

OPPOSITION AND UNITY: A STUDY OF SHAMANISTIC DUALISM IN PREHISTORIC ART

Huisheng TANG, Nining, Qinghai Province, P.R. of China

The logic in mythical thoughts is as rigorous as that of modern science and the difference lies not in the quality of the intellectual process but in the nature of the things to which it is applied.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Structural Anthropology

Collegiate books tell us that dualism began in the Greek Age. Yet since when did human thinking start? If human thinking started with *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*, how did it work without the basis of dualism? The cultural products of *Homo Sapiens* are brimming with intellect and logic founded on the notions of classification and binary opposition. In other words, human thought would not exist without binary opposition. Philosophically speaking, from Aristotle and Plato to Hegel and Marx, dualistic logic seems to have developed along with the evolution of the human species. When we, however, carry out intensive research into dualistic logic, we find that dualistic logic has eventually developed into a pure philosophy, but one whose ability to inspire the development of society has been completely lost. What kind of role has dualistic logic played in human thinking and the process of civilization? We should start our discussion from the remote beginning of the human species.

Three kinds of dualistic thought

Three kinds of dualistic thought can also be regarded as three stages of development: binary opposition, binary unity and dualistic dialectics.

I. BINARY OPPOSITION

The definition of binary opposition is that the relationship between two contrary elements is purely confronting and struggling; nothing is unified or ever transforms into the reverse. This is a typical mode of thinking in shamanistic cultures (Tang 1996a). From Lewis-Williams's point of view, binary opposition originated as early as the Upper Paleolithic. He says:

Indeed, it seems probable that during the Upper Paleolithic the great binary metaphor became a vehicle for multiple meanings that many have included notions of life and death, good and bad, though, of course, in formulations different from those that have run through the Western tradition down to the present day (Lewis-Williams 1996).

Later, this mode of thinking and cultural idea appeared as a basic motif in

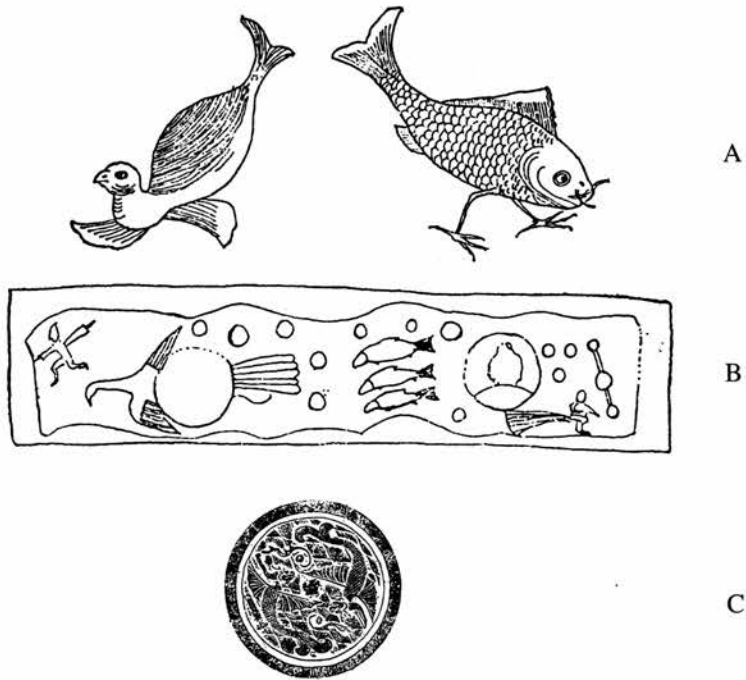


Fig. 8 a-b-c.

a) Bird-fishes from Shanhaijin (Archivio WARA W02323);

b) A wood board carved with bird and fish images in the Han Dynasty, from Jiangsu Province (Archivio WARA W02324);

c) Bird-like fishes on bronze mirror in the Han Dynasty from Gansu Province (Archivio WARA W02325).

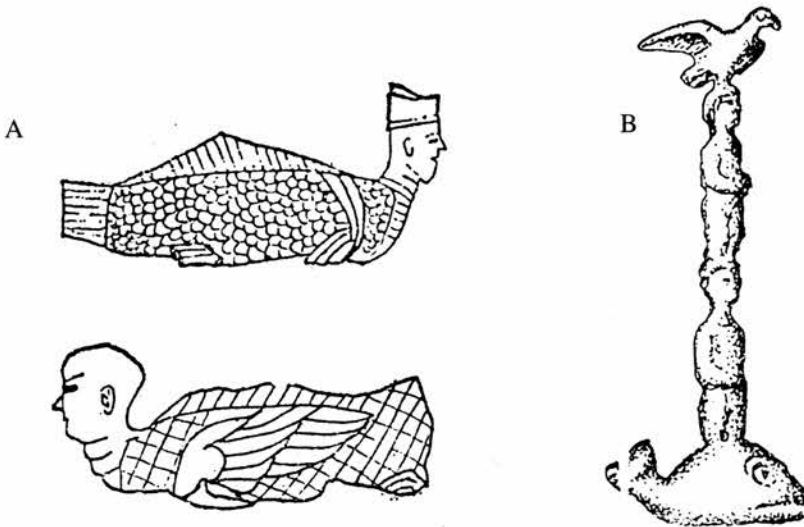


Fig. 9 a-b.

a) The scene of fish images transforming into human of the Tang Dynasty in Sichuan Province (Archivio WARA W02326);

b) The modern Indian wood figure composed by bird, human and fish, which represent respectively three worlds of shamanism (Archivio WARA W02327).

myths and epics all over the world. For example, in Tibetan historic sources, the myths and legends about the genesis of Bonism, Tibetan shamanism, give a prominence to binary opposition:

Firstly, came two syllables "hu-hu" from the World Generator, then came the whole world. There are two tendencies about the genesis of the material of the whole world. Firstly, a good-father came from a white egg, and he created all the good things; the black egg gave birth to a bad-father, and he created all the bad things in the world. The white man is also called "shiner", and the god who discharges a positive function, the origin of the good and the god of creator as well, while the black man represents the negative, Non-Being, evils, famine, pestilence and disaster (Tucci 1989, pp. 267-269).

