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**Chinese Deep Culture
Symbolism of Chinese Philosophy and Nature of Conflict Culture**

"He who lives in Dao, and Dao in him, is a good man: He keeps in good terms with men, takes things easy, loves the world as he does his own person; he is simple like an infant, cautious, modest, yielding. He is humble, and thus he remains entire. He is subtle, penetrating and profound; avoids excess, extravagance, and indulgence. He makes the self of the people his self... he acts to the good or to the bad with goodness, and to the faithful or the faithless with faith. He returns love for great hatred"...

Daoism thought of a good man, who seeks the Three Jewels: compassion, moderation and humility.¹

Daoism, as an ancient constituent of Chinese philosophy, came to existence along with Confucianism more than 2000 years ago. Throughout the rich history and cultural heritage of Chinese civilization, Daoism and Confucianism complemented each other by teaching people the concepts of righteousness, gravity, virtue, earnestness, and kindness. The amalgam of Confucianism and Daoism (I am going to exclude Buddhism because it came to China from the outer Indian culture) gave birth to Chinese philosophy that presents in individual, social, economic, and political life of Chinese people till today, and the influence it had on all the cultural aspects of life is now firmly embedded into the minds of Chinese people. Chinese collective unconsciousness, taken for granted by the Chinese themselves nowadays, conveys a message about the deep culture of Chinese people mostly through symbols: Chinese characters, national emblems, city monuments, the Great Wall, and the Dragon. A long record of domestic and international successful trade, the symbol of which is the Great Silk Way, let China be remembered as an economically strong country. Historical success in economy (The Great Silk Way) was transformed into the major failures in wars (The Opium Wars), which then became the attribute of Chinese collective failure-success-failure cultural cycle deeply influenced mostly by the Confucian philosophy. The anticipated success of China's potential to become an economic superpower today might be derived from the historical fact of China's successful economy. Further in my work, using Johan Galtung's concept of super-syndromes, I will consider Chinese deep culture within the aspects of Confucian thought and symbolic nature of collective expression that illustrates the spirit of revolution and Chinese nature of conflict.

Chinese identity had been always closely connected with the universe. *Zhong guo*, the Chinese character that literary means China, conveys a direct message of identity. *Zhong* is a rectangle (the universe) marked along its center, which represents China as the center of the universe, the middle of it. *Guo* symbolizes

¹ <http://religion-cults.com/Eastern/Taoism/taoism.htm> (17/10/05)

China as a “pocket of the world” surrounded by the sea in the east, desert in the west, mountains in the south, and tundra in the north.²

The Chinese believe that the “moral order of the universe”³ comes down from the Heaven. The absence of one common God to be worshipped in China is substituted through the presence of the abstract deity - the Heaven - and the Emperor (the ruler), who is the son of it. This belief is grounded in the Confucius thought of the “Mandate of Heaven”⁴, given to the Emperor in the form of the right to rule. In order to save the mandate, the Emperor should follow *yi*, the righteousness – the concept of right doing and means, and exercise *ren*, the goodness/humanness – the core of Confucian philosophy and political theory, expressed as the concept of being. But the Emperor (the ruler) can lose the mandate of Heaven if his deeds are not out of the righteousness and not for the goodness (inhumane). This is what happened to Mao Zedong after the historical shock of Cultural Revolution in the period of 1966-1976 when he undermined and destroyed society, education, and economy of China. Mao’s thought implied the destruction of deprived masses for the sake of unification of popular masses⁵ to recreate the one China:

*“The time has come! The great tide in the world is rolling ever more impetuously! He who conforms to it shall survive; he who resists it shall perish... The army of the red flag swarms over the East and the West, sweeping away numerous enemies...”*⁶

This strategy was to protect the popular, good people from the traitors as Chinese did when they built their Great Wall that would defend them – the one unified people – from barbarians (the Huns) coming from the outer world. The maintenance of the idea of one China as the pocket of the world, complimented by the universal superiority, is the heaven-sent, providential fate to sacrifice survival to preserve the identity (sacrifice the masses to preserve the masses). The exaltation of Mao and his good deeds was depicted in the form of the monument of Mao erected in every Chinese city as a symbol of the atheist ‘God’ to whom the Heaven mandated the right for good governance. His harmful doing was detached from his personality, and conformity of his policies with Confucius philosophy of the moral force and governance by virtue⁷, as Mao claimed it, made the Chinese people see him afterwards as a righteous leader.

While Chinese made efforts to resist offensive drug trade forced on them for long 150 years and the domination of the foreign (British and French) interests during the Opium Wars in the first half of the 20th century, the spirit of revolution and rebellion that underlay these efforts found its expression in the red color of the Chinese national flag. Now the red color is one the most privileged in Chinese culture, particularly used during the rituals and festivals (Lantern Festival, where red color is the color of unity). The national Chinese anthem stresses the theme of protectionist (defensive) revolution, emotional unity, and national solidarity of one China and its people, achieved through the sacrifice of their survival:

“Arise, those who do not want to be slaves! We will use our flesh and blood to build another Great Wall. China has reached the brink of national collapse. All the people

² Johan Galtung, “Religions, Hard and Soft”, *Cross Currents*, Winter 1997-98;

<http://www.crosscurrents.org/galtung.htm>, (08/10/05)

³ <http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm#six>, (08/10/05)

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_03.htm, (15/10/05)

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Confucius, *Analects*, V. II, 1; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius> (15/10/05)

*have been making their last outcry. Arise! Arise! Arise! All our hearts become one. Let us face the enemy's gunfire. March on! Let us face the enemy's gunfire. March on! March on! March on!*⁸

Zhong hua ren min gong he guo – the People's Republic of China – emphasizes that it is the country that belongs to the people but not the people who belong to the country. Thus, the Confucian thought of society as of one big family (*da jia* – translated as 'everyone' but literally means 'big family') could be interpreted not only as social but also as political unity that should be sustained by any means.

