

Discussion and Textual Research on the Paradox of Descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor

Zheng Zheng^a

^aFudan University;

Department of Environmental Science and Engineering, Jiangwan Campus, Fudan University,
2005 Songhu Road, Yangpu District, Shanghai, China, 200438

Abstract

Chinese consider themselves “the descendants of both the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor”, but most sources show that only the Yellow Emperor is the highest ancestor. To reasonably explain this paradox, this study finds that two emperors were the human ancestors of the Yangtze and Yellow River basins, respectively. The Zhou people, who ruled in the Yellow River basin, used their monopoly on writing to revise historical documents in favour of their rule and strived to belittle or even exclude the Yan Emperor, while they listed the descendants of the Yan Emperor, such as Zhuangxi, Shun and Dayu, as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor. If the errors made by the Zhou Dynasty are corrected, then the equal status of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor can be explained. Accordingly, this study reveals that the Xia Dynasty created by Dayu should also be in the Yangtze River basin.

Keywords: Yan Emperor, Yellow Emperor, Yangtze River basin, Yellow River basin

In the 1980s, public sacrifices to the sacred Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor were gradually restored in China, with the occasional participation of state leaders or representatives. To gain recognition by the government, the organizers of public memorial ceremonies constantly added national elements and set national symbols into the ceremonies by broadcasting images of sacrificial rites on national TV stations. Although there have been disputes, it is undeniable that these ceremonies have elevated such activities to the level of national belief, not only greatly enhancing their influence at home and abroad but also using national resources to reconstruct and express the traditional beliefs of the nation and consolidated the foundation of the belief identity. Today, the Yellow Emperor Mausoleum and the Yan Emperor Mausoleum have been included in China's first national list of intangible cultural heritage items (Zhou, 2016-08-05).

Corresponding to this event is widespread use of the term "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor". Hu Yaobang (1915-1989), former General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, said after visiting the Yan Emperor Mausoleum in Hunan Province, "Our ancient ancestor of the Chinese nation, the Yan Emperor, also known as Shennong, was buried here. For thousands of years, people have remembered him and respected him as the ancestor of Chinese civilization. Hundreds of millions of Chinese people are the descendants of the Yan Emperor" (Lu and Gao 2014, 135). On October 1, 1984, the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) noted at a ceremony to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China that the policy on Taiwan is penetrating the hearts of all descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor (Deng, 1984-10-02). The term "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor" are used so frequently in today's China that most Chinese people recognize that the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor are their ancestors -- the origin of the Chinese nation and the ancestor of humanity. However, there are fundamental contradictions and inconsistencies in the current information and its cognition.

The important historical materials for people to understand and study the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor mainly come from The Historical Records written by Sima Qian (145BC-87BC). "The Historical Records systematically summarizes the ancient dynasties, such as the Xia, Shang and Zhou, and the stages before them. The Historical records are the earliest official history of China" (Miyamoto 2012, 17). According to The Historical Records, the Yan Emperor wanted to invade the feudal states, so all governors returned to the Yellow Emperor. The Yellow Emperor then pacified the people, prepared the provisions and trained the army, fought the Yan Emperor in Banquan three times, and finally defeated the Yan Emperor (Sima 1994, 3). It is clear here that the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor were enemies. They fought three wars, likely very fierce ones, and the Yan Emperor was the loser. According to The Historical Records and other historical materials, the Yellow Emperor invented everything necessary for the life of ethnic groups in this period. The ancestors of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, the first three known to the Chinese,

and the Five Emperors all came from the Yellow Emperor. Moreover, according to The Dictionary of Chinese Surnames (Educational Science Press/1996), of the top 120 surnames in China today, 86 belong to the Yellow Emperor clan, while only 6 belong to the Yan Emperor clan.

In this way, it seems that the Yellow Emperor is worthy of being the ancestor of the Chinese nation, not only in terms of his blood but also in providing almost all of the important inventions of that era and as the winner of the war. There is no reason for the Yan Emperor to be regarded with the Yellow Emperor as the human ancestors of the Chinese people, but should he be ranked less than the Yellow Emperor. This issue has caused mystery and confusion about the descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor.

The purpose of this paper is to solve this paradox through rigorous analysis and argumentation based on relatively reliable historical data and evidence. The structure of this paper is as follows: 1. What type of person was the Yellow Emperor in the historical materials?; 2. According to historical data, who was the Yan Emperor?; 3. The relationship between the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor in the historical materials; 4. According to our research, the Yan Emperor was the leader of the tribal alliance and the ancestor of humanity in the Yangtze River basin; 5. The role of Chinese characters in shaping the paradox of "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor"; 6. The decisive role played by the Zhou Dynasty in the formation of the paradox of "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor"; 7. Discussion and research on the historical meaning underlying the appellation of "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor"; and 8. Conclusions.

What type of person was the Yellow Emperor in the historical materials?

Sima Qian wrote that the Yellow Emperor was the son of Shaodian. He was brilliant since he was young. He grew up to be very capable. At the time, Shennong's rule was weakened. The governors fought with each other, and the common people suffered greatly. The Yellow Emperor showed his strength by reorganizing his army and defeated the Yan Emperor, and everyone obeyed him. He was honoured as the Yellow Emperor. (Sima 1994, 1-3)

One of the incredible feats of the Yellow Emperor was that he and his chief assistants introduced many important inventions, covering almost every aspect of early human life and existence. According to The Historical Records, one of the emperor's accomplishments was the invention of farming techniques capable of growing the five major food crops (Sima 1994, 6). He invented clothes and so on so that people could wear them (Wang 2011, 360). In a textual research book on ancient history written by Jiao Zhou (201-270), it is recorded that the Yellow Emperor

invented cooking over fire. From then on, raw grain could be cooked and eaten. He also invented houses for people to live in. "People in ancient times lived in caves; later, the sage invented houses for people to live in. The roof and walls could keep out the wind and rain" (Wang 2011, 360).