Stein also gives the same description to the genesis myth of Bonism:

The black man is called "Black Hell" (dmyal-ha nag-po). He makes all that is evil, divides day from night, lets thunder and lightning fall, sends illnesses, appoints the hawk for killing birds, the wolf for animals, men for cattle, the other for fish, demon for man.. He creates discord, feuds and wars. He gives himself his own names: "master who likes Existence." He gives soft warmth to the sun, shares out sun and moon anew, sets the stars in order, in short makes everyone happy. Even today, the pantheon is comprehensively summed up in the Tibetan bipartite term "Ha-aDre" (god-goblin), which clearly reflects a dualistic concept of existence (Stein 1983, pp. 246-247).

Besides myths and legends, epics all over the world are also characterized by binary opposition. The essence of all epics involves the opposition and struggle between gods and devils, good and evil. But eventually, gods triumph over devils, good over evil, in which lies the cultural meaning of binary opposition. This can be seen in the epic entitled *Gesar*. As Stein points out, *Gesar*, the hero in the epic, dedicates his whole life to the suppressing of various evils (Stein 1983, p. 4). *Gesar* represents all that is positive, while the evils embody such things as famine, pestilence, paganism, rapacity and slaughter. In *Gesar*, some names of chapters clearly reflect the motif of binary opposition, such as "*The Struggle between Gods and Devils: Two Holy Mountains*" and "*The Battle between White Gods and Black Devils*". The epic begins with the struggle between the gods and devils, and how they win battle in turn. Fighting between gods and devils is ceaseless. For Tibetans, the most important thing in daily life is how to defeat devils through helping gods or being helped by gods. Religious practices such as burning juniper branches, praying and circling stone heaps are relevant to the fighting between gods and devils. Moreover, many festivals and celebrations of Tibetans originate from this idea, such as horse racing, athletics and wrestling. Even today, wrestling is still a part of ceremonies. It symbolizes the conflict between gods and devils, and the audience will often chant "the gods of the sky are victorious, the demons are vanquished", as well as other exclamations (Tang 1996b).

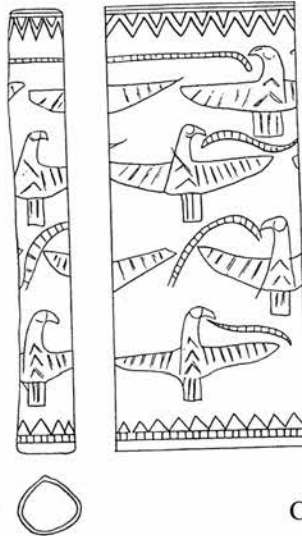
On the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, at every crossroads is a big heap of stones, mostly white ones. Sticks and wood swords are set on the top of them. Every traveller that passes lays a stone on the heap. At the same time, he calls out, "the gods of the sky are victorious, the demons are vanquished - ki-ki so-so!" The final exclamations are war-cries, reflecting the warlike nature of the gods and the devils.



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Fig. 10 a-b-c-d.

a) Eagle and snake image made of gold, from ancient Egypt, after Zengtian Jinyi (Archivio WARA W02328);

b) The scene of a loin attacking goats from Zhongwei rock art site in Ningxia, from Zhou (Archivio WARA W02329);

c) Scene of Eagles pecking snakes on eagle leg bone, from Kayue culture in Qinghai, around BC 1000 (Archivio WARA W02330);

d) A tiger attacking yaks from the Helimu rock art site in Qinghai, around 1000 BC (Archivio WARA W02331);

Tibetans hold that the body, the home and the local environment are many microcosms resting one inside the other, but each of equal importance. The large macrocosm of the world is only the projection or extension of this inner world. The heap of stones is the reflection of “the World Mountain” or “the Cosmic Mountain”, and the sticks symbolize the World Tree, in shamanistic cosmology. The very typical work which we follow here is entitled *Songs of the gods, which honor kings (or victory)*, and the myth in question occurs in the chapter devoted to gods of the sky. In the book, Mt. Sumeru is described as the mountain in the center of the world. The gods are described as living on the top of a big tree (the Cosmic Tree), which grows on the summit of the mountain. The tree roots spread beneath the mountain base, where the devils (asuras) live. The devils covet the fruits of the tree, and a war between the gods (devas) and asuras ensues. In the morning, the asuras have the upper hand, but in the afternoon, the devas are ahead. The world is peaceful when the gods are victorious; otherwise, there are floods, pestilence and other distasters. For Tibetans, all of their religious rituals are performed to ensure the gods’ victory.

In fact, human activities have been mostly conducted by the thought of binary opposition, on which our intellect and logic are founded. But its evolution in Chinese culture brings us to the second stage of dualistic thought.

2. BINARY UNITY

Ancient Chinese culture is also characterized by shamanism (Zhang 1986,4, Tang 1996c), in which binary opposition plays the most important part. However, during the Spring and Autumn Period (BC 770-BC 476), this philosophy changed and eventually made Chinese culture depart from that of the West. In other words, the shamanistic thinking of binary opposition started to transform into the dualism which stresses binary unity. The work of *Laotse* is the first who systematically demonstrates this new philosophical idea, whose purpose is to obliterate the distinction and opposition of dualism, and to uplift thorough transformation and complete unity as the only nature for dualism. This is more commonly known as the Chinese philosophy of *Yin and Yang*.

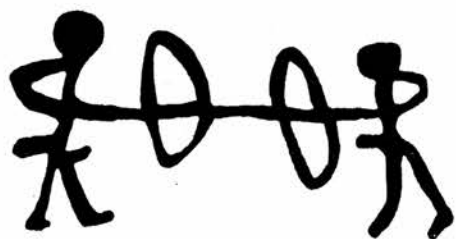
The typical shamanistic genesis indicates that the world was born from an egg. Due to the shamanistic nature of ancient Chinese culture, this myth is frequently mentioned in many historical documents, such as *Pangu* separating the sky and the earth, or *Huang Di* (Yellow god) parting *Yin and Yang*. But it was *Laotse* who gave it a philosophy perspective. The egg that became the world is called “*chaos*” in his book:

There was something mixed up that had existed before heaven and earth were born. It was of loneliness, of independence without change, and of circuit without stop. It could be the mother of all over the world. I don't know its name. But I am trying to give it the name “Tao”, and pen name “Great” (Zhu 1985, pp. 100-101).

