

The Conceptions of “the Distinction of Yi (Barbarians) and Xia ( Chinese ) ” [夷夏之辨] in Chinese Culture and Society – Culturalism or Cultural Chauvinism?

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Abstract:

The universal applicability of the Confucian ethics is shadowed by the concept of the yi/xia distinction. There are two theses to solve the problem: the culturalism and the ethnicity thesis. Though the culturalism and the ethnicity thesis tried very hard to solve the inconsistency in the Confucian doctrine, the problem is more complicated than solved. The conceptions of yi/xia distinction come originally from *Chunqiu* [春秋], the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, interpreted by the three traditional commentaries, *Zuo zhuan* [左傳], *Gongyang zhuan* [公羊傳] and *Gulian zhuan* [穀梁傳]. Firstly, we need to investigate the historic contexts of the conceptions in the discourses of the hegemony to know its moral and political implication. Secondly, the different applications of the concept are implicitly related to a unilinear sage-kings tradition, interpreted by Mencius as an alternative of the hegemony, which can be used to exclude other ethnic groups of living together with the later so-called Han people. Mencius criticizes the competition for the hegemony in the Chunqiu and Warring States era, but is not critical enough against the emperor and his families centered political order. And lastly, in Yuan Dao, the opening treatise of the *Huainanzi*, instead of following the unilinear sage-kings tradition, to identify what is Chinese and what is not, a naturalistic and pluralistic ways of living are provided, which can be interpreted as a solution of the universal applicability of the Confucian ethics, to free itself from the xia (Chinese) culture centered world picture.

In a blog forum someone posts a questionable contradictory in the doctrine of Confucianism that “the benevolent man loves others”<sup>1</sup>[仁者愛人] and “the distinction of yi (barbarians) and xia (Chinese)” [夷夏之辨] appear to be opposing each other. If the former, as the moral principle toward other human being, is crucial to Confucian doctrine of living together, then the latter must be modified, so that the application of the former principle should not be limited by the latter.

Confucius confirms that the nature of all human being is not that far divergent as people thought. The differences come from the diverse practices in different occasions. He explains: “By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart.” [性相近、習相遠] (Analects 17:2)<sup>2</sup> According to the interpretation of Irene Bloom, “a modern sense of human equality and relatedness – one that allows for both similarity and difference” (Bloom, 1998: 96) is expressed in this short statement.<sup>3</sup> Based on the appreciation of the common humanity, Confucius advocates for the “teaching with no distinction of classes” [有教無類] (Analects 15:38), and concerns about the different dispositions and capabilities of the students for giving lectures [因材施教].

One of his students, Tsze-kung asks him whether people’s preferences can be the criterion of the moral judgment, his answer is quite wise: “ Tsze-kung asked, saying ‘what do you say of a man who is loved by all the people of his neighborhood?’ The Master replied: ‘We may not for that accord our approval of him.’ ‘And what do you say of him who is hated by all the people of his neighborhood?’ The Master said, ‘We may not for that conclude that he is bad. It is better than either of these cases that the

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<sup>1</sup> Mencius said, ”That whereby the superior man is distinguished from other men is what he preserves in his heart; —namely, benevolence and propriety. The benevolent man loves others. The man of propriety shows respect to others” (Mencius 4, PartII: 28). The translation

<sup>2</sup> The Four Books (1969), Tran. by James Legge, Taipei.

<sup>3</sup> Irene Bloom has a different translation, “ By nature close together, through practice set apart”, and she mentions that the text is quoted in the UNESCO “Statement on Race”, published in July 1950. She recognizes the text as “the single most important connecting link between traditional philosophical and religious ideas and contemporary human rights documents”, which provides “insight into the human condition and into the human capacity for mutual respect and regard.” ( Bloom, 1998: 97)

good in the neighborhood love him, and the bad hate him.” (Analects 13:24) In other words, not people’s preferences, but the characters of the people who give the judgment and their attitudes toward the person of been judged are crucial for the authenticity of the moral judgment. Moral judgment should be made more profoundly and comprehensively.

In the other most quoted text, “The superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean man is adulatory, but not affable.” [君子和而不同，小人同而不和] (Analects 13:23), sometimes translated also as the following “The noble man is harmonious, but not quarrelsome, the mean man is quarrelsome, but not harmonious”, Confucius makes it clearly that the harmonious attitude toward the other is very different than the conformity with the other, irregardless right and wrong, good and evil. The former excludes not necessary the latter.