Another name of the Yellow Emperor is Xuan Yuan. "Xuan" in Chinese means the horizontal bar on an ancient chariot. "Yuan" in Chinese means straight wood for driving. The Yellow Emperor's name honours the ancient chariot that he invented. Jiao Zhou said that the Yellow Emperor invented the ancient chariot, carrying heavy objects for long distances. The Yellow Emperor also invented canoes to help with waterway transportation (Wang 2011, 360).

The Yellow Emperor had a senior assistant named Ling Lun. He asked Ling Lun to set the rhythm. Ling Lun invented instruments, such as the flute, and established five notes and twelve laws (Lü 2007, 69).

The Yellow Emperor also made great contributions to medicine. Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor) Neijing is one of the earliest medical books extant in the Chinese medical treasure house. It is an excellent book on human physiology, pathology, diagnostics, principles of treatment and pharmacology. It is generally believed that it was written in the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period. Huangdi Neijing is still the "Bible" of traditional Chinese medicine.

The Yellow Emperor's most important contribution was the invention of writing. According to the Book of Gleanings, the Yellow Emperor invented writing and began to use it (Wang 1981, vol.1). Xu Shen (58-147) said that Cang Jie, a senior official under the Yellow Emperor, based on careful observations of animals, plants, etc., discovered many patterns, and hieroglyphics were created (Xu 1989, Preface). "Cang Jie invented writing" (Song 2008, 36). The Book of Huainan Zi records that, when Cang Jie succeeded in creating characters, the whole country rejoiced. God was moved and rained down the corn. The ghost was frightened and began to cry at night (Liu 2013, 571).

Another very important aspect is the origin of the Chinese nation. According to The Historical Records, of the first five emperors of the Chinese nation, who were also the most important leaders, the Yellow Emperor was the chief, and the rest were descendants of the Yellow Emperor (Sima 1994, 10-45).

Zhuanxu was the second emperor among the Five Emperors. Sima Qian wrote that the Yellow Emperor lived in Xuan Yuan Mountain and had two sons. One was named Xuan Xiao and the other Changyi. Changyi lived in Ruoshui. He fathered a son named Gao Yang. After the death of the Yellow Emperor, Gao Yang succeeded to the throne and was honoured as Emperor Zhuanxu (Sima 1994, 10-12). Zhu Rong, the grandson of Emperor Zhuanxu, was the god of fire. Zhu Rong was the ancestor of the people of Chu (Hao 2010, 4994).

After Emperor Zhuangxi's death, Xuan Xiao's grandson Gao Xin ascended the throne. He was Emperor Ku, the third among the Five Emperors. Emperor Ku fathered a son named Fang Xun. He was Emperor Yao, the fourth among the Five Emperors (Sima 1994, 13-15).

When Emperor Yao was old, he chose Yu Shun as his successor. He was Emperor Shun, the fifth of the Five Emperors. Yu Shun was a descendant of Emperor Zhuangxi. (Sima 1994, 31).

These five are the most important ancestors of prehistoric China, the Five Emperors. In addition to the Yellow Emperor, there were four other emperors, two of whom were descendants of Xuan Xiao and two of whom were descendants of Changyi.

After the Five Emperors came the three earliest dynasties in China: the Xia, Shang, and Zhou. The founder of the Xia Dynasty was called Dayu. He was a descendant of Emperor Zhuangxi. His most important and remarkable achievement was regulating the great flood. The ancestor of the Shang Dynasty was called Chi. The ancestor of the Zhou Dynasty was called Houji. Both were descendants of Emperor Ku. (Sima 1994, 16)

Moreover, according to The Dictionary of Chinese Surnames (Educational Science Press/1996), of the top 120 surnames in China today, 86 belong to the Yellow Emperor clan, while only 6 belong to the Yan Emperor clan.

In this way, it seems that the Yellow Emperor was worthy of being the ancestor of the Chinese nation, both in terms of his lineage and in terms of introducing almost all of the important inventions of the era. So why are the Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor listed together as the ancestors of the Chinese people? Who is the Yan Emperor in the historical data?

The Yan Emperor in the historical data

The Yellow Emperor has a biography in The Historical Records and many other documents. However, for various reasons, in the official history of China, historical records about the Yan Emperor are few and not detailed. This fact has left many arguments for posterity and many controversies for later generations, such as confusion and incomprehension about the "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor". However, if we work hard, we can still collate and analyse the data about the Yan Emperor from various historical records to correctly understand him.

In the Yan Emperor's time, Chuang Tzu said that people lived in harmony with birds and animals and depended on farming. The people knew their mother but not their father. (Chuang

2009, 827). Shang Yang said, “in Shennong's time, people worked in the fields and lived together, while women performed textile work” (Shang 1986, 106). From these records, we can see that in the Yan Emperor period, there had been farming and textile, was in the stage of social development near civilization.

Shennong means the God of Agriculture in Chinese. The honorary title of the Yan Emperor was Shennong. Thus, it can be seen that the Yan Emperor invented agricultural technology and was a great agricultural inventor. There is much literature on this idea. According to Ban Gu (32-92), “in ancient times, people mainly ate the meat of birds and animals. At the time of the Yan Emperor, there was not sufficient meat to eat. Therefore, the Yan Emperor invented growing food crops to solve the problem of hunger. The Yan Emperor taught people to use farm tools to reclaim farmland and grow food crops. The people were very happy and called the Yan Emperor Shennong (God of Agriculture)” (Ban 2012, 282). “The Yan Emperor invented tools for ploughing fields and weeding, etc., and taught the people how to use them” (Hu 2008, 791). “The Yan Emperor began to teach people to cultivate grain and eat it to prevent killing” (Liu 2016, 491).