What is the Great *Tao*? *Laotse* gives a further explanation:

“One Yin and one Yang make Tao, and creating creatures was called change.” (Zhu 1985, p. 127).

This is the so-called philosophy of the *Tao* or that of *Yin and Yang*. In philosophical terms, the *Tao* is the entity which produces *Yin and Yang*, society



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Fig. 11 a-b-c-d.

a) Gladiators image from the Lushan rock art site in Qinghai (Archivio WARA W02332);

b-c) Bronze plaques with patterns of wrestling of the Han Dynasty, from Inner Mongolia (Archivio WARA W02333; W02334);

d) Scene of hunting with a chariot from Lushan rock art site in Qinghai (Archivio WARA W02335).

before binary opposition, and “*chaos*” in the myth. Later, *Pangu* separated heaven and earth, and *Huang Di* parting *Yin and Yang*. Those two imply that human intelligence and culture, i.e. binary opposition, started to appear. Primitive chaos, then, was disturbed and order was introduced into human society. Laotse said that the separation of heaven and earth and the opposition of *Yin and Yang* resulted in civilization, which also implies the downfall of society, anabolism, conspiracy and strikes. Therefore, if we want to get rid of this degeneration, we must first try to go back to “*chaos*”. The only effective way to achieve this is to eliminate binary opposition in philosophy. Laotse denied opposition and difference in the dualism of beauty and ugliness, easy and difficult, long and short, above and below, forward and backward. And Laotse also denied any moral value judgment in dualism, i.e. praising the positive. The only nature of dualism is association, unity, dependence on each other and transformation into each other:

Yin and Yang are changeable, one up while one down. The merging together of them results in perfection as chaos. They are in a condition of separation and amalgamation alternatively. This is cosmic law and the vehicle wheel of cosmic, which terminus means beginning (Lu 1989, p. 30).

This is the *Tao*, in which opposition does not exist. In the dualism, *Yin and Yang* fuse into one like a wheel with no beginning or ending. They are inseparable like water. The *Tao* works like the alternative substitution of day and night produced by encirclement of the sun. Thus it is also called the “*round Tao*”. In the Song Dynasty, this is diagrammed as “*Tai-ji*”. This is the same explanation Aristotle gave of the *Chaos*, from which everything comes and to which everything returns.

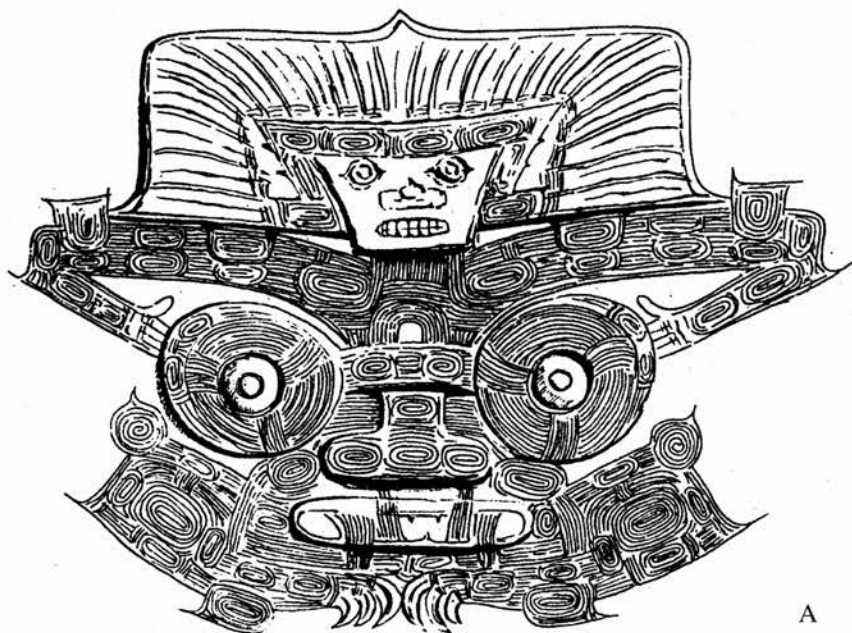
This is why Laotse’s philosophy is considered to be a retrograde philosophy. In all respects, including philosophy, politics and social system, Laotse suggested that we should go back to the time before binary opposition. In perspective of digit, the *Tao* is the mother of “*Two*” (*Yin and Yang*), so Laotse also calls it “*One*” or “*Onement*”. Since “*Two*” makes society degenerate, we should abandon “*Two*” or combine “*Two*” to become “*One*”:

By obtaining One, the sky would be clear, the earth would be tranquil, gods would be powerful, food would be abundant, all things on the earth would be full of life, the king could be an example to his people (Zhu 1984, pp. 154-155).

Because *One* has a positive value judgment, *Two*, as the opposite of one, has a negative value judgment. The Chinese character for “two” is not only used to express a number but also used mostly in a deprecatory sense, such as “betrayal”, “to split” (Ye 1995, p. 26).

During the Han Dynasty (206BC-220BC), the *Tao* was well popularized. Archaeological information can show how comprehensively it was accepted. In the Neolithic Age, in the center of China, the scene of a bird pecking a fish is a common motif painted on pottery. This is the earliest diagram of the concept of binary opposition, or of *Yang* vanquishing *Yin*. *Huainanzi*, written in the Han Dynasty, explains this symbol:

Bird, one with feathers, Yang; fish, one with scales, Yin. (Liu 1989, p. 24).
Obviously, the scene of a bird pecking a fish reflects the struggle in dualism:



A

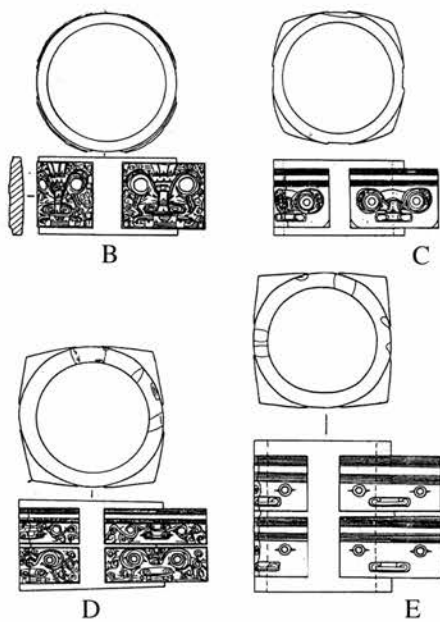


Fig. 12 a-b-c-d-e.

