of the Emperor's reign.

Ts'ai Chin had passed the national examination during the reign of Hui-tsung's father and had served in several posts under him. He was very urbane and a connoisseur of art, food, and gracious living. He teamed up with T'ung Kuang and began catering to the daily whims of Hui-tsung. T'sai Chin relieved the Emperor of most of the Imperial load and made most of the important decisions. He told the Emperor that they were very wealthy and began an enormous spending program that eventually bankrupted the country. He began building ancestral temples for the Imperial family, constructed many Taoist monasteries, and built many palaces and special gardens. Laborers were mobilized by the tens of thousands, which amounted to a tremendous drain on the countryside. This had a disastrous effect on the people, causing a number of rebellions which were put down very brutally.

There were a number of complaints and attempts to impeach both T'ung Kuang and Ts'ai Chin by both commoners and censors, but to no avail. The Emperor felt that Ts'ai Chin and T'ung Kuang were both very obliging and knew his

wants and catered to them. Ecke suggests that Hui-tsung's overindulgence with his closest confidants may have been the only way he knew to secure their devotion.⁵

Another of the corrupt persons around Hui-tsung was the Taoist High Priest Lin. He joined the court in 1116. The priest Lin practiced a great deal of sorcery. He placed the statue of Hui-tsung in the realm of Taoist heaven. Hui-tsung and his close associates all adopted Taoist titles and ranks. Hui-tsung built a fabulous monastery for Lin near the Forbidden City. High Priest Lin and his sect all lived in luxury. At one time, some twenty thousand Taoist followers throughout the country lived on government funds.

Eventually the vices of the High Priest Lin became known and he was banished, dying shortly thereafter. Later, Hui-tsung abolished the ranks and official positions created for the Taoists. His devotion to the Tao was not ended at this time, as he later was about to withdraw into a Taoist monastery after his abdication and before his capture by northern barbarians.

Before the advent of Lin, Hui-tsung had seen a mirage of Taoist figures in the sky and had become an ardent Taoist himself. He had had a private Taoist temple built inside his palace. He also instituted the teaching of Taoism and research into the history of Taoism and its scriptures.

Hui-tsung also wrote a commentary on the Tao Te Ching, which according to Ecke was profound.⁶

Joseph Needham wrote about the flowering of indigenous Chinese science during the Sung dynasty. There were great publications in botany and zoology. Hui-tsung established the College of Medicine early in his reign and also established many provincial medical schools. Needham felt that the Taoist philosophers, with their emphasis on Nature, were bound to pass from the purely observational to the experimental. With regard to research and publications in botany and zoology, for example, the output of the Sung period was extraordinary.⁷

The exact number of consorts for Hui-tsung is not known, possibly around fifteen. Altogether, they bore him thirty-one sons and thirty-four daughters, many of whom died in early childhood. His favorite consort and probably his real love was the daughter of an innkeeper. A favorite eunuch of the Emperor discovered her and praised her beauty to him. She was elevated to a lady of the first rank. From this time on until her death, less than ten years later, the Emperor spent all of his time with her, night and day. She bore him five children and he was unconsolable after she died. She was highly intelligent, unusually attractive and had great taste in makeup and dress. A new dress designed by her was immediately copied outside the palace. She was

variously described as a lady of lovely peace and as a shadowy remote personage.

There are many stories about Hui-tsung, particularly about his relationship with the courtesan Li Shih-Shih. One of his eunuchs, who in his earlier life had frequented the houses of "singing-girls," mentioned the beautiful courtesan Li Shih-Shih to Hui-tsung. Accompanied by a group of his eunuchs, Hui-tsung went incognito to visit her. He was treated fairly badly by her the first time he went there. The madame of the house, Matron Li, kept him waiting a long time, serving him food and generally entertaining him. At one point she demanded that he bathe, as Li Shih-Shih liked cleanliness. He did so reluctantly. When Li Shih-Shih finally did arrive, she wouldn't speak to him, but merely played the lute and sang a few songs. She didn't realize whom she was entertaining. He seems to have been intrigued not only by her beauty but by her independence and haughtiness. He gave her many gifts and visited her from time to time over the next ten years. It is said that in order to visit her anytime he wished, he built an underground tunnel that linked his residence with her house outside the palace.⁸

Some of his early escapist tendencies are described by Ecke. He had a great desire to be carefree like his subjects. He made frequent incognito trips outside the

palace walls. While he was away on one trip, there was a great fire in the imperial palace which was responsible for the deaths of many of the palace women. For this he was much criticized. Because he couldn't get out of the palace as often as he liked he had a bazaar set up in the Forbidden City where he could shop like a commoner. He also had somewhat familiar relationships with two of his handsome sporty prime ministers, treating them as equals.⁹ He frequently played a humble role in relation to his art and also his religion, again abdicating his imperial role.

