

CHINESE SOCIAL HISTORY

Paul Clark, Ph.D.

Introduction Chinese society in the late neolithic and early bronze ages developed largely independent of other ancient societies. As a result, there are a number of distinctive features infrequently seen in other areas of the ancient world. How or why this combination of attributes emerged as it did is not known. Nonetheless, these achievements: a strict patriarchy and social structure built on Confucian and Daoists ethics; a strong, highly centralized, interventionist government in an era when that was rarely seen; and a commitment to social order and the greater good over individual rights and liberty, converged to produce an ideal that has endured for more than 4000 years. Of course, there have been periods of divergence and of great social disruption, such as the integration of Buddhism, the Mongol invasions, and the leveling of society under communism. Indeed, each ruler and every generation have left their own mark on China. Nevertheless, the idea of “China”—its identity—has remained steadfast in essential ways across many different epochs, at least among the ruling elites. Chinese civilization, despite interludes and discontinuity, has endured.

PREHISTORY—The Neolithic Age (10,000-2000 BCE)

Social Relationships. For most of the neolithic period people lived in small groups where many if not most social relationships were based on some level of kinship ties. Fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, in-laws, and other extended family were all a part of any given group--which was likely a patriarchy. When groups got larger and small villages emerged, family ties were still paramount.

Class. Class as we understand it in the contemporary world had almost certainly not yet emerged in the neolithic era. It is associated with civilization and is social construct found where relatively large numbers of people live in close proximity to each other. Given that, early on, very small groups lived in caves and in very small villages, social structures were rudimentary at best. Later, neolithic Chinese began to construct pits with fires in the center around which huts made of wood, straw and mud were constructed. In warm, wet periods, multiple, large pits were sometimes constructed that could accommodate several dozen people, demonstrating the appearance of small villages. Still, settlements were highly dispersed so that humans would not compete for limited resources. There are no known cities until the Xia period, which spanned the last century of the neolithic and the early bronze age. Warmth and security from attack and predation were primary goals as well as the pooling of resources. The collection and production of food was the most important task of all neolithic societies. As China transitioned to the bronze age, the capacity to store food stuffs increased dramatically. However, this storage capacity would likely not be enough to get through entire seasons and certainly not enough to navigate years of drought or pestilence. As the era progressed, there likely emerged some stratification of society with village headmen and others controlling a disproportionate amount of resources. For most, however, subsistence was tenuous and often difficult.

Gender relationships. Daughters were likely married out but sons likely were not. Women were pregnant for many if not most of their childbearing years and often died in childbirth. Men hunted, fished and fought, and suffered injury and death from those activities. Though likely, it is not known whether serial monogamy was practiced in mating partners. Boys learned life skills from older men in the group and girls learned from older women. To the extent possible, families cared for the old and infirm, although few would have survived into their dotage. The struggle to survive in an age where disease, injury and unexpected death were constant companions even for the young and healthy provides context for social relationships. It indicates that flexibility and utilitarianism must surely have governed most of humanity. Orphans must have been adopted, widows remarried and wanderers taken in.

BRONZE AGE (2000 BCE-600 BCE)

Class and Social Relationships. Society in bronze age China was no longer solely based on the tribal or clan system, although familial ties were still paramount in daily life. There was a monarch, and usually, a central government which relied upon local elites to implement and administer government directives. Society was generally dispersed in rural areas, but there was a thriving urban culture as well, something that indicated a stratified

social system. In the cities of the late bronze age, Chinese elites valued large architectural edifices for both their practical and symbolic uses. In the Zhou Era (1046 BCE-771 BCE), there was an institution that resembled serfdom for the peasantry, although its contours are not well known. In addition, slavery is known to have existed in some form or another. Relationships between superiors and subordinates are believed to have had a reciprocal, moral component. It was the moral obligation of the rulers to govern fairly and justly and it was the moral obligation of the peasants to obey just rulers.

Funerary. In the burial tombs of early and middle Bronze Age elites, archaeologists have found the skeletal remains of large numbers of humans as well as animals who had clearly been sacrificed in order to be buried together with the deceased. This evidence of human sacrifice, though troubling for us in the contemporary world, was widely practiced in antiquity. It indicates the extent of the control elites exercised over those around them. As China moved through the Bronze Age, evidence of human sacrifice diminished until it was largely replaced by symbols of humans, such as small clay or bronze figurines, and in the most extreme case, the Terra Cotta Warriors of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (r. 221 BCE-210 BCE).