a) The sun god on the jade-ware of the Liangchu culture, BC3000, from Zhijiang (Archivio WARA W02336).

b-c-d-e) The Yuzong with human face patterns on, from the Liangchu Culture in Zhejiang (Archivio WARA W02337).

a bird vanquishing a fish, *Tang* vanquishing Yin, the positive vanquishing the negative. During the Han Dynasty, however, the scene of a bird pecking a fish turned into the scene of a bird transforming into a fish, such as a scene on a brick relief on the tombs in Henan Province. This ancient motif, thus, became a symbol of change from death (*Yin*) to rebirth (*Yang*).

Even if the *Tao* hadn't been accepted as orthodoxy in the Han Dynasty, the *Tao* still had a deep impact upon many things, such as the doctrine of the mean in Confucianism and politics, *Zen* Buddhism, in which even the distinction between life and death, the spiritual and the physical is denied; the medical theory of keeping an equilibrium between *Yin and Yang*; and the theory in painting following the principle between reality and unreality. In short, from the Han Dynasty on, Chinese culture started to develop a characteristic of its own, based on the thinking of binary unity.

Due to Laotse, aspects of Chinese culture, including philosophy, literature, art, medicine and religion gradually departed from the West. The distinction between China and the West could be explained by the difference between "*One*" and "*Two*", which initially came from philosophy. Compared with the West, ancient China was a philosophical society rather than a scientific society; the ancient Chinese stressed a spiritual world rather than an objective material world.

3. DUALISTIC DIALECTICS

The third stage of the development of dualism is dualistic dialectics, in which both opposition and unity are emphasized. Actually, this is the dualism which we commonly comprehend. Dualistic dialectics is a pure philosophy which is not relevant to the prehistoric art we are discussing here.

Binary Opposition and Prehistoric Art

Since Franco-Cantabrian parietal art is the earliest art, and because it comprehensively reflects the human ideology, we should start our discussion with it.

Besides Lewis-Williams whom we mentioned above, A. Leroi-Gourhan also made a contribution in this respect.

Leroi-Gourhan pointed out, after his structural analysis of Franco-Cantabrian parietal images, that they are depicted in a dualistic structure of gender. The horse and the cows account for over half of the images in parietal art. Horse and bovine here are used to express the concept of gender rather than animal: the horse represents the male while the cow symbolizes the female. No matter what kind of animal, they are all depicted, according to the symbols which show the animal's gender, in a dualistic relation: juxtaposition, opposition, association, and pairing. In a herd of animals, even different kinds of animals can be divided into two genders: goats, deer, and elephants embody the male; while bulls and female deer represent the female. That is to say that, in this classification, the natural gender of animals does not apply; artificial marks embody the animal's gender instead. Here, we can clearly see an ancient cultural concept, expressed through natural images, that of nature vs. culture and male vs. female. Leroi-Gourhan does not explain why the Upper Paleolithic people painted animals in such a way, or what cultural meaning parietal art might have. He does, however, suggest that it probably reflects a sort of primitive religious thought (Leroi-Gourhan 1967, pp. 113-120).

As an anthropologist, it is not enough to simply point out that there is a dualistic classification in rock art. We should find their cultural meanings, i.e.