By no means will Confucius limit the practice of his moral teaching to Chinese or the Chinese territory only, he says: “It is, in retirement, to be sedately grave, in the management of business, to be reverently attentive; in intercourse with others, to be strictly sincere. Though a man goes among rude, uncultivated tribes, these qualities may not be neglected” (Analects 13:19)

Mencius has the similar idea that morality is not limited by space and time: “Shun was born in Choo-fung, removed to Foo-hea, and died in Ming-t’eaou; a man near the wild tribes on the east. (east yi) [東夷] King Wan was born in Chow by Mount K’e, and died in Peih-ying; a man near the wild tribes on the west. (west yi) [西夷] Those regions were distant from one another more than a thousand li, and the age of the sage was posterior to that of the other more than a thousand years. But when they got their wish, and carried their principles into practice throughout the Middle Kingdom, it was like uniting the two halves of a seal. When we exam the sages, the earlier and the later, their principle are found to be the same.” (Mencius 4, Part II: 1)

Nevertheless, it was the same Mencius who refers to the classic text, the Praise Songs of Loo, “He smote the barbarians (rong di) [戎狄] of the west and the north, He punished ging and seu” (gin seu) [荆舒], to argue that one should not turn away from the teaching of the sage kings of Yaou, Sun, Yu and Chow-kung, and follow the doctrine of rong di. He said: “...I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land (xia) to change the barbarians (yi), but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians (yi)...Now here is this shrike-tongued barbarian of south (south man) [南蠻], whose doctrines are not those of the ancient kings. You turn away from your master and become his disciple...I have heard of birds leaving dark valleys to remove to lofty trees, but I have not heard of their descending from lofty trees to enter into dark valleys” (Mencius 3, Part I: 4) If the different spaces and times are not the problem for us to practice the morality, why it does matter to be a disciple of the “shrike-tongued barbarian of south”, not because of the moral quality of their doctrines, but of “not of the ancient kings”?

In Analects 3: 5 states: ”The rude tribes (yi-di) [夷狄] of the east and north have their princes, and are not like the States of our great land which are without them.” What is stated is that the yi di tribes, even if they have rulers, are not better than the decline of the ancient kings. When Tsze-kung criticizes Kwan Chung [管仲] for his violating of the fraternal love , Confucius answers: “Kwan Chung acted as prime minister to the duke Hwan, made him leader of all the princes, and united and rectified the whole kingdom. Down to the present day, the people enjoy the gifts, which he conferred. But for Kwan Chung, we should now be wearing our hair unbound, and the lappets of our coats buttoning on the left side.” (Analects 14:18)

The cited texts of Mencius and Confucius appear to disdain the foreign cultures and are not free from the “nationalistic” sentiment. For the readers with the profound expectation for the Confucian doctrine may feel disappointed. Why the concept of the

distinction of barbarians and Chinese seems to be a disturbing part of Confucianism? If the concept is inconsistent with the Confucian teaching, what should/can be modified?

I

Fairbank warns us not to interpret the texts from the perspective of the modern sentiment of nationalism, but suggests “We would do better to apply the idea of culturalism and see ancient China as a complete civilization comparable to Western Christendom, within which nation-states like France and England became political subunits that shared their common European culture.” (Fairbank, 1992: 45) By the word “culturalism” he means the devotion of the Chinese people to their way of life, which “arose from the difference in culture between China and the Inner Asian ‘barbarians’” (Fairbank, 1992: 45) Regarding this interpretation, Fairbank is a representative of the cultural differences thesis.

On the contrary, Chang Hao [張灝] finds Fairbank’s interpretation of “culturalism” too simplistic and amplified. Though the concept of the barbarians/Chinese distinction is more based on the cultural differences, but the blood kinship and geographic attachment are also contained not the less in the conception, so that the cultural differences thesis is not absolute, but relative to the contexts of its application. When the conflicts increased and the Chinese groups felt their status was weakening by the “other ethnic groups”, the ethnicity thesis would be raised by the yi/xia distinction. That’s why we can find that the most application of the concept emerged out of the occasions, when the central ruling feudal systems, established by the ethnic “Chinese” people was challenged, like they were in the period of North-South disunion (439-586), Southern Song with Jin Empire in North China (1127-1279), Yuan (Mongols) (1279-1368), late Ming and early Chin (1640-1650). (Chang, 2002:236) Chang refers to the late Ming philosopher Wang Fu zi [王夫之] to explain that the

ethnic exclusion does imply in the conception. (ibid.)

