



RE-MEMBERING IN TWO ANCIENT CITIES

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Abstract:

The Han, with its third century BC capital in Chang'an (modern-day Xian), and the West Saxons, with their ninth century capital in Winchester, built their dynasties by following remarkably similar policies of «re-membering», or recovering lost textual legacies that were used to underpin the rebuilding and subsequent re-formation of the cultures. The Han Emperor Wudi (r. 141–87 BC) launched a project whereby he hoped to restore the legitimacy of Confucius after his writings were destroyed by the legalist Qin emperor Shi Huang. Thus began the tradition of education in the Confucian Classics and the Imperial examinations. King Alfred, of course, is famously associated with his project of educational reforms announced in his Preface to his English translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*.

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Keyword: re-membering, re-formation, Han dynasty, West Saxon, capital.

Introduction

The Han dynasty, which ruled China from 206 BC to 220 AD, and the West-Saxon kingdom, which became the dominant cultural and political force in England in the ninth century AD, share the distinction of being governments that laid the cultural and political foundation of future great empires. The Han was

established by the legendary Liu Bang, while the West Saxons achieved their greatest accomplishments under King Alfred, who ruled from 871–899. Possible connections between these two founding dynasties/kingdoms may seem unlikely; nevertheless, this paper makes the argument that such connections are there and that they are significant. Specifically,

it traces the similar strategies that established enduring forms of government and great literary and artistic production in ancient China and England. The Han, operating from Chang'an (modern-day Xian), and the West Saxons, with their ninth century capital in Winchester, built their dynasties by following remarkably similar policies of «re-membering», or recovering lost textual legacies that were used to underpin the rebuilding and subsequent re-formation of the cultures. The Han Emperor Wudi (r. 141-87 BC) launched a project whereby he hoped to restore the legitimacy of Confucius after his writings were destroyed by the legalist Qin emperor Shi Huang. Thus began the tradition of education in the Confucian Classics and the Imperial examinations. King Alfred, of course, is famously associated with his project of educational reforms announced in his Preface to his English translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*.

These two cases provide clear examples of the role texts play in culture building, how they make it possible to reclaim the lost past and to adapt it to future dreams of imperial and national glory. Textual activity is the true foundation on which cultural and government centers are built and sustained over time. While the physical city, the concrete capital, may move or collapse in fire, the texts, through the cycles of recovery and adaptation, survive and get resurrected to provide a basis for rebuilding the cultural framework. In the case of China and England, this process of «re-membering» is at the core of strategies for establishing political legitimacy and cultural ascendancy that through history would prove to have the power to give these particular nations such impressive longevity and influence.

Methods

This study begins by considering the primary historical records, the statements left to us by two towering figures in the development of Chinese and English culture, Liu Bang, the first Han emperor, and Alfred, King of the West Saxons. The records of the statements and actions of these rulers clearly show that each understands that their own power and the influence exerted by their respective cultures is linked to the quality of artistic and intellectual production and this quality is manifested in a variety of ways, chiefly through literature and learning. The legitimacy of the ruler becomes inseparably linked early on to the sophistication of such productions, and this connection is expressed in both cases by analogies between cultural development and architecture.

Next, I attempt to apply the theories of «characterology» and «cræft» to these historical statements and actions. Both of these theories make use of the ancient Chinese and the Anglo-Saxon view of the universe and human society based on the principle of resonance. What happens in one sphere of endeavor affects and resonates with other spheres. By this logic, the legitimacy of a ruler is tied to his cultural prowess, his ability to build and rebuild or, to put it in the context of this essay, to «re-member», to put the fragmented members of the cultural legacy back together. However, the ability to accomplish such a grand, large project can be evidenced in the smallest trace of mastery in the arts. In China, for example, a skill in the art of calligraphy served to indicate the level of skill in other spheres such as administration and government. That is the principle, according to Rebecca Doran, that underlies the Chinese theory of «characterology». In Anglo-Saxon England

in Alfred's time, the parallel to this respect for Chinese calligraphy was found in the reverence shown for the artistry of scribes and in the appreciation for the rhetorical mastery demonstrated in translating Latin. It was by demonstrating one's «cræft» in this way that a scholar, official or ruler proved his ability to teach and to govern.

What the truly gifted ruler produces in each case is a government that rests on an awe-inspiring cultural foundation, and to construct such a foundation the Han emperor Liu Bei and the Anglo-Saxon king Alfred resorted to «re-remembering», to gathering up the tatters of a lost cultural legacy and putting it back together in such a way that it could be the platform for a lasting future greatness. It is in this endeavor that each ruler shows distinctive and exceptional skill and artistry. That is the point I try to make in the final section of the essay.