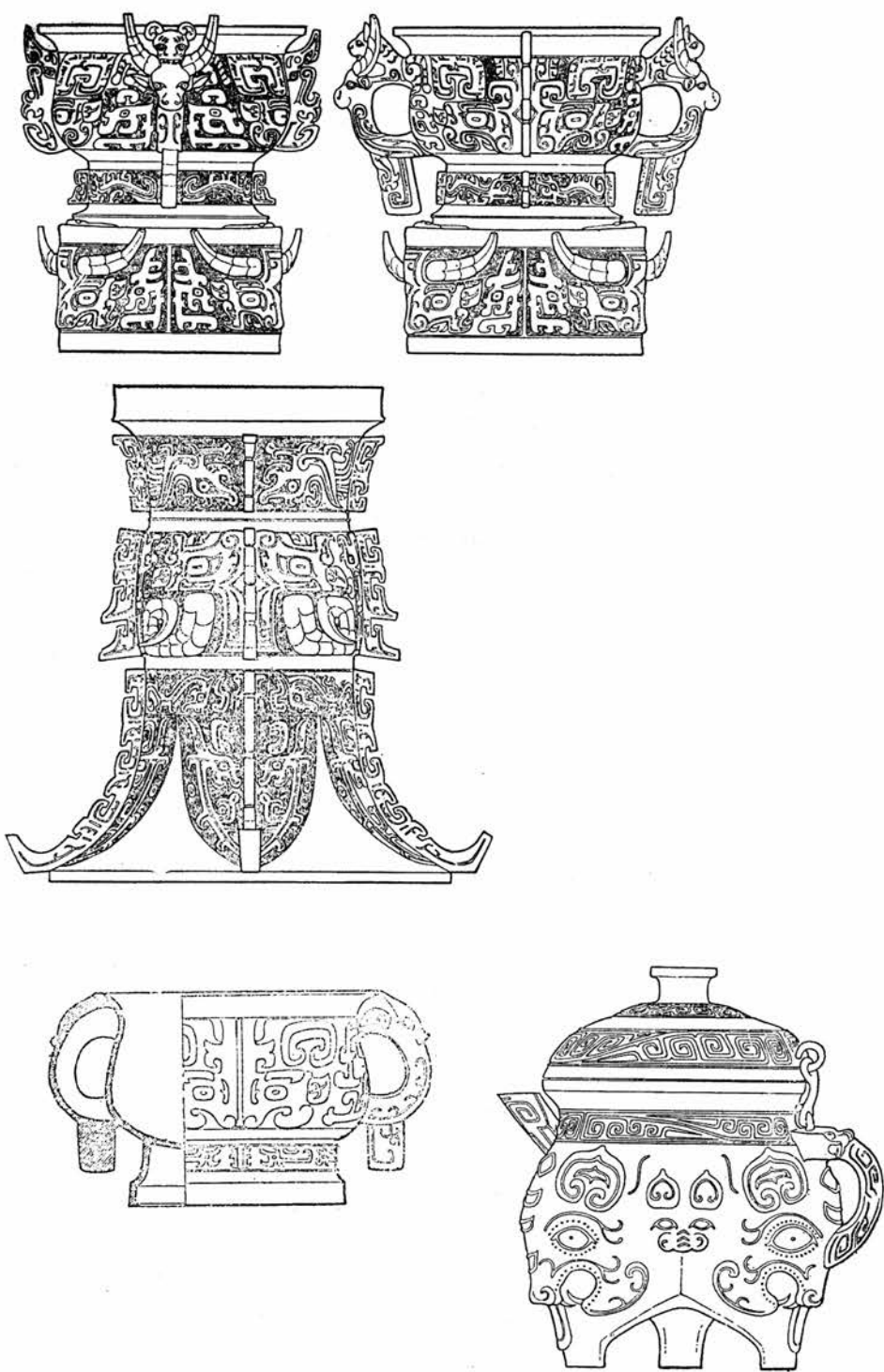


Fig. 13. The Taotie patterns on the bronze ware in the Shan Dynasty (Archivio WARA W02339).

which one in dualism represents the positive or the negative. Cultural meaning is the ultimate end of rock art research. In ancient China, there is much evidence suggesting for the principle of binary oppositions as applied to rock art. Two artistic themes from prehistoric China are worth discussing here.

1. Scenes of animals fighting

The scenes of animals fighting is a common artistic theme which has been found all over the world. Typically, it reflects the binary opposition of shamanism. The scenes are predominantly composed of a beast (tiger, leopard, eagle, wolf and in certain cases, a mythological animal) chasing or attacking its prey (goat, horse, cattle, deer, etc.). In the northern steppes of China, for instance, scenes of leopards chasing deer, tigers attacking yaks have frequently been discovered.

This theme of animals fighting initially appeared in the cave art of the Upper Paleolithic Period in southern Europe. The appearance of the theme in its explicit and definite form was found in Mesopotamian art. A lion attacking a cow carved in the relief of a pot, preserved in the national museum of Iran, is a piece of work made by the Sumer BC 3500. This theme, according to Lommel, represents a Sumerian legend: the cow is the symbol of the moon and the dark, while the lion represents the sun and the light, the light dispels the dark (Lommel 1966, pp. 11-19). This legend reflects the shamanistic thought of binary opposition, whose cultural meaning is that the positive vanquishes the negative.

In shamanism, basic binary opposition is composed of the god and the devil, white and black, light and dark, right and wrong, powerful and powerless, up and down, much and less, big and small, holy and secular, fertility and infertility, strong and weak, success and failure, happiness and disaster, etc. The former represents the positive aspect and the latter represents the negative. This composition has a definite cultural meaning: the positive defeats the negative, and consequently, has a religious function that expels the devil and blesses and protects the people. For instance, in the northern steppes of China, the bronze plaques of the Han Dynasty are predominantly decorated with design of animals fighting, amulets rather than ornaments. As a complete system in early human thinking, these abstract cultural ideas were expressed mainly through symbolic forms of animals and plants. Rock art is one of the symbolic expressions of these cultural ideas.

In Neolithic China, scenes of animals fighting frequently appeared on painted pottery. The painted jar, for instance, discovered from tombs in Henan Province, had a scene of a bird pecking a fish. Here, as we mentioned before, the bird represents Yang, heaven, the god, and life, while the fish embodies Yin, the earth, the devil, darkness and death. Culturally, the scene means that Yang triumphs over Yin, and most importantly, life over death. Correspondingly, in Europe and other places of the world, an eagle vs. a snake respectively symbolize heaven and hell, the sun and the dark, the gods and the devils. This was discovered as early as the time of ancient Egypt. In the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, this artistic theme has persisted from ancient times until today.

In the Center of China, however, due to Taoism, binary opposition transformed into binary unity during the Han Dynasty. Consequently, the scenes of a bird vs. a fish turned into a transformation of Yin and Yang, death and life, or a symbol of intercourse between the male and female. Archaeological information, so-called the scene of a bird (a fish) transforming into a fish (a bird), vividly show us this transformation.