The Yan Emperor also invented traditional Chinese medicine. Liu An (179 BC-122 BC) wrote, “The ancient people suffered from many diseases and poisons, so Shennong himself tasted the herbs and tasted the sweet and salty tastes of the springs of water so that the people would know which were good to eat and which were harmful. This practice was hazardous. The Yan Emperor once per day suffered from poisoning for many times” (Liu 1998, 1312). The Age of Kings has similar records. Shennong studied many types of plants and used them as Chinese medicine to treat many patients. “Shennong invented medicine and saved many people” (Song 2008, 356). There are also many documents about Shennong tasting all types of plants and inventing medicine. Almost all Chinese people today think of Shennong tasting hundreds of herbs when they mention the Yan Emperor. There is still a special memorial in Hubei called Shennongjia, a large mountain area full of mysterious and abundant plant resources, to commemorate this event.

The Yan Emperor invented music. Huan Tan (40 BC-32 AD) of the Han Dynasty wrote that Shennong also invented the seven-string Chinese zither. Shennong used the wood of the Chinese plane tree as the body of the seven-string Chinese zither (Huan 2017, 110). “Shennong created the seven-string Chinese zither” (Song 2008, 4). “Shennong's music works were called Support -- also called Xiamou” (Du 1988, 3589).

While the Yan Emperor invented agriculture, he also invented hemp and mulberry planting and silkworm rearing and textile and clothing. He even invented houses. “The Yan Emperor selected appropriate fields to plant mulberry and hemp according to the type of soil, and the agricultural mulberry industry arose. He led the people in building houses to live in and taught them how to spin and make clothes to wear” (Hu 2013, vol. 1).

The Yan Emperor invented weapons such as bows and arrows. Zhao Ye wrote, "In ancient times, the people were straightforward, and life was very hard. When people died, they wrapped them in thatch and left them in the open. To prevent dead from being eaten by wild animals, slingshots were invented to keep them away. On this basis, the Yan Emperor selected the appropriate wood to bend it into an arc, with a string to fix it. This was the invention of the bow. He whittled the branches into arrows" (Zhao 2019, 144).

The Yan Emperor was the founder of ancient Chinese cities. "The Yan Emperor pioneered the use of stone walls, with the outside of the river around them. From then on, the army could guard its people well" (Wang 2008, 241).

The Yan Emperor invented the market and commercial exchange. Cities make it safer and more convenient for people to exchange businesses. The Notes of Zhou Yi recorded, "Shennong taught people to take their goods from different places to the market and exchange them during the day and rest at night" (Wang 2011, 360).

The relationship between the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor in historical materials

From the Yan Emperor's and the Yellow Emperor's respective inventions, their contributions to the people's lives and production of the era can be compared. However, given that 86 of the top 120 surnames in China come from the Yellow Emperor and only six from the Yan Emperor, it is difficult to see how the two can compete. If we consider the three wars between the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor mentioned above and that the Yan Emperor was the loser, it would be unreasonable and illogical for the Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor to be regarded as the first ancestors of the Chinese nation and the Yan Emperor to be ranked first.

There is another description of their relationship. Zuo Qiuming (502 BC-422 BC) wrote, "Once upon a time, Shaodian and Youqiao married and gave birth to the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor. The Yellow Emperor grew up in the Jishui River basin, while the Yan Emperor grew up in the Jiangshui River basin. Thus, the Yellow Emperor was surnamed Ji; the Yan Emperor was surnamed, Jiang. They went down different paths. Because of their different aspirations and different morals, they ended up fighting each other" (Zuo 2202, 337). Today's Chinese work exists on the vague basis of these descriptions. We can see at present in the earliest historical record of the Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor's birthplace. They were two closely related tribal leaders who originated in the Wei River basin in central Shaanxi Province. Later, the two tribes launched the war of Banquan; the Yellow Emperor defeated the Yan Emperor, and the two tribes gradually merged into the Chinese nation. The Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor

are also the ancestors of Chinese culture and technology. According to legend, their followers and their descendants introduced almost all of the important inventions of ancient times (baike.sogou.com/v... - 2020-7-15).

The prevailing narrative in China is much the same. Xu Guangchun, head of the research department of the semi-official Chinese Yanhuang (the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor) Culture Research Association and former vice-minister of the Publicity Department of China, described this fact in his lecture entitled "Leading cadres study Chinese culture": "As early as five thousand years ago, China's ancient times were a time of numerous tribes. The Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor tribes were the most powerful tribes in the Central Plains. After the war between the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor, they shook hands and made peace and formed an alliance with the Yellow Emperor as its leader. This alliance laid the foundation for the formation of the Chinese nation and created the conditions for forming the integrated multinational structure. The Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor have become the recognized ancestors of the Chinese people" (Xu 2018-07-21).

This view is the prevailing one today. It is difficult to "muddle through" because it still cannot solve the contradictions and questions that we raised earlier. Their contributions to inventions were about the same. Their contributions to surnames (reflecting the population of the Chinese nation) were very different, and the result of their war was that the Yan Emperor was the loser. It seems absurd to call the Yan Emperor the ancestor of the Chinese nation. Combined with the above mainstream views, new questions are also raised. As "brothers", why did the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor introduce repetitive and systematic inventions? IF the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor originated in Shaanxi, why did they go to distant Hebei for a decisive battle? After the defeat, the Yan Emperor led the tribes to surrender to the Yellow Emperor (Lu and Gao 2014, 74). The Yan Emperor, as the loser, should have been in a weak position in the "alliance" formed after the war. How can he not only be the co-leader of the alliance but also be named number one? In short, it is difficult to explain the above problems according to the existing literature and mainstream discussion. This study attempts to unravel the mystery.

The Yan Emperor was the leader of the tribal alliance and the ancestor of humanity in the Yangtze River basin

According to our research, the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor are unlikely to have been brothers of the same origin. Nor is it likely that they both originated in Shaanxi.

Ban Gu said, "The character of the Yan Emperor is fire, so he is called the Yan Emperor. Yan as a Chinese character means raging fire. He taught people farming techniques, so he was also called Shennong" (Ban 2012, 1012). The Chinese theory of the Five Elements considers the south as fire. The Yan Emperor was the leader of the Yangtze River basin in southern China, so the fire was his characteristic. The Yan character in Chinese is the superposition of two fire characters, indicating the uniqueness and supremacy of the Yan Emperor. Ban Gu also said that the earth characterized the Yellow Emperor. An impressive feature of southern China is its heat. Heat is often associated with fire. Along the Yangtze River from west to east, three large cities called the three furnaces: Chongqing, Wuhan and Nanjing.