Gender. In bronze age China, gender roles were well established. Family units were dominated by a patriarchy and women were rarely allowed to participate in public life. This attitude reflects the social milieu just before the time of Confucius, who taught that only men were head of household and women bore children and took care of the family. In particular, women were expected to bear a son who would eventually become head of household and pass on the family name. This was her foremost duty. Still, peasant women worked alongside their husband in the rice paddies during the labor intensive planting and harvesting season. As the Zhou dynasty began to decline, in the 7th century BCE, the fighting season began to lengthen. Men went to fight, kill and be killed, thereby leaving many women the total responsibility for subsistence and family life for longer periods of time. Of course, social convention often did not (and still does not) apply to aristocratic women, some of whom emerged to become prominent figures in society.

IRON AGE (1000 BCE-500 CE)

Class and Geographic Mobility. In each of the kingdoms of pre-unification China before 220 BCE, society was structured in slightly different ways. Peasants, in particular, had different experiences in the various kingdoms. In most of the eastern kingdoms, peasants were tied to the land through one form of coercion or the other. Though not exactly serfs in the medieval European sense, peasants could not move freely from place to place without the permission of their lords. This led to the problem of peasants absconding—that is to say—peasants moving without permission to a different kingdom where, it was hoped, conditions were better. Others could and did move as well: artisans, scholars, bureaucrats and even military men. This was possible because of a shared language. The Qin dynasty (221 BCE-206 BCE) is well known for the incentives they offered to the laboring classes. For a brief period, the Qin provided land to new peasants in a way that was similar to homesteading in the United States during the 19th century. Peasants became free-holders instead of semi-serfs if they improved land on the frontier. In due course, this land was brought under cultivation, was taxed and brought under the control of the central authorities. It provided an additional layer of protection against the barbarians on the periphery. These policies relating to the peasantry were modified several times during the Han period (202 BCE-220 CE).

Gender. Along with Confucianism, which restricted the position of women in society, Daoism also played a role in the social structure. The concept of yin and yang illustrates this duality. Women were understood to represent yin: passive, soft and reflective. Yin was associated with darkness and carried a negative connotation in Chinese society. Men represented yang, which is active and assertive. It was associated with light and positive energy. These forces: light and darkness, positive and negative, hard and soft, active and passive help to maintain harmony in the universe. For iron age Chinese, this was the natural order of the world. However, it should be noted that, theoretically, neither side was to dominate the other. Instead, they were to complement each other. By the time of the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), the legal system had relegated women to second-class status. Women could only be head of household if there was no adult male and were never able to initiate divorce proceeding from their husband for any reason. And, of course, men of means could take as many concubines as they desired and could afford.

POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD (500 CE-1500 CE)

Class and the Scholarly Tradition. Society in post-classical China functioned in much the same way as it had under the Han (206 BCE-220 CE). There were monarchs, aristocrats, artisans, clergy, peasants, laborers, etc. Each played their role in an organized and generally stable society. During the Tang period (618-907), another class of society emerged, the Confucian elite, sometimes also known as degree holders or Mandarins. These government officials helped society function as the population of China skyrocketed. They also created a custom known as the “scholarly tradition” in China, a concept that is well understood and highly valued in East Asia to this day. Scholars, or those with other specialized learning in China, are much more highly valued than in the western world. For hundreds of years in China, it was believed that society could neither function nor progress without learned, moral men to provide a philosophical framework for actions taken by the state. Service to the state and to the emperor was the highest calling to which a man could aspire.

Gender. Women could not aspire to serve the state. The Confucian elites articulated a moral code which kept women both out of public service and even out of the public eye. If possible, it was the job of women to stay at home, take care of the household and prioritize either fathers, husbands or sons. Women’s goals and aspirations were always secondary to those of the men around her. Strict adherence to this code was complicated for peasants and laborers. Peasant women worked alongside their husbands in the fields and rice paddies.

Foot-binding. In the Song period (960-1279), if not before, there arose the custom of foot binding among those who could afford it. It is not clear why this particular activity began, but it had the effect of crippling any woman who had the misfortune of experiencing it. Late in childhood, girls’ toes were doubled under the soles of their feet, bound tightly and kept there as their feet grew. This was a very painful ordeal. Over time, it retarded the growth of bones in the feet and created very small feet that were said to resemble the beauty of a golden lotus. Women with bound feet were unable to walk very far or engage in any sort of work which required them to stand for long periods of time. It was not possible to work in the fields or rice paddies. However, this condition conveyed status and made women more desirable for marriage. Though foot binding was outlawed in the early 20th century, it existed in the rural areas for another decade or so. Today, a tiny number of very elderly women with bound feet survive in China.