Discussion

Sima Qian (145-c.85 BC), in his famous *Historical Records (Shiji)*, describes an argument that arose when Xiao He, the chief minister to the first Han Emperor Gaozu/Liu Bang, was accused by Liu of wasting money on building a huge, elaborate Eternal Palace at Chang'an (Xi'an), the Han capital. He reminded the minister that the fledgling empire had yet to establish itself securely and was in an ongoing war with Northern Invaders, the Xiongnu. Minister Xiao responded that «It is precisely because the fate of the empire is not yet settled that we need to build palaces and halls like these». His reasoning? «The true Son of Heaven treats the four quarters as his family estate. If he does not dwell in magnificent quarters, he will have no way to display his authority, nor will he establish the foundation for his heirs to build on» [1, p.67]¹

This analogy between building an elaborate structure and building the basis for a long-lasting unified empire sounds surprisingly similar to what King Alfred was saying in Winchester some thousands of miles away and almost a thousand years into the future. In his Preface to his translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, after carefully describing how every person should venture out into the forest to collect strong, guiding texts in order to know how to direct his life, he concludes,

«It is no wonder, though, that one should labor for such material, both in the carrying and in the building; but every man, after he has built a cottage on land leased by his lord, with his help, likes to rest in it sometimes, and go hunting and fowling and fishing, and from that lease to provide for himself in every way, both on sea and on land, until the time when, through his lord's favor, he should merit chartered land and a perpetual inheritance. So may the rich benefactor, who rules both these transitory habitations and those eternal homes, bring it about. May he who created both and rules both grant that I may be fit for each: both to be useful here and especially to attain thither» [2, p.68].

In each case, the authors speak of building a foundation for future greatness, of legitimizing authority on the basis of the Lord's favor. Capital building becomes empire building by extension, a building that is legitimized and sustained by individual moral character. Further, in each case, the building is a textual endeavor, a recovery of ancient knowledge and an intentional remembering/re-remembering that adapts it to present needs. The capital, like Paul's church, is not merely a physical building project, but a spiritual, moral and most importantly, a cultural one that projects visions of nationhood and empire into the future.

In the building of halls, forts, and imperial palaces, the techniques practiced and the materials used in medieval Northern Europe and in Han China were somewhat similar. During the Western Han, architectural design was highly advanced, and the preferred building material was wood. One of the most famous design features, which dates all the way back to 500 B.C. and the Warring States period, is the «dougong». According to an article in *The People's Daily*, the «dougong are an assemblage of a number of blocks and arms. The function of dougong is to transfer the load from the horizontal member above to the vertical member below». This structural element is given credit for making ancient buildings earthquake proof and for helping «numerous traditional buildings stand for ages». Just as with the invention of printing and the development of gunpowder, the Chinese were perhaps the first to discover a structural solution to the threat of living in earthquake zones [3].

While architectural science was not as sophisticated in Anglo-Saxon England as it was in Han China, there is existing archeological evidence of a remarkably similar structural innovation in the building techniques used at sites in some areas of the country. The usual construction method of framed buildings, of course, relied on «a large number of posts [being] set into the ground to form the basis if the walls» with «extra rows of posts inside to help support the roof» and «tie beams running across the building».

However, in some cases a more elegant support solution was found:

«The excavations of the seventh century settlements at Cowdery's Down and Charlton, both in Hampshire, uncovered evidence of 'cruck' building, a technique previously not thought to have been used until after the Norman Conquest. In this style of building the outer door frames extend into the roof and internal support for the roof timbers is provided by one or two pairs of curved timbers (crucks) set next to the door frames. This method allows for lower side walls and thus saves on building materials. In light of these excavations, many other sites were reassessed, with the result that cruck building was identified at these too, showing that cruck building was not only known, but widespread by the seventh century» [5].

Jack Sobon is a carpenter who still teaches his students how to build «cruck» frames, and his website provides the following description:

Cruck frames use large curved timbers to transfer the weight of the roof directly down to the foot of the posts. Besides being structurally efficient and allowing the wall frames to be lighter, they are also quite beautiful with the arches soaring overhead.

«Each pair of cruck blades is usually halved from the same tree, and since the exact curve is undeterminable until they are made, there are usually many decisions about the rest of the timber frame design that have to be made during layout» [6] (*figure 1*).

¹ Jack Chen shows how this exchange between the emperor and his advisor later resurfaced in the Tang emperor Taizong's defense of his building of the Daming Palace. Chen notes, «What the emperor [Liu Bang] requires is a symbol to signal the end of the Qin and the beginning of a new, legitimate dynasty» [4]. Taizong, on the other hand, sought to legitimize his extravagance by showing his conformity with past imperial greatness [4, page 305].

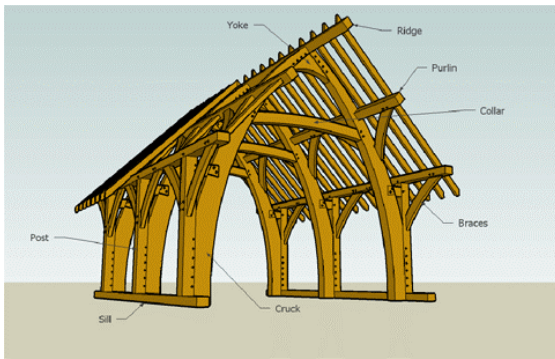


Figure 1 – Cruck Framing.