Though the cultural differences thesis and the ethnicity thesis tried very hard to solve the inconsistency in the Confucian doctrine, the problem is more complicated than solved. From my point of view, the political thinking of the Confucian doctrine is entangled in the discourses of the hegemony (ba) [霸], which come originally from *Chunqiu* [春秋], the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, interpreted by the three traditional commentaries, *Zuo zhuan* [左傳], *Gongyang zhuan* [公羊傳] and *Gulian zhuan* [穀梁傳], supposed to be the earliest record of Chinese history at the time of Chunqiu and Warring States Period (770 B.C.-220 B.C.). Based on the discussions in those books, we can find the source of the Chinese historical consciousness and “Weltanschauung”, in which the Chinese territories [天下] are thought to be the center of the world [中國], in the middle, the unitary empire as the ruling center, surrounded by the smaller center states, which are the family members of the emperor, and beyond that, the non center states, which are allied with the emperor, and lastly, the barbarians as the boundaries. (Comparing with Hirase, 2009: 85-88) The structure is like concentric circles, one circle surrounded by the other, but unified by the single central power. Though Mencius tried to deconstruct the discourse of the hegemony through the distinction of the sage king (wang) [王] and the hegemony (ba) [霸], adding the legitimacy conditions of the ruling power, he did not realize that the unilinear cultural and political thinking of the tradition are problematic. Nevertheless, he was the first one who questioned the discourses of the hegemony and asked the ruling powers to be limited by the moral and political duties. (Chen, 2010: 254-256)

## II

The modern archeological and historic studies on the ethnicity reconfirm that the documentations of one's own cultural origins may not reveal the objective facts of their origin, but the subjective identity created by the selected historical memories.

The thought identities, which are made in certain historical contexts, exposed not really who they are, but who they want to be. When they preferred to assimilate with the main ethnic groups, they will refer to some mythical stories of their ethnic origin to strengthen their connectedness with the groups, forgetting where they really come from. Archeologists found the phenomena, represented as the “collective memory” and “structural amnesia”, in many ethnic groups. (Wang, 1997: 21) This discovery leads the researchers to change their attitude toward the found documentations, instead of asking the question: “Who are they?” they enquire: “Why they claimed who they are?” (Wang, 1997: 21)

The methodological shift in the archeological research can be an important clue for our discussion about the conception of the yi/xia distinction. The concept emerged originally out of the discourses of the hegemony, combined with the following question: Who should be the next common leader of our central states? Which conditions qualified the “would be hegemon”? The notable slogan, “honor the king and repel the barbarians” (zun wang ran yi) [尊王攘夷], which can be seen as two necessary conditions for the qualification of the hegemony at the time of Chunqiu and Warring States Period. Though we cannot avoid raising the following question: How these two conditions associate with each other? Or, is the one exclude the other? No matter what are the answers of those questions, the boundary between the king as the center of an ethnic and cultural identity and the barbarians has to be made, to clarify practicably who should be preserved and who should be attack.

The discourses of the hegemony imply the dichotomy of the civilization and the barbarism, indicate that “xia “ or “Chinese” represents the civilization; “yi” [夷], “di” [狄], “rong” [戎] and “man” [蠻] are barbarians. Though the concept of “xia” originally referred to a clan or a tribe, supposed was living in the center of the areas, is extended to represent an ethnic and cultural identity as Chinese. How the ethnic and

cultural identity is related to the discourses of the hegemony need to be explained more carefully, regarding the phenomena of the “collective memory” and “structural amnesia”.

### III

Originally, “xia” was a name for a clan or a tribe called ju-xia [有夏氏]; “yi” meant “fang-kuo”[方國]. At the prehistory time of Xia [夏] (2200-1750 BC) and Sang [商](1750-1040 BC), “yi” and “xia” were indicating only the different tribes in the East and the West.