Concubinage and Polygamy. Women in China also had to endure the peculiar institution of concubinage. Concubines existed in all societies in the pre-modern world. In China, it existed until outlawed in 1949. In general, girls who became concubines were from very humble origins. In this system, young women were sold by their father or older brother to a wealthy and powerful man. She would then become his sexual companion for life. The offspring of concubines were not afforded the same level of legal legitimacy that the children of first, second or third wives enjoyed and could not inherit unless no other heir existed, and most often not even then. However, they existed within a well-established legal framework and were not considered only sex slaves who could be discarded at will without cause. They were a part of the family and treated as such. Nonetheless, the young women sold into these situations rarely had a say in the decision to become a concubine. It was sometimes considered a badge of honor to have a daughter sold as a concubine to a wealthy, powerful man who could also provide financial assistance to the father’s household as well. Nonetheless, the concept of free will for women in post-classical China was at best a secondary consideration.

Unmarried Men. It is not clear how large a percentage of women were concubines in post-classical China. However, the practice was widespread. One of the enduring problems in post-classical China was the lack of suitable women available to marry working class men. Polygamy and concubinage among elite men was at the root of the problem. Poor, unmarried men who were never able to marry and start a household of their own were destined to remain on the periphery of society and often became law breakers and trouble makers.

EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1500-1800 CE)

Class and Structure. Society was structured in the early modern period much as it was in the early Ming period (1368-1644). Though the ruling household had changed in 1644 and a barbarian conquest dynasty had seized power, not a great deal changed in society. There were monarchs, aristocrats, artisans, clergy, peasants, laborers, etc. Each played their role in an organized and generally stable society. Mandarins or degree holders acted as the administrative class and governed much as they had during the early Ming period. The vast majority of the population worked the land just as their ancestors had and most had very little contact with their foreign conquerors. The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) simply created an additional layer of administration at the very top. This, of course,

led to the problem of the government being administratively top-heavy. But, given just how prosperous China was in the 17th and 18th centuries, this structural weakness was not evident until well into the 19th century.

The Retention of Culture. The Qing sought to maintain their distinct culture as members of the Jurchen/Manchu ethnicity. They were well aware just how quickly China had assimilated other conquest dynasties and were determined not to lose their identity. They used the Manchu language in the imperial household and kept two different sets of records for many years: one in Manchu for household deliberations and one in Mandarin for civil administration. They handed down laws which separated all the different ethnicities of China from the Jurchen. For example, during much of the Qing period, it was not legal for a member of the Jurchen/Manchu ethnicity to marry or have sexual relations with someone from any other ethnicity. This was an extremely problematic restriction, however, when one considers that several banner armies were stationed long-term far away from Manchuria. Indeed, it was a law that was often broken, particularly later in the Qing period. Interaction, in general, between the ethnicities was not encouraged. This was made somewhat possible because Qing armies often lived in garrison towns when not on campaign. Members of the Manchu ethnicity were also treated differently from the Han under the law. Among the imperial family, it is generally understood that the Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) lived and acted in a way which reflected his Jurchen/Manchu heritage, but his grandson, the Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) struggled to maintain Jurchen/Manchu traditions. Nonetheless, in the late Qing period, it was still possible to distinguish the Manchu ethnicity from the Han ethnicity.

The Queue. Perhaps the most recognizable element of the Manchu conquest in the early modern period was the appearance of the queue in China. It was also one of the most hated symbols forced upon all male Han Chinese. The queue is a type of hairstyle. In the Ming period, it was customary for men to have long, flowing hair. Indeed, it was a badge of honor. When the Manchu began the conquest of China, they required all Chinese men to adopt the Jurchen hairstyle, often referred to as the “pigtail.” But it was more than that. One also had to shave one’s hair from the forehead to at least half-way back on the scalp. Often the pigtail was trimmed only to keep it from dragging the ground when walking. Han men chafed under this rule. Nonetheless, as early as the first raids across the north China/Manchuria frontier in the early 17th century, they forced this upon the Han. It symbolized the acceptance of Qing authority. If a man refused to adopt the queue, he was considered to be in open and visible revolt against the Qing and subject to summary execution. Early in the dynasty, thousands were killed because they refused. A famous slogan of the era was, “keep your hair and lose your head, lose your hair and keep your head.” Within a few years, the queue had become customary.