It is actually not known and is still the subject of debate how great an artist Hui-tsung really was. That he was talented and a true connoisseur of beauty seems pretty well established. The pictures attributed to him are usually quiet, careful studies of birds on branches. They are painted with exquisite precision, delicate color, and faultless placing. Often their beauty is enhanced by the emperor's highly elegant calligraphy.¹⁰ His son spoke of his father's great care in writing, whether it be notes to his children or imperial pronouncements. They were done with equal care, feeling and literacy.¹¹

It is a matter of conjecture which paintings or poems were really his. He had a number of talented people at his disposal and much of the work attributed to him could have been done by others.

Hui-tsung is often associated with the great Han-lin Academy, China's great College of Painting. It is curious that in his relationship with the Han-lin Academy, Hui-tsung was very authoritarian. He forbade inclusion in his collections of the works of artists like Mu Fu, one of China's greatest painters, because it was too expressionistic in style. His own painting is rather precise and restricted. According to Michael Sullivan:

Hui-tsung kept tight control over the painters at court. He handed out subjects to be painted and set examinations as though the painters were candidates for administrative posts. . . . He imposed a dictatorship of form and taste upon his academicians as rigid as that of Le Brun over the artists working for Louis XIV¹²

Some of his other activities included compiling great catalogues of paintings. He created three institutes of Rites and Music. Of the many colleges that he created, only Medicine and Foreign Studies carried down to later periods. The Colleges of Numerology, Taoism, Tz'u poetry, Painting and Calligraphy did not last beyond Hui-tsung's rule.

The final force that uprooted the empire came from outside. The Liao and the Chin were two of its neighbors. Mistakenly the Sung decided to side with the Chin against the Liao. The Chin succeeded in conquering the Liao and then, realizing the weakness of the Sung, began to invade Sung territory.

Shortly before the invasion by the Chin in 1127, Hui-tsung felt unable to cope with the task of protecting

his country and abdicated in favor of his eldest son. His son fainted when he heard of this but was finally persuaded to succeed his father. Hui-tsung tried to escape to a Taoist monastery. However he was persuaded by his family to return and he and his son were captured by the Chin. About 3,000 members of the Imperial family, ministers and officers were captured and taken to Chin territory as hostages. One of his younger sons was able to escape to the South and established the Southern Sung dynasty. Hui-tsung died in exile nine years later.

Karen Horney describes the detached person as having a feeling of futility, "dread of emptiness that calls for unceasing distractions."¹³ It is true that Hui-tsung was born into a life of ease and was encouraged in his extravagance and pleasure-seeking by the eunuchs upon whom he was dependent from early childhood. Horney also says that "the negative attributes of resignation remain while the positive factors fade out . . . it deteriorates into shallow living."¹⁴ He did abdicate in the end and tried to withdraw into a Taoist monastery. Whether a stronger emperor would have been able to rule and prevent the downfall of the Sung is hard to know.

NOTES

- ¹Li, Ageless Chinese, 193.
- ²Ecke, Hui-tsung, the Artist, 207.
- ³Ecke, Hui-tsung, his Time, 22.
- ⁴John C. Ferguson, "Emperor Hui Tsung, A.D. 1082-1135," China Journal of Science and Art, 2, (1924):205.
- ⁵Ecke, Hui-tsung, his Time, 27.
- ⁶Ibid., 141.
- ⁷Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, Science and Civilization in China, vol 2, History of Scientific Thought (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 34.
- ⁸Li, Ageless Chinese, 221-22.
- ⁹Ecke, Hui-tsung, his Time, 152.
- ¹⁰Ecke, Hui-tsung, the Artist, 64.
- ¹¹Ecke, Hui-tsung, his Time, 12.
- ¹²Michael Sullivan, The Arts of China 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 164-65.
- ¹³Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth, 184.
- ¹⁴Ibid.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has attempted to pull together various themes from Chinese history, philosophy and personalities to show that the conceptions of Karen Horney regarding "moving toward," "moving against" and "moving away" as responses to stress represent a useful tool of analysis for historians. It is also the contention of this thesis that Chinese philosophy is of particular interest to psychologists because the three main Chinese philosophies--Confucianism, Legalism, and Taoism--reflect these three tendencies.