After Sang was defeated by Zhou [周], according to *Zuo zhuan*, the regions earlier governed by Xia were still called “xia”; ruled by Sang called “east xia” [東夏], as two specific politic domains, surrounded by the west, south, east and north land. The center area was in fact the west land, controlled by rong [戎]. (Hirase, 2009:76) The territories, which are labeled as the center area by the three commentaries of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Zuo zhuan* [左傳], *Gongyang zhuan* [公羊傳] and *Gulian zhuan*, are totally different, relative to their evaluative systems and depend on where the authors of the historiography stood. (Hirase, 2009: 64-68) Therefore, the people living outside of the regions of xia, east xia and the center land, known as “yi” [夷], “di” [狄], “rong” [戎] and “man” [蠻] of *Zuo zhuan* or “yi di” [夷狄] of *Gongyang zhuan* or “di” of *Gulian zhuan*, are conceived by them in the totally different locations, depend on where are the center areas they thought to be.

After the end of the West Zhou, the emperor of the Zhou moved to the East, his authority declined, the regions of the “center” were divided and controlled by over one hundred dukes or princes who looked for their chances to be the hegemony of the areas. In the late Warring States period, seven states were left to be the possible candidates of the hegemony.

In *Zuo zhuan*, Kwan Chung [管仲], the chief minister of the duke Hwan of Qi, is

illustrated as a politician who is not like the other advisors of the dukes and vassals, advocate only for strategy and power competitions, but argues with the rhetoric of moral. When the di tribes attack a central state Xing, he urges the duke Hwan to rescue Xing. He argues: “The rong and di tribes are jackals and wolves, they cannot be sated; the various central states are kin and close, they cannot be abandoned. Ease and repose are poisons, they cannot be cherished. It is said in the Odes, How could I not cherish going home? But I fear this writing on the bamboo strip. The writing on the bamboo strip is about how those who abhor the same thing show concern for one another. I request that we rescue Xing, so as to comply with the writing on the bamboo strip.” (*Zuo zuan*, Min I.2: 256) The bamboo strip represents the “king affairs”, Kwan Chung refers to the bamboo strip to convince the duke Hwan of Qi, to defend the central state Xing against di. The kinship and the mean characters of the di/rong justify the action of the rescue.

According to the study of Wai-ye Li, the last quoted text is “one of the clearest justification of the hegemonic enterprise in *Zuo zuan* : the hegemon is to sustain interstate order by defending the central states, bound by common origins in the early Zhou political order (...), against the encroachment of insatiable barbarian peoples (...) beyond the margins of civilization” (Li, 2007:277)

In another political and strategic discourse, the ruler of Jin proposes for military triumphs over “barbarians” to become a strong leader of the areas. He says: “The rong and di are avaricious and know nothing of kin or close ties. It is better to attack them.” However, his adviser can not agree with him and responds: “If we exhaust our troops with the rong and Chu attacks Chen, we will certainly not be able to come to its rescue—that will be to abandon Chen. The various center states will surely rebel. The rong tribes are birds and beasts. To obtain control over the rong and to lose the support of the central states—is that not inadmissible!” (*Zuo zuan*) They both

marginalized and dehumanized rong to argue which policies are better for them of becoming a hegemon. According to the analysis of Li, “peace with the rong is thus broadened into a more exaltation of restraint and renunciation of conflict” (Li, 2007:297-298) But on the other hand “Jin also emphasizes its proximity to and occasional alliance with the rong to defy Zhou claims....The founding Jin ancestor is said to have begun with Xia regulations and set up boundaries and divisions by rong methods” (ibid.) In the other words, the cited text from *Zuo zuan*, reflects only the half of the story that the allied relationship with the “barbarians” against the central state is actually not abnormal at all. This can explain why the principle of “honor the king and repel the barbarians” is set up as the rule of the game.