The Yan Emperor is also known as the Red Emperor. Not only is fire red, but large areas of land in southern China are also red. Because the soil contains iron and aluminum and other substances, the soil is called red earth. Red land is widely distributed in south China, covering many provinces. For this reason, the Yan Emperor was also called the Red Emperor. However, the Yellow Emperor originated in Shaanxi Province. He mainly lived in the middle reaches of the Yellow River to the Wei River basin, which was famous for its yellow land and later extended to the lower reaches of the Yellow River. Together with the above data, it can be seen that he was the leader of the tribal alliance in the Yellow River basin. Therefore, the characteristics of the Yan Emperor were hot and red, while the characteristics of the Yellow Emperor were yellow and earth.

Where was the final destination of the Yan Emperor? That is, where is the Yan Emperor's tomb? By convention, the heads of state or tribal confederations were buried in the heart of their territories, often near the capital. Numerous historical records have only one place, that is, the "Tea town, tail of Changsha City", namely the Yan Emperor mausoleum in Yanling County, Zhuzhou City, Hunan Province. The Yan Emperor mausoleum was first seen in the historical records recorded in *The History of Emperors and Kings* written by Huangfu Mi during the Jin Dynasty: the Yan Emperor died 120 years after his reign and was buried in Changsha (Liu 2014, 250-255). In 1994, the State Council of the People's Republic of China approved the renomination of Lingxian County (County of the Mausoleum) in Hunan Province as Yanling County (County of the Yan Emperor Mausoleum). Hu Yaobang, the former general secretary of the Communist Party of China, quoted above, also clearly believes that Yan Emperor was buried in Yanling County. In prehistoric times, when the Yan Emperor lived, the range of people's activities was minimal. It is unlikely that he was a Shaanxi native but crossed the Yangtze River, lived mainly in the south, and died in Hunan. The Yangtze River is a natural boundary. Today, the Yan Emperor Mausoleum ceremony, located in Yanling County in Changsha, has been included in China's first batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists.

In summary, it is almost certain that the Yan Emperor was the symbolic human ancestor of southern China (Yangtze River basin). Correspondingly, the Yellow Emperor was the symbolic human ancestor of the northern system (Yellow River basin). It seems that they are the common

cultural ancestors of the Chinese nation who can stand on equal footing. However, according to what was noted above, the Yellow Emperor and his descendants had an absolute advantage, and the literature was also very rich. In contrast, there is no systematic record of the Yan Emperor, such as a biography, and even the information involved is scarce and fragmentary. The descendants of the Yan Emperor have only 6 surnames among the 120 most popular surnames. One of the most critical factors for the significant asymmetry between the two is the influence and function of Chinese characters.

The role of Chinese characters in shaping the paradox of "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor"

According to the previous introduction, the Yan Emperor and his group and the Yellow Emperor and his group invented everything that people needed to survive in that era, from farming techniques to medicine, housing and even music. They seem to have been almost completely parallel system inventions. However, there is a key fundamental difference; that is, the Yellow Emperor group invented writing, while the Yan Emperor group did not.

Sima Qian believed that the history and chronology of the vassal states before the Shang Dynasty were not clear, while that of the Zhou Dynasty afterward was clear. (Sima 1994, 487) The Japanese scholar Takao Hirase agreed with Sima, pointing out in *A History of China 02* published by Kodansha that China's history has a distinct era and an unclear era. The key to clarity and ambiguity, he argues, is whether there are Chinese characters. Chinese characters were first invented and used by the Shang Dynasty in the Yellow River basin, namely the so-called oracle bone inscriptions and the bronze inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty. Later, the Zhou Dynasty had written, and bronze vessels with inscriptions were given to various vassal states. None of the other nations could carve words into bronze alone. (Takao 2012, 32-33) He said that there were no records to pass down where there were Chinese characters, there were records, but where there were no characters, there were no records. Indeed, we can see that many important archaeological sites along the Yangtze River have no written materials. From Sanxingdui in Sichuan Province to many "urban sites" in the Jiangnan Basin (Hubei) to the Liangzhu site in Zhejiang Province, no written materials have been found. It can be seen that, in the development process of the Yangtze River and the Yellow River, the Yellow River basin was the winner in the competition of who entered "civilization" first.

Before writing, the history of the tribes had to be passed on by word of mouth, which was inevitably distorted and contradictory, and history often became legend. Therefore, early figures such as the Yan Emperor, the Yellow Emperor and other famous ancestors discussed here are

hardly accurate historical figures. They are essentially condensed, symbolic ancestors, but they are indeed projections of history. For the sake of discussion, we still treat them as concrete characters.

The Shang and Zhou dynasties mastered the use of writing, and they were also the rulers of the Yellow River basin, especially the Central Plains, in Chinese history. They had a monopolistic right to speak about history. There exists a grand centralism mentality in the research on Chinese history, which is embodied as the "Loess Zone myth" and "Central Plains doctrine" in the discussion of the origins of civilization. During the Zhou, Qin and Han dynasties, the key period for the formation of down-handed documents, the political centre of China was always located in Guanzhong, Zhengzhou and Luoyang. This geographical ideology is also projected in the literature handed down from the Pre-Qin and Han dynasties. The central plains are the centre of the world, whether it is the current events in these documents or the spatial concepts expressed in the interpretation of ancient myths (Guo 2013, 3 of preamble). Therefore, the Yan Emperor, the first ancestor in the Yangtze River basin, will inevitably be belittled and diluted, there is no biography in the most important historical books. A few lesser Yangtze River ancestors were incorporated into the system led by the Yellow Emperor. In this process, the Zhou Dynasty played a decisive role.

The decisive role played by the Zhou Dynasty in the formation of the paradox of "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor".