As I have discussed the importance of Chinese (Confucian) philosophy (the theme of Heaven, universal superiority, and the one China), we can now examine the explicit dualism of *yin* and *yang* in Chinese deep culture along with its dynamics in different existential aspects of Chinese civilization;

The *yin/yang* dualism appeared in the history of Chinese philosophy long before Daoism and Confucianism emerged. The symbol of *yin* and *yang* is a "circle divided into two embryonic shapes, one black and the other white... whose significance is life and the ordering of life, universal power, and the mysterious duality which lies in the soul of men to achieve perfect harmony."⁹ While these two interacting forces mutually balance and compliment each other, there are Confucianism and Daoism that coexist in a peaceful accordance, and there cannot be more of Confucianism or Daoism because it will ruin the Chinese philosophic harmony. There is a dynamic interchange between these two concepts. The balance of being-good-to-unite-with-high-spirit thought of Confucian school and uniting-with-high-spirit-for-being-good thought of Daoism can be displayed in the scheme of black (*yin*) and white (*yang*):

Realistic (absence of gods)-Tangible (seen)-Moral (philosophical)

Mystic (spirits and ghosts)-Intangible (unseen)-Dogmatic (religious)

Wu lun - five vertical human relations within the Chinese society (father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, ruler-subordinate, and friend-friend)¹⁰ – is what explains the central power of Chinese Communist Political Party as supreme and Chinese people as subordinate. Here the party is compared to the North Star: "it stays in its place while the myriad of stars wait upon it"¹¹ (the stars on the Chinese national flag). But the dichotomy here is either *da jia* – big family of state - without central power (i.e. denial of *wu lun*) or paternal central power - the father of the people – but without the concept of one society in the face of one big family.

After the turmoil of the Opium War – the struggle of China (good) against Britain and France (evil) - and the feeling of shame for losing the battle to the evil created the *yin/yang* approach to the Chinese 20th century trade: whether to protect domestic interests and continue to be ignored in the international trade treaties or to reintegrate into the global trade and try to meet international standards. The unique *yin/yang* dualism of Chinese culture (cycles of growth and decline)¹² made China rotate around disintegration-reintegration axes of the idea of one China since the fall

⁸ <http://www.china.org.cn/e-changshi/>, (15/10/05)

⁹ <http://religion-cults.com/Eastern/Taoism/taoism.htm>, (17/10/05)

¹⁰ <http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm#six>, (08/10/05)

¹¹ *Supra*, 7

¹² George Yeo, Ministry of Trade and Industry, *Chinese Culture and Politics*, http://www.mti.gov.sg/public/NWS/frm_NWS_Default.asp?sid=39&cid=223, (16/10/05)

of the Han dynasty.¹³ This *yin/yang* cyclic, interchangeable rotation is the reciprocally reversible replacement of good and evil, the Armageddon of the Dragon (righteous sacred animal that flies through Heaven) and Ghosts (demons and spirits that disturb people and hinder them from the exercise of *ren* and *yi*) reflected in the Dragon dance accompanied with the noise of Chinese crackers during *Chun jie* – the Chinese New Year.

Throughout the discourse upon Chinese deep culture I came to the conclusive point of what is the nature of Chinese conflict culture. As Chinese closely identify themselves with the universe and the superior people, universally they are not aggressive though oppressed frequently. Due to their universal dominance over the barbarians who live on the outer territory, which is the periphery of the world, Chinese are not willing to spend their strength to fight for its superiority and soil their 'chosen-people hands' waging a war against the wicked outsiders. The absence of one God in Chinese culture makes them keep away from the concept of the Holy War, simply withdraw from the potential universal conflict, and prefer the defensive rather than offensive strategy of politics.

But it is somewhat different in the internal affairs due to the idea of one China (the pocket of the universe geographically surrounded by rather vague but natural borders from the four sides) and fatal inseparability of its constituent parts (provinces). This gives an explanation to why the Chinese government sees unacceptable the independence and separation of Taiwan. A step-by-step Chinese expansion and integration into the Uyghur territory through eradication and elimination of the Uyghur traitors who want to disintegrate the one China is essentially directed at the settlement of the territory with the Chinese who will eventually win the battle and preserve the idea of unity and solidarity by means of their own sacrifice. It is though not only the battle for the cohesion with all its revolutionary spirit and defensive politics that are fundamental, but also it is about the so-called conflict philosophy of what you do not want yourself, do not do to others.¹⁴ But the same concept could be interpreted in the opposite way as what you want for yourself, do it to others. China wants for itself the one China, because it is the destiny of all the Chinese people predetermined by the Heaven, and it sacrifices every means to prevent Uyghurs and Taiwanese from gaining their independence. The plain symbolism of Chinese philosophy - China in the image of the Dragon, (the virtue and the good) fights the small ghosts and evil spirits (Taiwanese and Uyghurs) to defend their concept of fate, which makes up the collective unconsciousness of the Chinese people. The notion of defense of cohesive China has deep roots (the building of the Great Wall) and internal transcendence is likely impossible although a non-violent form of their culture, based on virtue, benevolence, goodness, and righteousness, was always intrinsic to Chinese. But the possibility of failure of Chinese chosenness to keep the cohesive country because it is their god-sent fate gets higher in today's 21st century.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Confucius, *Analects*, V. XV, 24 or 23, <http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm>, (08/10/05)

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