The 19th CENTURY

Class and Fragmentation. As the 19th century progressed, Chinese society first saw little in the way of change, then there were the years of catastrophe during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and then finally, the slow devolution of the existing order. The system, in which there were monarchs, aristocrats, bureaucrats, artisans, clergy, peasants, laborers, etc., had worked very well since the transition from the Ming Period (1368-1644). Most Chinese understood their role in a stable and prosperous society. The Mandarins, the administrative class, continued to do their jobs at all levels of government. But it is, in part, because of China’s stable and prosperous system that the population continued to grow in the early 19th century. In 1800, there were perhaps 300 million Chinese. By 1900, that number had reached at least 400 million. Agriculture was the key to maintaining social and political order. It is not clear who or what is to blame for China’s social problems in the 19th century. But it is clear, as evidenced by the widespread use of opium, the rise of banditry and the breakdown of authority, that they got worse as the century progressed. Any disruption in agriculture due to drought, flood, pests, excessive heat or cold required the use of emergency government-run granaries to feed the people until the next harvest. It appeared that many of China’s peasants (which represented most of the population) often teetered on the brink of hardship or worse. And the government was increasingly unresponsive, even though the peasants continued to pay their taxes. In addition, government corruption was endemic. Infrastructure such as dikes, roads and irrigation ditches, which had allowed for the dramatic advances in agriculture, but which was expensive to maintain, began to breakdown. When the Grand Canal ceased to function after the 1855 Yellow River floods (during which the Yellow River changed course dramatically), some of the Confucian elites began to imply that the Qing had lost the “Mandate of Heaven.” Failure to maintain essential infrastructure often presaged dynastic decline.

Early 20th CENTURY (1900-1950)

Continuity and Change. It would be easy to say that Chinese society in the early 20th century had devolved into something that neither resembled nor functioned as it had in previous epochs. But that would not be true. It had a well-established, mature society that provided the glue which held China together in the absence of effective government. There were many elements of society that functioned as they always had. In particular, China's peasants, who constituted at least 90% of society, continued to farm the land and live their lives much as they always had. Village headmen, applying basic Confucian ideology, still acted as intermediaries between individual producers and the authorities. What had changed was who they paid taxes to and who enforced the laws by which they ordered their lives. It is also true that taxes were sometimes very high (more than 50%) and paid in advance or sometimes multiple times per year if a warlord or government changed. One of the primary weaknesses in society in the early 20th century was the lack of a strong bureaucracy. The old Confucian elites, the Mandarins, had been dissolved as an official class of society. And, given the lack of a central government, most of those magistrates were not replaced with effective leadership. Neither the leaders of the Republican Revolution nor the Guomindang had succeeded in re-ordering society, but that had not that been among their goals in the first place. While it is true that both wanted to bring China into modernity, a radical restructuring of society was not the highest of their priorities.

Class. One group did emerge in the first half of the 20th century that sought the radical restructuring of society: the Chinese Communist Party. As was true of other countries ruled by communists, the CCP wanted to flatten society. All of China would be radically equal. All great landowners would be stripped of their land (and capital) and it would be redistributed to those who actually worked it. They wanted to apply the old socialist adage popularized by Karl Marx (1818-1883) in the 19th century: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" to all elements of the economy. No one would become wealthy, but no one would be desperately poor either. In the political realm, the politburo would govern until the people of China were educated sufficiently to understand that communism was in their best interests. They would then voluntarily vote themselves into a communist system (the dictatorship of the proletariat). In short, this was the plan that the CCP used when it set up soviets in their 1920s and 30s. However, before it could be instituted, the war with Japan (1937-1945) disrupted society in a way not seen since the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864).

Social Disruption in the War With Japan (1937-1945). Though Japan could not control all of China, it occupied territory in which hundreds of millions of Chinese lived. In these territories, Japanese occupation officials recognized the extent of their limitations. They were governing a people group who had not submitted to their rule and whose government would not surrender. The Japanese therefore ruled with a very, very strong hand and would not allow any dissent. The Japanese traumatized the Chinese people in many ways. First, the Japanese did not perceive of the Chinese as being equally human. They enjoyed no rights given by the Japanese. Second, the best of all that China produced went to the Japanese: food, housing, clothing, manufactured goods, etc. Third, when the Chinese had the temerity to oppose the Japanese or question any decisions made by the Japanese, the Chinese were killed. Fourth, when the Chinese actively engaged in guerilla war, the Japanese responded with large-scale slaughter. Individuals, villages, and whole cities survived (or didn't) based on whim and chance. Society, as might be expected, was terrorized and moved into a protective, survival mode. From 1937 until the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, China's losses reached approximately 20 million. It should come as no surprise that many elements of Chinese society still express hatred for the Japanese.