Karen Horney is considered to be a social psychological theorist because of her emphasis on the role of culture in determining neuroses. Therefore, this thesis has tried to show the social-historical contexts of both the philosophies discussed and the emperors selected for study.

Karen Horney describes the kind of stress that the individual may experience which gives rise to the one-sided kinds of development mentioned above. This writer has described the stressful environment during the Chou dynasty, particularly the Warring States Period, that gave rise to the three main Chinese philosophies. These philosophies were primarily political, that is, they were directed to the

rulers as guides for action. All three of these philosophies continued to be influential throughout the period of Imperial China and into the twentieth century.

A major task of this writer has been to justify the decision to classify the three philosophies as aggressive, compliant and detached. Legalism does seem to be very aggressive. Everything is geared to the power of the emperor. The whole economy is to be organized to fight wars. The warrior class is the one that is rewarded. Agriculture was set up to support both the emperor and the fighting forces; everything else was controlled. Punishment was swift and fierce. Life was perceived as a jungle; only the strongest could and did survive.

Confucianism is the most appealing philosophy to this writer, possibly because of its similarity to many of the "Christian" ideals prevalent in western culture. Its emphasis on compassion and consideration makes Confucian values similar to the compliant values described by Horney. On the negative side, the hierarchical nature of Chinese society, its paternalistic orientation based on the needs of an agricultural society, was accepted by Confucius. He held "filial piety" in great esteem. This is by definition a "compliant" orientation. Women, children, younger siblings and subjects were to be deferential to their superiors.

Taoism as a philosophy seems ideally suited to the detached person. Freedom is everything -- freedom from the so-called civilizing pressures in particular. According to Horney, the detached person does not give in to such social pressures as love, success, competition. The early and perhaps even the later Taoists were recluses who tried to escape from the constant warfare around them. Taoism was also a great escape for artists who felt the need to get away from the pressures and constrictions of society. They liked to go out and commune with nature, frequently with the aid of a little wine, and do whatever they felt was expressive of themselves and "the way" of nature.

The three emperors in this thesis were not selected for the purpose of doing serious psychoanalytic case studies. Rather they were selected as vehicles to study the three personality types and the three philosophies in action. The emperors were chosen partly because they were interesting in themselves, and partly because their most influential advisers represented each of the philosophies selected. They lived in periods of history where each of these philosophical emphases seemed to be appropriate to, or at least in conformity with, the dominant political or social institutions of their time.

It was logical that in the Warring States period Legalism was the winning philosophy, the only one that could

unite and stabilize the country. It was also logical that in the aftermath of the fall of the Ch'in dynasty it was found necessary to institute the Confucian educational program and state philosophy to provide the bureaucracy that China needed to rule it.

It is also logical that during the disoriented and chaotic period of 400 years between the Han dynasty and the next dynasties--the Sui and T'ang--that Taoism (as well as Buddhism, which came in from India) rose in importance. This does lead one to the conclusion that it could be interesting to investigate what kinds of social and economic, as well as political, conditions are likely to produce what kinds of philosophies. There is an assumption on this writer's part that the philosophies are the outcome of circumstances, rather than the other way around.

The first emperor, Ch'in Shih-huang-ti, was pretty clearly an aggressive personality, although personally he was very interested in Taoism, particularly in the search for an elixir to prolong life. His prime minister, Li Ssu, was a very ambitious and expansive person and one of the important Legalist philosophers. Between them, they not only succeeded in unifying the whole of China militarily, but they set up an extraordinarily efficient system of government that was to last essentially for the next two thousand years.

One can also see the negative side of such total commitment to aggressive solutions, in terms of the consequences for the people of China: the enormous cost in lives, for instance, not only because of the wars, but also the great projects undertaken, such as the building of the Great Wall to protect the northern boundary of China. And it is understandable that after the death of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti and Li Ssu, the whole country would rise up in anger.