Not only Jin, but also Zhou itself had a very close relationship with the rong, before Zhou had defeated Sang. A part of the main clan of Zhou, called gi [姬] though, was also called rong, before it became the emperor of the regions. Even after it became the emperor of the whole region, the connection with rong still continued by the intermarriage, for consolidating their power in the west. Nevertheless, the dissolving of the bound causes the crash of the West Zhou. The complicated ethnic relations and the ethnic politics can be an important clue to know the emersion of the Chinese identity. (Wang, 1997: 215-217)

“Ron” means originally weapon, extended to warriors or skillful fighters, not necessary firstly related to “barbarian”. (Wang, 1997: 216) However, the meaning of the word “rong”, changed to mean “barbarians”, can be explained not only by the increased tension between the central states of Zhou and the rong, but also by the establishing of the xia centered politics, following a world picture of the concentric circles. The following two interrelated processes are the effective ways to reach that:

1. The divided groups renewed the history of their ethnic origin, to establish an ethnic self-awareness.
2. The sense of otherness was produced to strengthen the ethnic

boundary. (Wang, 1997: 214-5)

#### IV

Mencius criticizes the discourses the hegemony, he says: “He who, using force, makes a pretense to benevolence, is the leader of the princes [霸]. A leader of the princes requires a large kingdom. He who, using virtue, practices benevolence – is the sovereign of the empire. To become the sovereign of the empire, a prince need not wait for a large kingdom...when one by force subdues men, they do not submit to him in heart. They submit because their strength is not adequate to resist.” (Mencius, II, Part I: 3) Though he mentions about “using virtue and practices benevolence”, as the distinction between the leader of the princes [霸] and the sovereign of the empire [王], and makes it very clear that a large kingdom is not the necessary condition of becoming the sovereign of the empire, but a large kingdom is not excluded, if one becomes really the sovereign of the empire. He knows that the conflicts between the vassals and the dukes are caused by the force competitions for the hegemony, of absorbing the other states and of ruling a large kingdom.

However, Mencius rarely challenges the unilinear thinking pattern of the sage-kings tradition. More than that, his critiques are based on it as the model of the ruling. His historical consciousness is molded by the unilinear transition of the sage-kings, Yaou, Sun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Woo and Chow-kung, embody a single continuing Chinese identity. For him, this identity is not based on the ethnicity or territorial, but on the culture, transferring unbroken from Yaou to Chow-kung. Whether those arguments for the unilinear sage-kings tradition are only strategic, not substantial, is not clear.

Many texts show his tendency to idealize the consistent ruling tradition of the sage-kings, in comparing with the critical behaviors of the princes like the following: “The five chiefs of the princes [五霸] were sinners against the three kings. The princes of the present day are sinners against the five chiefs. The great officers of the

present day are sinners against the princes. The emperor visited the princes, which was called ‘a tour of inspection’. The princes attended at the court of the emperor, which was called ‘giving a report of office’. It was a custom in the spring to examine the plowing, and supply any deficiency of seed, and in autumn to examine the reaping, and assist where there was a deficiency of crop... If a prince once omitted his attendance at court, he was punished by degradation of rank... Thus the emperor commanded the punishment, but did not himself inflict it, while the princes inflicted the punishment, but not command it. The five chiefs, however, dragged the princes to punish other princes, and hence I say that they were sinner against the three kings.”

(Mencius, VI, Part II: 7) This text shows explicitly not only the hierarchical ruling structure, but also the emperor-centered politics. More obvious than that we read:

“Benevolence and righteousness were natural to Yaou and Shun. Tang and Woo made them their own. The five chiefs of the princes [五霸] feigned them. Having borrowed them long and not returned them how could it be known they did not own them?”

(Mencius, VII, Part I: 30) The five chiefs of the princes, the hegemon, know very well that their political legitimacy can only be ground on the sage-kings tradition, that’s why they are eager to feign them. Mencius criticizes their pretended behaviors, but at same time, consolidates that unilinear sage-kings tradition as the ground of the political legitimacy.

Totally far from the sage-kings tradition, the “barbarians” are excluded from the culturally and politically toward the center concentrated circle. Though in the texts of Confucius and Mencius, the ethnic and territorial origins are not relevant, but regarding the political legitimacy on the sage-kings tradition, their “barbarian” status, from the Chinese culture centered perspective, is inevitably presupposed.

That’s why the following sayings are cited unwearied in the Chinese history, again and again, when a Chinese culture centered political regime perish or divided:

“The rong and di are avaricious and know nothing of kin or close ties. It is better to attack them.”;

“The rong and di tribes are jackals and wolves, they cannot be sated; the various central state are kin and close, they cannot be abandoned.”;

“I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land (xia) to change the barbarians (yi), but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians (yi).”