The other theme relevant to dualism is the myth of *Dong Wanggong* (king of

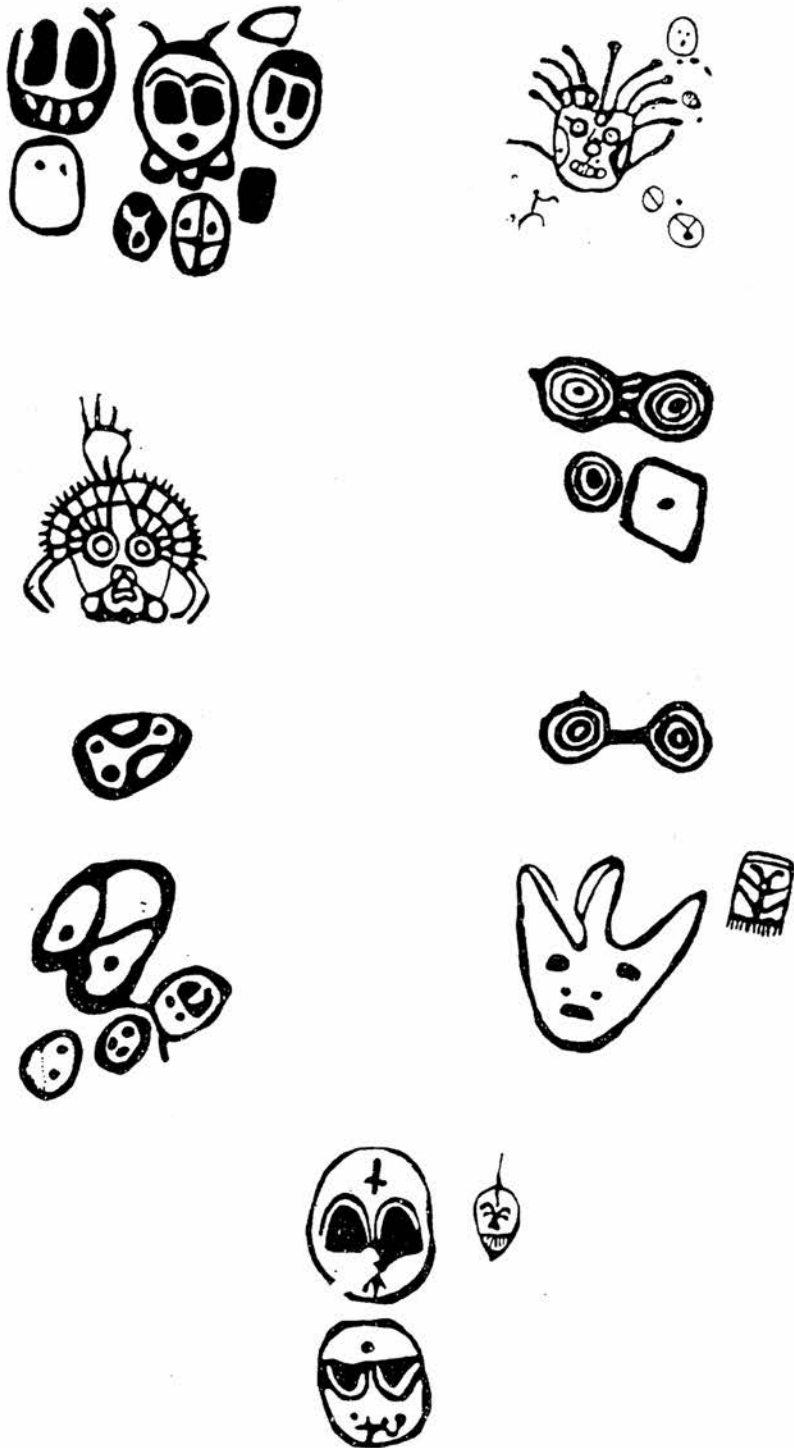


Fig. 14. The rock art of human face, stressing eyes, from the Helan Mountain in Ningxia Province (Archivio WARA W02338).

the east) and *Xi Wangmu* (queen of the west). It is also an important design on the brick relief from the Han tombs. *Dong Wanggong* has a compasses, a symbol of sky, or the sun (sometimes with a bird in it), in his hands; *Xi Wangmu* has a rectangle, a symbol of earth, or a moon (sometimes with a frog in it), in her hands. Both of them are frequently depicted with the tails of snakes, which are often tangled.

Furthermore, binary opposition is also depicted through the human social activities, such as hunting, wrestling, battle, etc. The gladiators design on copper plaques are still used by Tibetans as amulets. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer pointed out that it was a special part of the Spring and Autumn festivals that people performed wrestling in the religious ceremonies. On these occasions the participants are divided into two teams, which represent Winter and Spring, light and dark, good and bad in a struggle respectively. In ancient German mythology, a wrestling was considered to be fighting between the god of Spring and evils. In oriental countries, wrestling were taken for a fighting between Adornis and his enemies (Frazer 1987, p. 461). Okladnikov mentioned that, in the harvest day of *Yarkut* people, young people are divided into two teams that embody light and darkness, good and bad, to perform the wrestling in the ceremony (Okladnikov 1980). The Algonkin in North America played a game which also divided people into two teams, one symbolizing *life* and the other *death*. The *life* team always won (Levi-Strauss 1966, p. 31-32). In fact, the gladiatorial contests in ancient Rome, the wrestling that still persists in the Eurasian steppes, and the scene of the hero and beast in the Near East all originated from the age-old shamanistic ritual conducted under binary opposition.

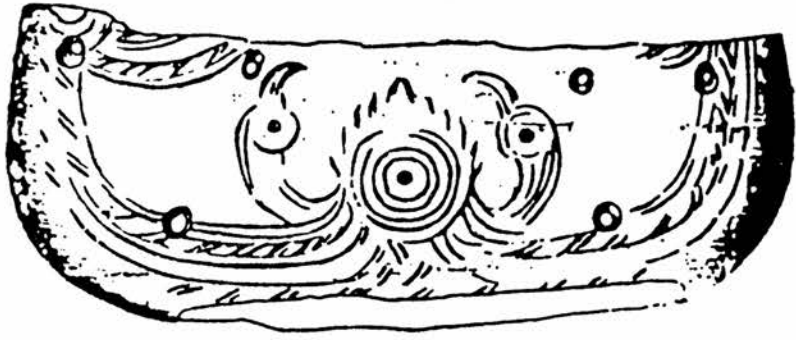
Hunting scenes were also executed in accordance with binary opposition. In the Qinghai *Lushan* site, for instance, the scenes of hunting by chariot were depicted realistically. But in fact the chariot cannot be used as a transportation vehicle, and the archaeological remains of chariot have never been found in the Plateau (Tang 1994). Therefore, the use of the chariot in hunting scenes can only be considered as an example of the cultural concept of binary opposition.

Yet the opposite dualistic elements are not always expressed because binary opposition rests on the value of the positive. Thus, the negative is often left out, especially in later cases. For instance in the cases of the tiger vs. cattle and eagle vs. snake, only the tiger and eagle are depicted. We have already discussed the tiger and eagle as the positive element in binary opposition. Here, we are going to speak of human masks, another important positive element of binary opposition in early Chinese art.

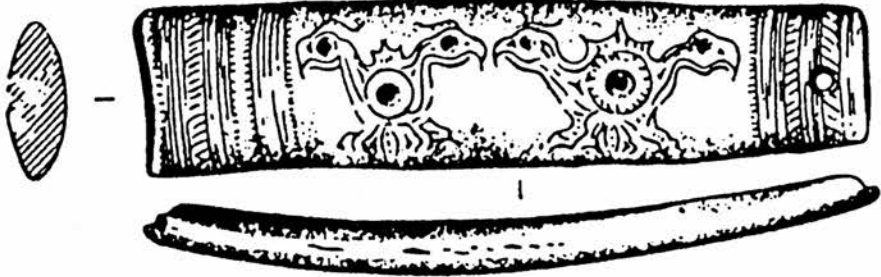
2. Depiction of Human Face

In Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Shandong, Fujian and other provinces, many rock art sites containing the depiction of human faces have been discovered. There are many theoretical explanations for the depiction of human face, but few of them are clear. We try, here, to apply the theory of binary opposition to the human masks. We should begin our analysis with the “*Yuzong*”, the jade sacrificial relic found in the *Liangchu* culture, in Zhejiang Province. The *Liangchu* culture can be dated back to the Neolithic age, around 6000 years BP.