The second emperor, T'ang T'ai-tsung, was also an aggressive personality, a vigorous and effective fighter. However, the basic philosophy he espoused was Confucianism and he tried hard, at least in the beginning, to be a good Confucian emperor. His minister Wei Cheng was a good Confucian remonstrator and his beloved wife and confidante, the Empress Chang-sun, supported his Confucian efforts. It was mainly after her death that the emperor reverted to his earlier aggressive ways. However, it is possible to see many examples in the early reign of T'ang T'ai-tsung of consideration for his people.

The last emperor studied, Sung Hui-tsung, was both a Taoist and an artist. As emperor, he essentially abdicated his role as leader of his country. He left the question of defense of the country to one of his eunuchs and the rule of the country to various prime ministers. He occupied himself

with his arts, his collections, his hobbies, and his women. He showed a definite rebellious streak in his many trips outside of the palace and in particular his frequenting the house of a notorious courtesan. In the end, when the northern barbarians were about to overrun the country, he tried to run away to a Taoist monastery. He was considered a national disgrace by later generations of Chinese.

Burton Watson, one of the great China scholars, has some interesting comments on the good and bad effects of the three philosophies of government. He felt that after the downfall of the Ch'in only three important philosophies remained of the "hundred schools of thought" of the pre-Ch'in times. All of the elite were schooled in all three philosophies, but some of the ministers advocated one or the other of the three predominantly in their political advice.

For the empire as a whole Taoism advocated a policy of laissez-faire, allowing the people to follow their desires and instincts without interference from the government. This, it was believed, would lead to an era of peace, stability, and rustic content. Those officials who followed Taoist teachings. . . aimed at self-effacement and anonymity, avoiding wherever possible any positive exercise of authority.

This policy was advocated in the beginning of the new Han dynasty and led to a period of relative prosperity. However, it became clear that Taoist policies were not going to be able to cope with the threat of the barbarians from the north, nor were they going to be able to rule such a large land as China and keep the feudal lords from fighting

and trying to divide up the territory. Taoism gradually fell out of contention as a serious political philosophy but continued as a semi-religious cult among the people.

The early Han rulers tried to avoid the mistakes of the Ch'in and its extreme form of Legalism but gradually Legalism became influential, particularly during the rule of Han Wu-ti.

Legalism had advocated the establishment of a strong central government, the suppression of feudalism, and the regimentation of the people by stern and inflexible laws.²

Confucianism on the other hand was in practice in Han times most concerned with government by virtue. Virtue was thought of as:

a kind of moral force which emanates from the truly good ruler and enables him to convert his people, . . . to the practice of goodness. In deed, so great is the power of this force that its influence extends to the world of nature and the supernatural, calling forth in the reign of its possessor the tokens of cosmic approval.³

Confucianism also became very influential under Han Wu-ti and was named the state philosophy at that time. The next two thousand years saw a continuing struggle for supremacy between these two philosophies, with both remaining powerful.

The final thrust of this thesis is to suggest that political systems and political philosophies can be evaluated on the basis of Horney's theory of personality. According to Horney, a psychologically mature person is one who is comfortable with being compassionate and loving some

of the time, active and enterprising at other times, as well as independent and creative when the circumstances require.

The extreme examples of Ch'in Shih Huang-ti and Sung Hui-tsung show the negative effects on the people and consequent undesirability of these one-sided approaches. The mixed example of T'ang T'ai-tsung (he was both aggressive and compassionate) shows the desirability of a more balanced approach to social and political philosophy. He was not only a strong and aggressive leader, a fierce warrior on the battlefield, but he has been seen by many Chinese as well as Western scholars as the closest to an "ideal" Confucian emperor. He has been selected to suggest one of the main points of this thesis that the "ideal" emperor, like the "ideal" person, is someone who is able to move appropriately in all three directions, as the situations require.

People need a strong effectively administered (legal and fair) government--the good qualities of Legalism. They also need a government that is concerned with their welfare (the welfare state idea)--the best influence of Confucianism. They also need freedom to develop their greatest individual potential--the best quality of Taoism.

This study has shown that Karen Horney's ideas can be useful in analyzing the political philosophies and the personality and behavior of political rulers. The

political philosophy must include the best qualities of all three trends, aggressiveness, compliance and detachment. This kind of analysis can also be useful in interpreting contemporary social and political problems.

NOTES

¹Watson, Records, 1:312.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 313.

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