The conceptions of the distinction of yi/xia become the most popular arguments to exclude any thing has been identified as “foreign”, “external”<sup>4</sup>, “not Chinese’ or “barbarian”. The most “famous” examples of them are:

1. Buddhism, when Han dynasty declined, Buddhism was once identified as a “foreign” and “barbarian” doctrine. The conception of the distinction of yi/xia is critical reviewed in Hong Ming Collection 《弘明集》, collected and edited by the Buddhist monk Shen You (僧佑), which records the 300 years circulation of Buddhism in China;
2. Mongol, when Chu Yuan-Chang, letter becomes Ming Taizu, the first emperor of Ming dynasty, uses the slogan “repel the barbarians and restore China” (驅逐韃虜, 恢復中華) to fight against the Mongol Yuan dynasty;
3. Manchurian, when Sun Yat-Sen refers to the same slogan to overthrow the Chin dynasty, though he proponents for the “five clan republics” (五族共和), after his revolution has been succeeded;
4. Westerner, when the conservative party in the late Chin government refers to the distinction yi/xia to against the reform politics, led by the young emperor of late Chin, Kuan Shiu (光緒) and his think tank;
5. And nowadays in Taiwan, the newly immigrant spouses from the south and the north

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<sup>4</sup> The popular verse of Gongyang commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals states: “Internalized the central states and externalized the barbarians “ [內諸夏而外夷狄].

east Asia, even when they are formally entitled as the citizens of Taiwan, are called generally “foreign brides’ (外籍新娘) in the society. The term “foreign laborer” (外勞) is used to label the blue collar workers who come from the south east Asia, but not the white collar workers from Japan, Europe or the USA.

In connection with the study of Nicola Di Cosmo, Yuri Pines’ works on the conceptual development of the yi/xia distinction (dichotomy), and concluded that the concept gets its full sharp only in the early Han dynasty, when the pure nomads were true challenge of the empire. (Pines, 2005: 59-102) Though the early texts, such as Zuo zhuan, had pejorative attitudes toward barbarians, but the latter are rarely supposed as the major threat of the xia and zhu xia regions. In other words, the full meaning of the concept presupposed a great-unified Chinese empire, is thought to save the Chinese civilization from the threat of barbarian attacks. However, Pines’ interpretation neglects the connection between the concept of barbarians and of the other/different ways of living, which is used very often as the ground for a great-unified political central powers. Even the universe-opened Confucian teachings are not really free from that.

V

In the opening treatise of the Huainanzi, named Yuan Dao (元道, translated “Tracing Dao to its Source), dated in the late second century BC, at the time of the early Han dynasty, we can find a different tendency toward the “barbarians”, more naturalistic and realistic.

“Hence, when the spring winds come they bring the timely rains, and the myriad things are produced and nourished.

Feathered creatures incubate and hatch their eggs,

Furred creatures conceive and give birth to their young,

Plants and trees bloom

And birds and animals are oviparous and viviparous.  
When the autumn winds bring the frost,  
Vegetation is injured and snaps,  
Eagles and falcons sweep down on their prey,  
Swarming insects hibernate,  
And fishes and turtles make for the deep.  
Without anyone ever seeing the actual doing,  
Things disappear without a trace.” (Yuan Dao, 1998: 80-83)

The verses seem to expose only how the things in nature present and disappear on their own way, but actually, if the readers are familiar with the Chinese words, They would find that “birds and animals”, which translate also as “birds and beasts” are referred to the rong, the “barbarians”, but now transferred to totally different contexts of the discourse. If the readers are patient, they will find the more obvious evidences in the followings verses:

“Tree dwellers nest in the foliage,  
Water dwellers live in underwater caves.  
Birds and beasts have beds of straw,  
Human beings have houses.  
For dwelling on land the rearing of cattle and horses is suitable.  
The Xiongnu territory produces animal hides for clothing,  
While the Wu and Yue territories produce hemp for garments.  
Each takes advantage of the places in which they are situated  
To ward off the cold and heat.  
They all get what is suitable,  
And what is produced meets a local need.  
Viewing it from this perspective,

The myriad things have been so-of-themselves from the beginning –

What room is there for interference by the sage?” (Yuan Dao, 1998: 82-83)

If the skeptic readers of the philosophers say that the just quoted verses only show the Xiongnu territory and the Wu and Yue territories, traditionally labeled as the territories of the barbarians, have their own goods, the *laissez-faire* policy would be suitable to them, the readers overlook the power of last verse: “What room is there for interference by the sage?”, not only criticizes the discourses of the hegemony, “honor the king and repel the barbarians”, but also the unilinear sage-kings tradition and its role as the ground of the political legitimacy, incorporated in the Confucian doctrine.