Gender. As is the case in any society traumatized by war, invasion and occupation, social conventions broke down. In the occupied areas, Chinese men of fighting age were considered by the Japanese to be potential adversaries and treated as such. Men of fighting age risked their lives if they left their dwellings. In active war zones, they were often killed on sight irrespective of whether or they were a combatant. Women were often brutalized and sometimes kept as comfort women or personal sex slaves. In cities such as Nanjing in the winter of 1937-1938, tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of men, women and children were killed after the city surrendered. When the war was over in 1945, the number of men needed to work the farms and factories was insufficient and women did many of the jobs that men formally had done. Social conventions limiting widows remarrying were also relaxed due to the vast number of unattached women.

Late 20th Century (1950-1999)

Class and Social Engineering. In the years following the 1949 communist revolution, the CCP sought to completely level society. There was to be radical equality, true liberation and no class distinctions. In a country where the government had allowed for the stratification of society during the Qing period (1644-1912), this was

truly revolutionary. All large landowners were stripped of their lands and capital and sent to reeducation camps if they were lucky and executed if not. Their land was then used to create agricultural communes where the people who had actually been working the land were given responsibility to work the land for the state. All known supporters of capitalism, bankers, financiers, industrialists (a relatively small number) had their factories nationalized and their wealth seized. All members, supporters, known associates and family members of the Guomindang party were given a notation in their records that they had a suspect background. Many were sent to reeducation camps. They were then blocked from becoming a member of the CCP or from rising to any position of leadership in society. In the early years, even their children were not allowed access to education on the university level. This black mark followed them through their entirety of their lives. A new social hierarchy emerged, one which valued ideological purity and membership in the CCP above all else. The CCP governed society, the economy, the military, the state and everything else of value.

The Peasants. Mao sought to glorify the rural peasantry in Chinese society. His version of Marxism substituted the agricultural worker for the industrial worker. This was a subtle, but extremely important, shift in communist ideology because most Chinese were still engaged in agricultural pursuits—and there was very little industry. It was therefore difficult for the Chinese industrial worker to, as Marx wrote, become “alienated from the means of production.” Instead, the government during the revolutionary era sought to elevate the lowly peasant to the equal of all in society. Their way of life, which was characterized by the CCP as exemplifying hard work, frugality, responsibility and rectitude appealed to the politburo. Mao wanted all of society to emulate the best qualities of China’s peasants.

Liberalization of Economy. Mao Zedong died in 1976 and, after a short period of transition, was succeeded by Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997). Deng is remembered most for liberalizing the Chinese economy and for allowing for limited capitalism in the economy. However, when China began on its path to capitalism, the government also moved away from relying on the rural peasant for social and economic inspiration. Today, China has a large and thriving middle class and a very large number of industrialists and super-wealthy. There are also tens of millions of poor, homeless and marginalized. Though the communists are still in power, they have abandoned most of their economic ideology and, through that, the attempt to bring radical equality to all members of society.

Gender and the One Child Policy. China’s current population is approximately 1.4 billion. It is the most populous nation, by far, in the world. The only nation that comes anywhere close is India, which has a population of approximately 1 billion. China’s leaders struggled for decades after the revolution to make the nation nutritionally self-sufficient. But that didn’t happen in most years. More alarmingly, it became clear to the Chinese central economic planners in the early 1970s that the population would continue to rise to the point that famine and malnutrition would be an ever-present specter. The push to bring more and more land under cultivation would lead to environmental degradation and ultimately, the collapse of the social and political order. Therefore, the government instituted its draconian “one child” policy in 1979—which limited all women to bearing one child only. While the policy was in place, one had to acquire permission from the authorities to procreate. Children born without permission were often denied full social benefits including healthcare and education and their parents punished. As expected, this unpopular policy disproportionately effected women and created a number of other social problems up to an including infanticide if the baby showed any signs of abnormality, infant abandonment if the child was female (and not a male who would carry on the family name), forced abortions and sterilizations. But the policy did yield results and the population of China is expected to begin declining sometime around 2045. Therefore, some of the most intolerable elements of the law were relaxed in 2013. However, Chinese society has been forever changed as a result of this policy. Having a large family had been a marker of one’s wealth until 1979. Now, smaller families are not just encouraged by the government but have become the social norm. Finally, an unnatural demographic anomaly has emerged whereby there are slightly more males children in China than female children. For context, a slightly larger number of females have been born each year worldwide in all cultures. This has been a constant for thousands of years. A by-product of the one-child policy has therefore managed to change thousands of years of evolution and gender demographics.