In ancient China, the *Yuzong* as an oblation was offered to the earth. *Yuzong* takes the shape of square outside and round inside, and in the middle a perforation. It is about 40-80 mm in both width and height. Most of *Yuzong*, found in the *Liangchu* culture, were carved with human faces. In 1988, many *Yuzong* were

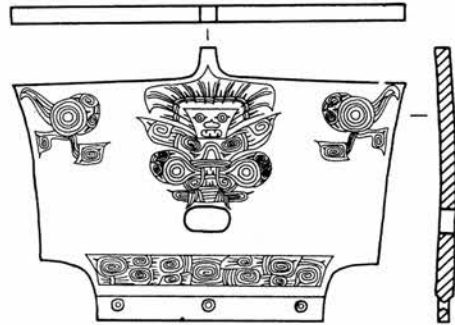


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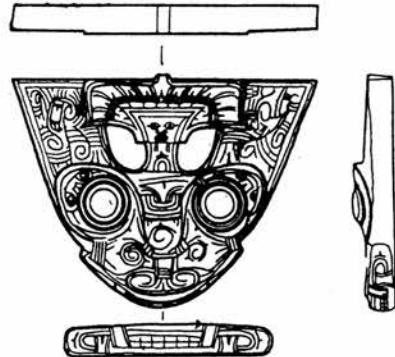


B

Fig. 15 a-b-c-d.
 a-b) The sky sods in shape of birds and suns carved on the jades of the Hemudu Culture, 6000 BC, from Zhejiang Province (Archivio WARA W02340);
 c) The images of the sun god with birds on jade-ware of Liangchu Culture in Zhejiang (Archivio WARA W02341);
 d) The Sun god carved on semicircle jade of Liangchu Culture (Archivio WARA W02342).



C



D

discovered from the *Yaoshan* site and the *Fanshan* site in Zhejiang Province. In the middle of the graves at *Yaoshan* site, archaeologists also found a square platform built of earth, which is about 7 X 7 in square and 65-85cm in height. As for the usage of the *Yuzong*, *Zhouli*, the work of the Zhou Dynasty (1100 BC-771 BC) about various religious ceremonies, gives it a definition: yellow *Yuzong* was used to worship the earth. *Zheng Xuan*, a scholar of the Han Dynasty, gives a further explanation:

Worshipped the earth with Yuzong specially in Summer Solstice, for the god was at the top of Mt. Kunlun, which faces to Heaven. (Ling 1985, p. 193)

From these sentences we get the explicit message that Mt. Kunlun is the same as the World Mountain or the Cosmic Mountain in shamanism. *Kunlun* is from the *Xongnu* (Hun) language, and means *heaven mountain* (Tang 1996b), the only place leading to heaven. In the cosmic myth of shamanism, the World Mountain as the *center pillar* or *earth axle* connects the heaven and the earth. In a shamanistic area, people could appoint a certain mountain as the World Mountain, and a big tree as the World Tree. If on a plain, people would build a high platform, or erect a pole, a stone heap and a palace as the World mountain to connect heaven and earth.

We can conclude that the square platform called the *She*, which means *country*, represents the World Mountain. Thus the human face on the *Yuzong*, used to worship Mt. *Kunlun*, the World Mountain, is the god of the *She*, the god of Mt. *Kunlun*, the heavenly god and the god of the sun. The shape of the *Yuzong* merits attention: the square outside represents the earth, the round inside represents heaven, and the perforation embodies the heavenly pillar or the earth axle which connects heaven and earth. In this sense the *Yuzong* could also be regarded as *Kunlun*. Historic work entitled *Taiping yulan*, of the Song Dynasty, described that *Kunlun* like the air in the shape of a pillar led up to heaven. *Kunlun* was the center of the earth and the heavenly pillar.

Before we compare the human faces with the heavenly god and the sun god, we should first try to summarize the traits of the heaven god and the sun god in shamanism. The gods reside in heaven or on the top of the mountain and tree. Therefore, they are always associated with birds (the eagle), mountains, trees, clouds, circles (the sun) and rays of light. Secondly, in many ancient myths, the sun was regarded as the eye of heaven. In Brahmanism, for instance, Surya, the sun god, is called "the creator of light", "the eyes of the world" (Ye et al, 1993, p. 274). The ancient Irish word "suil" means eye, but in some other European languages, such as Lithuanian and Latvian, it means *sun* (saule) (Gimbutas 1989, pp. 221-230). Archaeological information about ancient Egyptians provides more evidence that the sun god (also the heavenly god), the eagle and eyes combine to form a Trinitarian image. The sun god, Horus, is also a eagle god, and was later combined with the sun god, *Ra*, and was called *Ra-Horakhti*. But *Horus* was usually depicted as a pair of eyes, which were believed to be able to bless people with health and happiness (Zengtian 1983,2). The scarab amulets in ancient Egypt are also a symbol of the eye and the sun.

Now we return to the human faces, the gods of the *Kunlun*, referring to the ancient Chinese historic sources. The human face carvings on the *Yuzong*, including rock art, are the gods of the heaven and the sun. They have many names in classical literature. But the most important one was called "*Huang Di*".