The following verses are the evidence for the thesis:

“Cut their hair and tattoo their bodies

To look like scaly reptiles.

They wear briefs in place of trousers

For wading and swimming;

They have their short sleeves rolled up

For poling their boats

This is to avail themselves of what is convenient for the environment.

To the north of the Yanmen pass,

The Di barbarians do not eat grain.

They set great store by men in their prime and look down on the aged,

And it is custom to value virility.

Men never slacken their bowstrings

Nor do they unbridle their horses,

In order to be ever on the ready.

...

The gray thrush does not cross the Ji River,

And the badger dies when it crosses the Wen River

Their form and basic nature should not be changed, and neither should the circumstance under which they live be altered.” (Yuan Dao, 1998: 82-85)

Almost every prejudgment of the barbarian customs, stated in the Chinese literatures, is discussed in the verses and explained why they are “different”.

The treatise is presented by Liu An, the king of Huainan, to the Han emperor Wu, as a present to celebrate his succession to the throne of the unified Chinese empire. The founder of the Han Empire, Liu Bang, had defeated Xiang Yu and rose to emperor, while he allowed the local powers to have control over their lands. After he became the emperor, he had fourteen troops under his direct command in the west and ten kings under the control of vassal kings. And Xiongnu tribes in the north were conceived as the constant threat of the empire. Though the emperor had replaced the vassal kings with his family members, the competition among family members for the throne brought more troubles to the emperor. The emperor took the advantage to divide them into smaller kingdoms and to reduce them to become troops under his direct control. (Lau and Ames, 1998: 3-4)

Under such circumstance came Liu An to power in Huainan. He associated with other six kings in a revolt against the emperor, but not succeeded. According to the study of D.C. Lau and Roger T Ames, who translate the text into English and introduce the historic context, “. . .the text is a political statement of this same pluralistic idea, While Huainmanzi taken as a whole is syncretic, Tracing Dao to Its Source is a cloaked but compelling Daoistic argument against political centralism, expansionism, and zero-sum consolidation of power that was driving the imperial court during this first century of the Han dynasty” (Lau and Ames, 1998: 5) Whether Liu An’s standpoint of the yi/xia distinction is the orthodox position of the Daoism, is not within the points of our discussion. But his critiques of political centralism, expansionism and zero-sum

consolidation of power are so living, reflect almost all the problems of the Confucian discourses for the unilinear sage-kings tradition.

## VI

From his teaching “By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart.” (Analects 17:2) and “The superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean man is adulatory, but not affable.” (Analects 13:23), Confucius confirms both the human similarity and difference, not for the sake of the former at the cost of the latter. However, this universal applicability of the ethics of Confucian is shadowed by the concept of the yi/xia distinction. The culturalism thesis of Fairbank appears to save the teaching from the racist interpretation. Against the culturalism interpretation, Chang Hao raises many examples, to expose that the ethnic exclusion does imply in the moral and political conception. But both of them do not explain why the concept of the distinction yi/xia, based on the cultural and ethnic differences, has the power to shape the Chinese historical consciousness and “Weltanschauung”.

The conceptions of yi/xia distinction come originally from *Chunqiu* [春秋], the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, through the three traditional commentaries, *Zuo zhuan* [左傳], *Gongyang zhuan* [公羊傳] and *Gulian zhuan* [穀梁傳], which record the discourses of the hegemony and evaluate the competitive candidates. In the discourses, the sage-kings tradition and its moral implication are created to regulate the political disorder and the warfare. However, in the name of maintaining this tradition, the political centralism and expansionism are implied in the conception, which become the main obstacles of the diverse living cultural traditions in the sharing life world.

The critical thinking of Yuan Dao toward the yi/xia distinction and its naturalistic and pluralistic representations of diverse living cultures can be a better commentary of the Confucian teaching: “By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart” and “The noble man is harmonious, but not quarrelsome, the mean man is

quarrelsome, but not harmonious”.

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