Readings

- 1) David Keightley ed., *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*, (University of California Press, 1983).
- 2) Li Feng, *Early China: A Social and Cultural History*, (Cambridge, 2013).

- 3) Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius*, (University of California Press, 2006)
- 4) Evelyn Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Institutions*, (University of California Press, 1998).
- 5) Andrew G. Walder, *Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement*, (Harvard University Press, 2012).

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Amateur historians often ask the question “which society created the world’s first civilization?” The Chinese, the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians and the Indians all like to lay claim to being the first. Do you think this is an important and meaningful question to ask? If so, what assumptions underlie these assertions? What are the criteria used to determine civilization? Is it writing, religion, an organized government, the existence of a monarch, cities, advanced agriculture, etc?
- 2) Confucianism and Taoism emerged at roughly the same time. Both religions have shaped and molded Chinese society in profound ways. Confucianism is widely known around the world and credited for helping to create Chinese culture and for influencing the cultures of Korea, Vietnam and Japan, to name a few. Why is Taoism so poorly known around the world? Why does it too not receive equal credit for influencing Chinese culture? In order to answer the question, you will need to be able to articulate the primary tenants of each faith. You will need to know how one of the religions was used to legitimize the ruler of the Han Dynasty and the other was not.
- 3) Many historians have depicted ethnic relations between the Manchu and Han to be unimportant until the late 19th century? To what extent do you agree with this notion? Were the Manchu able to maintain their ethnic identity until the end? Or at what point in the Qing period were the governing Manchu effectively assimilated into Han Chinese society? Is the issue of ethnicity even an important question to ask of Qing China?

Texts

- 1) From the *I Ching* (The Book of Changes), Book 1, Part 1, Section 15, *On Modesty*, originally compiled during the Zhou Period

The destinies of men are subject to immutable laws that must fulfill themselves. But man has it in his power to shape his fate, according as his behavior exposes him to the influence of benevolent or of destructive forces. When a man holds a high position and is nevertheless modest, he shines with the light of wisdom; if he is in a lowly position and is modest, he cannot be passed by. Thus the superior man can carry out his work to the end without boasting of what he has achieved.

- 2) Lao Tzu. From the *Tao Te Ching*, 7th century BCE

Those who know don't talk.
Those who talk don't know.

Close your mouth, block your senses,
blunt your sharpness, untie your knots,
soften your glare, settle your dust.
This is the primal identity.

Be like the Tao.
It can't be approached or withdrawn from,
benefitted or harmed, honored or brought into disgrace.

It gives itself up continually.
This is why it endures.

3) From the *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*, found in Robert Van Gulik's translation, Dover Press, 1976, pg. 5.

In the end, as a general rule, no criminal escapes the laws of the land. But it is up to the judge to decide who is guilty and who is innocent. If, therefore, a judge is honest, then the people in his district will be at peace; and if the people are at peace, their manner and morals will be good. All vagabonds and idlers, all spreaders of false rumors and all trouble makers will disappear, and all of the common people will cheerfully go about their own affairs. And if some wicked people from outside should happen to settle down in such a district, they will better their lives and reform of their own accord; for they see with their own eyes, and hear with their own ears, how strictly the laws are enforced, and how sternly justice is meted out. Therefore, it can be said that the amelioration of the common people depends on the honesty of the magistrate; never yet has a dishonest official improved the people under him.

4) Guidelines for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966. Found at http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/sixteen_points.pdf

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, old culture, and customs, and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds, and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do just the opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole society. At present our objective is to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic "authorities" and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all the other exploiting classes and transform education, literature, and art and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

The masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals, and revolutionary cadres form the main force in the Great Cultural Revolution. Large numbers of revolutionary young people, previously unknown, have become courageous and daring pathbreakers. ...