In her book *Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties: From Myth to Historical Fact*, Professor Guo Jingyun says that, although Chinese characters have a long history, it was not until the late Western Zhou Dynasty that Chinese civilization reached the historical stage of "knowing oneself". Before then, there were only oral stories. Only in the late Western Zhou Dynasty did records begin to form historical documents. In this process, it is inevitable to compile the "history" passed on by word of mouth from the perspective of the Zhou Dynasty into a "history" centered on the Zhou Dynasty. The early historical myths in Chinese literature also have obvious traces of northern ethnic groups snatching and plagiarizing the history of southern myths. The Five Emperors and even the ancestors of the three earliest Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, described by Sima Qian in *The Historical Records*, all originated from the Yellow Emperor, which is the most important embodiment and model. Even the Yellow Emperor's surname was invented to be the same as that of the Zhou royal family. In this way, the orthodox position of the Zhou Dynasty was strengthened and emphasized. Many scholars, especially foreign scholars, have doubts about this point. Miyamoto said, "In many cases, it is likely that the consanguinity of those ancestors was invented by politicians to maintain authority" (Miyamoto 2012, 19).

Sima Qian's scholarly attitude was serious. He faithfully collected "historical information" about these ancestors. However, he was also confused and found many contradictions and perplexities. Sima Qian said that many scholars had told stories about the Five Emperors, but the time of the Five Emperors was a long time ago. The Book of History recorded only the historical facts after Emperor Yao. For the various stories about the Yellow Emperor, the text is sparse, contradictory and unreliable. It is difficult to interpret clearly. I have been to many places, east, west, and north, across the Yangtze River to the south. The older men from all over the country often talked about the deeds of the Yellow Emperor, Yao and Shun, whom they had heard of, respectively, and their customs and teachings were different (Sima 1994, 46).

Discussion and research on the historical meaning behind the appellation of "Descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor"

Above, we have discussed the paradox of the history that preceded the invention and use of writing and the systematic "adaptation" of Chinese history by the Zhou Dynasty, which had a monopoly on writing. Now, we should carefully consider the influence of these two aspects on the discussion and textual research of the real historical meaning behind the appellation of "Descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor".

According to The Historical Records, the Five Emperors and ancestors of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties could be divided into two lineages, which were placed under the names of the two sons of the Yellow Emperor. Can we assume that this scheme is a Sima Qian cipher? Let us take a closer look. Of the Five Emperors, the first was the Yellow Emperor. The next line was Emperor Zhuangxi. Sima Qian wrote that the second son of the Yellow Emperor was named Changyi. He was given the title of vassal and lived in the Ruoshui region. As with the name of the place, even today one can find nine Ruoshui counties, all located in the south of China in the Yangtze River basin. Changyi married the daughter of Shushan and fathered Gaoyang. After the death of the Yellow Emperor, Gaoyang, the son of Changyi, assumed the throne and was called Emperor Zhuangxi.

According to the preceding accounts about Zhuangxi, whose father Changyi lived in Ruoshui, it is clear that Zhuangxi belonged to a southern group. Another important piece of convincing evidence is the description of the ancestor's origin by Qu Yuan (340 BC-278 BC), a famous politician, scholar and poet of Chu. Qu Yuan was a royal of the State of Chu. He was proud of his birth and said he was a "descendant of Emperor Gaoyang" (Hong 1983, 3). Guo Jingyun said that Qu Yuan's Li Sao and Some Questions about Heaven and Earth recorded social life from creating the universe to his own time. He wrote beautifully in his way, highlighting the sacred history of

his country and lamenting its decline at the time. Qu Yuan described the State of Chu as having a complete thread from the beginning of creation, but we do not see such a complete thread in the history of the other states handed down. (Guo 2013, 102) The Chu was a representative power in the Yangtze River basin, and its early active areas were mainly Hubei, Henan, Hunan and Anhui provinces. Chu's western neighbour was mainly Ba and Shu -- today's Chongqing and Sichuan, respectively, while its eastern neighbours were Wu and Yue, today's Jiangsu and Zhejiang. The State of Chu once extended its influence to Ba and Shu, as confirmed by some recent archaeology in Sichuan and Chongqing. The State of Chu later annexed Wu and Yue during the Warring States Period. When the Chu was strong, it had a population of 5 million and a territory of 1.5 million square kilometers: from Dabashan Mountain, Wushan Mountain and Wuling Mountain in the west to the sea in the east and from Nanling Mountain in the south to the present-day central Henan, northern Anhui and Jiangsu, southeastern Shaanxi and southwestern Shandong, all of which were the territory of Chu. Therefore, Chu can be regarded as a representative of the Yangtze River basin and even southern China.

Ancestor worship in the State of Chu was of Zhurong, the god of fire. Zhurong was Zhuanxu's grandson (Guo 2011, 681), which supports the Yan Emperor (Red Emperor) being the ancestral symbol of the Yangtze River basin, ethnic groups. Until modern times, China still had the theory of "three furnaces", namely Chongqing, Wuhan and Nanjing along the Yangtze River. Compared with the Yellow River basin in the north, heat is a characteristic of the south. As a representative of the southern states, Chu was slightly weaker than the northern dynasties (the Yellow River basin) Shang and Zhou. Still, it tended to maintain a balance in surface obedience and confrontation. Guo Jingyun said that, although the history of Chu before the Western Zhou Dynasty is not clear in handed down documents, it can still be seen from the oracle bone scripts that the State of Chu existed in the Wuding Era of the Shang Dynasty. In the poem Ode to Shang, Yin Wu said, "The State of Chu, in the middle of nowhere, has long lived in southern China". "Our king was brave and mighty. He led a great army to crusade against the State of Chu. Our troops went deep into the area and captured many soldiers of the State of Chu" (Zhou 2010, 517). This passage is a description of the confrontation between Chu and the Shang Dynasty. It seemed that the Shang Dynasty was victorious, and it was very pleased with itself. Of course, it also reflects the strength of the State of Chu. Otherwise, it is not worth declaring victory.