"Huang Di" literally means *yellow emperor*. But in the very beginning, in the

Shang (1600 BC-1100BC) and Zhou (1100BC-771 BC) Dynasties, “*Di*” meant *god*. The ancient Chinese used four colours to represent four directions: white=north, blue=east, black=north, red=south, and the center was represented by yellow. “*Yellow Di*” means “the god of the center” (Xiao 1997, pp. 213-228). Mt. *Kunlun* was located in the center of the earth, so it is worshipped with yellow *yuzong*. A historic book of the Han Dynasty, entitled *Yindiwangpian*, said that “the god of the center is called *Hundun*”. Etymologists believe that *Hundun*=*Kunlun*=*Hung Di* (Yellow god) (Pang 1992). In *Mutianzi zhuan*, the biography of Emperor *Mu* written in the Warring States Period (475BC-221BC), it is recorded that one climbs *Kunlun* to visit the Palace of the *Huang Di*. In ancient Chinese literature the word *Huang* (yellow) could be replaced by another word, also pronounced as *Huang*, meaning *great*, *beginning* and *creation*.

What traits do human faces of the *Yuzong* and the rock art have? Their most salient feature are their eyes, which are large, and, in some cases, depicted as more than one or two circles. Some human faces only have eyes that consist of pupils. 11). They recall a description in *Shanhaijin*, a work of the Han Dynasty, in which the *Huang Di* has eyes with two pupils. In the Bronze Age, eyes were given a further prominence. The design called *Taotie* is also the god of heaven and the sun, as we have already mentioned that in the sun god, the eyes are usually emphasized. But only a few scholars have found this to be true (Tongkou 1990, pp. 135-204).

The Chinese genesis myth holds that, in the very beginning, chaos was the only existence, later, heaven and earth were separated, *Yin and Yang* were parted by *Huang Di*. Thus, only *Huang Di* is able to connect *Yin and Yang*, once they have been separated. Here *Yin and Yang* represent earth and heaven, death and life, secular and holy, devil and god, etc. *Huang Di* was also regarded as a symbol of rebirth, longevity and reproduction. So *Huainanzi* said that mounting up to *Kunlun* made people become immortal and made people become a god, for it was the place where the Great God lived.

Because the gods live in the heaven or on the summit of a mountain, human faces are usually depicted besides on the *Yuzong*, on jade in roundish shapes or

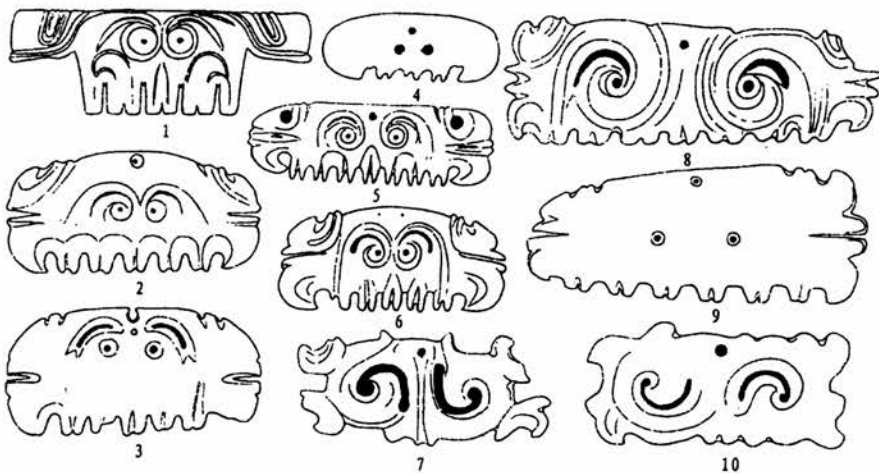


Fig. 16. The Heaven gods, all from 1-10, carved on the jades in shapes of clouds from the Hongshan Culture, around 7000 BC, in Inner Mongolia (Archivio WARA W02343).

semiround (heaven), and of semicircles with three projecting sticks (mountain), and as clouds, or birds. As the sun god, some human faces are depicted with rays of light or birds. As the World Mountain connect the three worlds: heaven, earth and hell, Mt.*Kunlun* was artistically and documentally described as a mountain with three levels or with a tree.

In rock art, human face images are usually found in places considered to be the World Mountain, such as Mt. *Helan*. In the *Xongnu* (*Hun*) language *Helan* meant *heaven*, the same as *Kunlun* (*Tan*-1996b). Even if certain mountains, in which rock art of human faces is located, are not named *heaven*, they can be considered as World Mountains or Cosmic Mountains.

Finally, we can come to a conclusion that the designs of human faces in ancient Chinese art are not only the representation of the positive in binary opposition, but they are also the images of *Huang Di*, the most important character in Chinese mythology. He was not only the god of the *she* (country), *Kunlun*, the *Taotie*, heaven, the sun but also the symbol of reproduction, longevity, rebirth, life, and other cultural concepts.

Conclusion

Through our analysis we can learn the relationship between binary opposition thought and historic art on cursory examination. But it is enough to provide us a new view and approach to prehistoric civilization. All the cultural products, including art, came from human's thinking. For the prehistoric cultural products, most of them came from the thinking of binary opposition. Levi-Strauss once raised the point about primitive thinking, he used dialectic dualism, which, as we know, is far from the thinking of binary opposition and from the prehistoric society and culture. But his approach to research is perfect, just as he said that the only difference between mythical thought and modern thought are the things we apply to thinking.

Riassunto

L'articolo prende in considerazione il dualismo ed il suo ruolo nel pensiero umano. L'autore individua tre tipi di pensiero dualistico: l'opposizione binaria, l'unità binaria e la dialettica dualistica. L'opposizione binaria è messa in relazione all'arte preistorica, soprattutto quella cinese. Il pensiero sciamanico implica l'idea di dualismo, poiché il suo significato culturale è la vittoria del positivo sul negativo.

Summary

The article deals with the study of dualistic thought and its role in human thinking. The author recognizes three kinds of dualistic thought: binary opposition, binary unity and dualistic dialectics. Binary opposition thought is then analysed in relation to prehistoric art, above all of China. The shamanistic thought involves the idea of dualism, as its cultural meaning is the positive vanquishing the negative.

Resumé

L'article prend en considération le dualisme et son rôle dans la pensée humaine. L'auteur individualise trois types de pensée dualistique: l'opposition binaire, l'unité binaire et la dialectique dualistique. L'opposition binaire est mise en relation avec l'art préhistorique, surtout le chinois. La pensée chamanique implique l'idée de dualisme, car son signifié culturel est la victoire du positif sur le négatif.

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