Zhou and Chu were almost always in a dynamic balance between war and peace. When King Wu of Zhou launched his crusade against the Shang Dynasty, he invited the State of Chu to send troops with him. However, after the victory, King Wu of Zhou conferred many different vassal states, but there was no the State of Chu. It was several decades before the Zhou Dynasty reluctantly granted the State of Chu a viscount. This fact shows the exclusion and opposition between Zhou and Chu. By the fourth king of the Zhou Dynasty, King Zhao, the conflict had intensified to a violent fight. According to the Bamboo Calendar, King Zhao of Zhou undertook

three expeditions to the south. For the first time, King Zhao of Zhou "waged a campaign against the State of Chu, encountering wind and dust storms and many wild beasts". "The second time they encountered bad weather and were destroyed". The third time, "King Zhao marched south to Jing Chu and died in the Han River" (Hao 2010, 3887-3889). This also led to the decline of the Zhou Dynasty from prosperity.

The enmity between Zhou and Chu grew. Later, the State of Chu proclaimed itself king to challenge the order and authority that only the Zhou dynasty could be king. During the reign of King Yi of the Zhou Dynasty, Xiong Qu, king of the State of Chu, proclaimed publicly that he was a barbarian southerner and had nothing to do with the people of the Central Plains of the North (Sima 1994, 1692). The Zhou Dynasty could not help it. According to Zuo Qiuming's Notes on Spring and Autumn, the first of the five hegemonies in the Spring and Autumn Period, Duke Huan of the State of Qi, led various vassal states to crusade against Chu in 679 BC. The emissary of Chu asked, "Your majesty is in the North Sea, and my majesty is in the South Sea. It does not matter at all. So why are you invading our land?" To show that this action was justified, the prime minister of the State of Qi, Guan Zhong, rebuked the emissaries of the State of Chu and said, "You did not pay the special thatch that you were supposed to pay. As a result, when the Zhou Dynasty offered sacrifices, it did not have anything to leach out the wine lees. We came to collect the tribute. King Zhao did not return from his southern tour. We have come to inquire into this matter". The emissary of Chu replied, "It is our sovereign's fault that he has not paid his tribute. How dare we not offer it? King Zhao did not return from his southern tour, so please go to the water's edge and ask him" (Hong 1987, 273-274). It seems that the State of Qi led many vassal states to crusade against the State of Chu, which was a little aggressive, but in essence, it was a bluff. Of course, it was mainly because Chu was sufficiently strong.

Subsequently, the State of Jin in the Yellow River basin and the State of Chu in the Yangtze River basin fought for hegemony for a long time, which was the main melody of the Spring and Autumn Period. Later, after the Warring States Period, the State of Qin destroyed the State of Chu and established the Qin Dynasty. After a short period of more than ten years, the people of Chu fulfilled their promise to "destroy Qin and return Chu". With the establishment of the powerful Han Dynasty, the long-standing north-south dispute between the Yangtze River basin and the Yellow River basin ended. The two basins were unified and integrated. Thus, we have today's Han (Chinese) nationality, Han (Chinese) culture, Han (Chinese) characters and Han (Chinese) language. Liu Bang (256 BC-195 BC) was the first emperor of the Han Dynasty, who led the Chu people to establish the Han Dynasty. He claimed to be the "son of the Red Emperor" (Sima 1994, 347) and confirmed his identity as a descendant of the Yan Emperor and Vulcan from the Yangtze River basin. This recognition is one of respect and pride for the ancestors and strengthening the legitimacy and cohesion of one's rule.

The Chu people from the south had the right of speech; this time, the basis and background of the consideration were different from those of the Zhou people. The Zhou Dynasty ruled mainly the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River -- the so-called Central Plains. Based on this background, history was written to strengthen the legitimacy of Zhou's rule: the Yellow Emperor with the same surname was made the first ancestor, excluding the Yan Emperor, and some other important figures were included in the Yellow Emperor line as descendants of the Yellow Emperor. The Chu people established the Han Dynasty, which greatly expanded its territory and became a great empire based on integrating the Yellow River and the Yangtze River basins. They had to describe and interpret "history" from their perspective to show that they were "winners". In contrast, to maintain the unification and stability of the Han Dynasty, they could not completely overturn the "history" centred on the Yellow River Basin. The best way to manage this issue was to place the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor together as humanity's ancestors. The great ancestor of the Chu people, the Yan Emperor, was the first leader of the new alliance to shape it. A similar example is that the State of Qin, which had been actively striving for the unification of the two basins, formally sacrificed to both the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor for the first time. (Sima 1994, 1364)

At the end of the biography of the Five Emperors, Sima Qian lamented that the history since Yao has been relatively clear and reliable. In contrast, the previous historical records of the Yellow Emperor and others are difficult to explain and have little credibility. Both Shun and Dayu were later than Yao, and their historical data are highly reliable. According to The Historical Records, both Shun and Dayu belonged to the systems of Changyi and Zhuanxu; therefore, both were southerners in the area of the Yangtze River. Shun's father "sired Shun in Yaouxu, so his surname was Yao" (Sima 1994, 32). Where was Yaouxu, the birthplace of Shun? There are four, namely Puyang in Henan Province, Heze in Shandong Province, Yuyao in Zhejiang Province and Shangyu in Zhejiang Province. Two were in the Yellow River basin and two in Zhejiang Province. This paper has explained that early Chinese literature was compiled centring on the Zhou Dynasty and the Central Plains. Since Shun was the descendant of Zhuanxu and Changyi, it is reasonable that Shun was born in Zhejiang Province, south of the Yangtze River. Sima Qian recorded in The Historical Records an incident in which the stepmother of Shun gave birth to a son named Xiang. Xiang in Chinese means elephant. In China, elephants are only found in Yunnan and other southern regions. This fact is also strong evidence that Shun was from a southern region of China.

The tomb of Shun is at Jiuyi Mountain, Yongzhou City, Hunan Province. Yongzhou is the southernmost city in Hunan Province, bordering Guangxi Province. Elephant County was established by the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty. Elephant County was in Guangxi and its surrounding areas. Sima Qian wrote, "In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Shun died on his tour in Cangwu and was buried at Jiuyi Mountain in the South of China" (Sima 1994, 43). Qu Yuan said, "I want to go to court directly to the Yan Emperor, and I want to go south to Jiuyi Mountain"

(Hong 1983, 172). Qu Yuan wrote in his poem, "The beautiful goddess, the wife of Shun, came to the island in the water. When Shun's wife learned that Shun had died, her tears fell like sheets of torrents. They were shed on the bamboo of the mountains, forming beautiful markings, which were known in the world as 'spotted bamboo'". Former Chinese leader Mao Zedong wrote a poem to commemorate this event. "On Jiuyi Mount, a cloud fly, the fairy comes to the top of the hill by the wind. She was dressed in beautiful red clothes, and each bamboo branch was covered with a thousand sad tears". Sima Qian wrote in *The Historical Records* that the First Emperor of Qin sacrificed Emperor Shun in Jiuyi Mountain (Sima 1994, 260). This event is very important and of special significance. The state of Qin grew from the former home of Zhou in the middle reaches of the Yellow River. In the late Warring States Period, Qin destroyed other powerful states and established the Qin Dynasty. The First Emperor of Qin also did two special things. One was to order the "unified writing" of the whole country (Sima 1994, 239). He ordered that all historical documents not written by the State of Qin be burned (Sima 1994, 255). Considering the above factors, the First Emperor of Qin specifically went to worship Shun during his last tour of the country, so there must be sufficient reason to be sure that Shun was buried in Jiuyi Mountain.

Dayu is a great historical figure who made great contributions to the historical development of the Chinese nation. His great achievements lie in controlling floods, developing national production, and making people live and work in peace and happiness and ending the social organization form of tribal alliance in primitive China and creating the new social and political form of "nation". Dayu completed the establishment of the state, replaced the primitive society with a class system and the savage society with civilization, and promoted the evolution and development of Chinese imperial history.

Among the Warring States bamboo slips that the Shanghai Museum has rescued from the antique market in recent years is a book called *The Rong Cheng Family*, which documents flood control by Dayu. There is a line in the book that "Dayu laid out 500 li in the south of the Han River and 500 li in the north of the Han River". This passage means that the special focus of Dayu's flood control was the central area of the Han River basin, namely the headquarters of Chu State (Takao 2012, 183-185).

After the founding of the Xia Dynasty, Dayu held a grand assembly of governors at Tushan. This Tushan meeting is generally regarded as a landmark event in establishing the Xia Dynasty in China. The Tushan union is related to the formation of early Chinese states and is an important subject in exploring the origin of Chinese civilization. Therefore, where is Tushan? According to *Notes on Zuo Zhuan of Spring and Autumn Period*, there are two Tushans: 1. based on Geography, Tushan is Dangtu County, which is located in southeast Anhui Province, China, on the east bank of the Yangtze River; and 2. according to *The Notes to the Water Classics*, Tushan is the Kuaiji Mountains of Shanyin County, Zhejiang Province (Hong 1987, 859). Both Tushans are located in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in the Jiangnan region.

According to The History of Wu and Yue States, Dayu's father was called Gun, and he was a descendant of Zhuanxu (Zhao 2019, 95).

Dayu's tomb is located in Yuling Village, Yuling Township, Yucheng District, Shaoxing City, Zhejiang Province. It is recorded in The History of Wu and Yue States that Dayu traveled worldwide, returned to Dayue (Shaoxing City), climbed Mount Mao, and met with various vassals. After his death, he was buried there (Zhao 2019, 100). Sima Qian said that, in the 37th year of the First Emperor of Qin, the Emperor came to Kuaiji, Zhejiang Province and sacrificed to Dayu (Sima 1994, 260). It is of special significance for the First Emperor of Qin's sacrificial offering to Shun and greatly enhances his reliability to be buried in Jiuyi Mountain of Hunan Province.

Similarly, the First Emperor of Qin also came to Kuaiji to offer sacrifices to Dayu, which is also very helpful to confirm the historical fact that Dayu was buried in Kuaiji. Qi, the son of Dayu, built a temple for Dayu on the top of Nanshan Mountain and offered sacrifices every year. Dayu's sixth-generation grandson was called Shaokang. After he inherited the throne, he worried that Dayu's descendants would break off, and no one would offer sacrifices to Dayu every year. Therefore, he allowed his youngest son to establish a state in Kuaiji, which was the beginning of the State of Yue (Zhao 2019, 101). Many years later, the State of Yue was defeated and annexed by the State of Chu.

Considering that Dayu's mausoleum site and the State of Yue in Zhejiang were his descendants' and the most important things in his life -- Tushan's meeting place and flood control -- were in the Yangtze River basin, we can say with certainty that Dayu was a man in the Yangtze River basin. A further inference is that Dayu likely lived mainly in the eastern part of the southern bank of the Yangtze River. It is even possible to deduce why the capitals and tombs of the Xia Dynasty have not yet been found. This is mainly due to the influence of the theory of central Plains was the core of early Chinese dynasties, the related researches and searches have been conducted in the Central Plains and the Yellow River basin. In discussing the problem, we must consider the people's productivity level and transportation capacity in the era of Dayu. "Moreover, the Xia and Shang dynasties were surrounded by dozens of neighbouring countries (Morris 2015, 127)". It is difficult to imagine that Dayu, born in south China, lived mainly in the eastern part of the southern bank of the Yangtze River, crossed the Yangtze River basin into the remote Yellow River basin to control floods and establish the Xia Dynasty, then returned to the south of the Yangtze River and was buried in the south after his death. Can we even guess that the Xia Dynasty founded by Dayu is likely mainly located within the territory of the State of Chu? the Yangtze River basin. Common sense tells us that it was the custom of royalty to be buried in the heart of their homelands or territories.

Conclusions

Although China has a long history, it was not until the late Western Zhou Dynasty that Chinese writing reached a new stage: it was more convenient for recording history and society. At this time, Chinese civilization had reached the historical stage of "knowing oneself". Before then, there were only oral stories. Only in the late Western Zhou Dynasty did records begin to form historical documents. In this process, it is inevitable that "history" was compiled and passed on by word of mouth from the perspective of the Zhou Dynasty into a "history" centred on the Zhou Dynasty. The early historical myths in Chinese literature also have obvious traces of northern ethnic groups snatching and plagiarizing the history of southern myths. The Five Emperors and even Xia, Shang and Zhou, the three earliest Dynasties in China, described by Sima Qian in The Historical Records, all originated from the Yellow Emperor, which is the most important embodiment and model. Even the Yellow Emperor was made for sharing the surname Ji with the Zhou royal family, which was done to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Zhou Dynasty.

At the time, the world in the eyes of the Zhou Dynasty was the Yellow River basin with the central plains as the core. The Yellow Emperor, who was shaped as an emperor from yellow land, the common ancestor of the ethnic groups in the Yellow River basin, has become a totem or symbol. Wise and powerful, he invented almost everything that the people in the Yellow River basin should have had at their stage of development, such as farming techniques, traditional Chinese medicine, and even boats and carriages, houses and clothes, and music. In the Shang and Zhou dynasties, or even before, there was another "world" in the Yangtze River basin in the south, and they also had a great ancestor that served as a symbol -- the emperor of the fiery south or the Yan Emperor. He also invented almost everything that the tribe needed, such as farming techniques (Shennong), traditional Chinese medicine, textiles, clothing, bows and arrows, musical instruments, cities and commerce. However, compared with the Yellow Emperor, the Yan Emperor lacked a key invention, namely writing.

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) famously said, "All history is contemporary history". Hu Shi (1891-1962), a famous Chinese scholar, once said, "History is a little girl who lets herself be dressed up". Therefore, when only the Zhou people in the Yellow River basin mastered writing to edit and modify history, the status and influence of the Yan Emperor were understandably "degraded" and "diluted". Considering the invention and function of writing and the monopolization of writing by the Zhou people, we should judge when we study and discuss Chinese ancestors, especially those in the Yangtze River basin. If the records of their births, their principal places of activity, and their burial places are recorded mainly in the south but sometimes also in the north, they are almost certainly southern.

Sima Qian faithfully collected historical data based on Zhou Dynasty documents and "recorded" that two sons of the Yellow Emperor, Xuan Xiao and Changyi, founded a clan. However, the true historical meaning of these two lines was unknown to Sima Qian. Based on our results, Zhuanxu, the son of Changyi, and later Shun and Dayu were people living along the Yangtze River in southern China. They were "stolen" by the people of the Zhou Dynasty, who knew about writing and placed them under the name of the Yellow Emperor's line. If these "stolen" southern characters were moved back under the name of the Yan Emperor, they could form the Yangtze River Basin group. This group is on a level with the Yellow Emperor's Yellow River Basin group, eliminating the "stolen" southerners. Accordingly, the imbalance in the proportion of the 120 surnames with the largest modern population from the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor and even the serious imbalance of the Han population coming from the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor has been solved. Those listed under the name of the Yellow Emperor must be divided into two parts, which belong to the two departments of the leaders of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor, respectively.

Moreover, according to the latest census of surnames in 2016, the top eight surnames are Li, Wang, Zhang, Liu, Chen, Yang, Zhao and Huang. Among the eight largest surnames, Li, Liu, Chen, Zhao and Huang were all descendants of Changyi and Zhuanxu from the Yangtze River basin. Of course, they belong to the Yan Emperor's line.

After a long struggle against the Zhou Dynasty in the Yellow River basin, the Chu people from the Yangtze River basin finally won and established the Han Dynasty based on the unity of the two basins. They knew what the matter was with the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor. Their vision expanded from the confines of the Zhou People in the Yellow River basin to the Yangtze River basin and even further south. "Tianxia" or "the world" was larger, and the new concept of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor Alliance as a common ancestor was needed to unite the greatly expanded population of China. As the victors from the Yangtze River basin, the rulers of the Han Dynasty should not only correct the wrong history centered on the Yellow River basin but also take into account the situation of the new dynasty. Before the Han dynasty, the short-lived Qin Dynasty was founded by the Qin people from the Yellow River basin. Nearly 200 years before the unification of China, the Qin people officially held public ceremonies for both the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor for the first time in Chinese history. This fact is similar to the Han Dynasty, which aimed to emphasize the unity of the two great basins and the whole of China and paid homage to the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor. Later, after more than two thousand years, Chinese people gradually only "knew" and forget "why" that they are "descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor".

The first three dynasties in China were Xia, Shang and Zhou. The Shang and Zhou dynasties have much archaeological evidence to prove their existence, and there are many documents and archaeological discoveries to help people study and understand these two dynasties. However, so

far, there has been no definite archaeological evidence for the Xia Dynasty, including a capital, writing and bronzeware. It is possible that people were looking for the Xia Dynasty in the wrong place. To date, efforts to find the Xia Dynasty have mainly been undertaken in the Yellow River basin in northern China and the central plains. According to the research in this paper, Dayu founded the Xia Dynasty, and his most important activity, "Tushan Meeting and Alliance", occurred in the Yangtze River basin. He returned to and died in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, where he was buried. His son and successor, Qi, and the sixth king of the Xia Dynasty, Shao Kang, are recorded as having been in Shaoxing to sacrifice Dayu. To ensure that Dayu was formally sacrificed every year, Shao Kang especially allowed his youngest son to establish the State of Yue there. The State of Yue lasted for more than one thousand years and was once dominant at the end of the Spring and Autumn Period. It was defeated and merged by the State of Chu in 308 BC. Therefore, the Xia Dynasty founded by Dayu should be in southern China, or even in Zhejiang Province and its surrounding areas to be exact. Of course, Dayu's main achievement was to control the flood, which should also have occurred in the Yangtze River basin.

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