Scholars of English medieval architecture have surmised that this type of design feature has its beginnings in the Anglo-Saxon period, although the earliest preserved examples only date back to the thirteenth century². The cruck would have served the same purpose as the Chinese dougong. It made it unnecessary to plant so many posts for support and opened up the inside of the building. King Alfred would have surely been eager to try out any sort of advanced carpentry, and it is tempting to treat his famous analogy between building a hall and building a home for the spirit in the context of the «cruck» frame.

For one thing, the «cruck» would make a more suitable, more open space for the spirit. Such a structure would be more in accord with the Chinese principles of *feng shui*. And in his Preface to the *Soliloquies*, Alfred sounds like a devoted practitioner of this Chinese art as he describes the airiness and comfort of his «home» that is aligned with the religious precepts of Augustine, Gregory and Jerome. Here I follow the Hargrove translation, which provides a more literal translation of the building materials than the one by Swanson cited above:

«I then gathered for myself *staves* and *stud-shafts* and *cross-beams* and *helves* for each of the tools that I could work with; and *bow-timbers* and *bolt-timbers* for every work that I could perform—as many as I could carry of the comeliest trees. Nor came I home with a burden, for it pleased me not to bring all the wood home, even if I could bear it. In each tree I saw something that I needed at home; therefore I exhort everyone who is able and has many wains, to direct his steps to the self-same wood where I cut the stud-shafts. Let him there obtain more for himself, and load his wains with fair twigs, so that he may wind many a neat wall, and erect many a rare house, and build a fair enclosure, and therein dwell in joy and comfort both winter and summer, in such manner as I have not yet done. But He who taught me, and to whom the wood was pleasing, hath power to make me dwell more comfortably both in this transitory cottage by the road while I am on this world-pilgrimage, and also in the everlasting home which He hath promised us through Saint Augustine and Saint Gregory and Saint Jerome, and through many other holy Fathers; as I believe also for the merits of all those He will both make this way more convenient than it hitherto was, and especially will enlighten the eyes of my mind so that I may search out the right way to the eternal home, and to everlasting glory, and to eternal rest, which is promised us through those holy Fathers. So may it be» [9, p. 1].

Carcinelli notes in his edition of Alfred's Anglo-Saxon translation of the *Soliloquies* that, «the precise meanings of several apparently technical terms are difficult to determine», but he soldiers on anyway and

²N. W. Alcock states that there are some 4000 examples of medieval cruck constructions in the British Isles and that the earliest continental examples date to the thirteenth century [7]. However, there is enough evidence to trace the design well back into the Anglo-Saxon period, as «the earliest archaeological evidence comes from 4th-century excavations in Buckinghamshire» [8]

defines *kyglas* (staves) and *stupansceaftas* (props/stud-shafts) «as referring to materials for the framework of a building». Simeon Potter, notes Carcinelli, relates *boh-* in *bohtimbru* to *bogian*, meaning «to dwell». A German scholar named Endter defines this type of wood as a branch or twig, *Zweigholz* [10, p.47]. The *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, however, defines *bohtimber* (*bogtimber*) as «wood for an arch» but indicates uncertainty with a question mark after the definition [11]. The existence of cruck framing certainly helps clear up the mystery and uncertainty about the precise meaning of this term indicated by the question mark placed after this definition. Anyone wishing to build an airy home would be glad to lay his hands on some *bohtimber*. This type of framing construction would provide the type of spacious dwelling Alfred is attempting to summon up.

The structure of the hall of a king such as Alfred would have been designed to enhance his authority and reputation in much the same way the «magnificent quarters» that Minister Xiao describes in the passage quoted above are intended to «display the authority» of the Han emperor Liu Bang. The connection between the hall and the lord's confident authority is central to the storyline of the epic *Beowulf*, and in the description of Heorot, Hrothgar King of the Danes' hall, the scop/poet devotes a long passage to the description of the awe-inspiring construction and spaciousness of the structure. The skill evidenced in such building, just like the palace of a Han emperor, is intended to

signify the almost divine status of the King. The poem, itself a masterful and skillful witness to the sophistication of the overall culture, focuses on various manifestations of skill at all levels of the society: the talent of the poet (which is described in detail at one point) manifest in the poem itself, the skillful artistry in the sword hilt that is carefully examined by King Hrothgar and is the only relic of a vanished culture, the superhuman accomplishments by which the warriors and heroes are remembered, and the successful governance of a number of kings⁴. The craft of a wide range of artisans is on display, from the work of the sword maker to the beautifully ornate household items like cups produced by the metal worker. And craft is also shown in the behavior of those at Hrothgar's court. Wealtheow, Hrothgar's queen, puts on a perfect performance at court when she dispenses wine and advises the warriors to seek out peace. Beowulf's speech before Hrothgar is so polished that the King exclaims that he has never heard such a young warrior speak so well and so wisely. The poem is packed with examples of those who do what they do so well that it transcends human ability and approaches the divine, with the poem itself being an instance of what it is praising. All of these crafts participate at different levels in the skill shown by the Creator himself in the crafting of the universe. Peter Clemoes has found exactly the same «synthesizing power of the word *craft* in Alfred's understanding of . . . spiritual, moral and material elements in a God-devoted wisdom» [12, p. 232].

³I use Swanton's more recent translation of the *Soliloquies* preface above (see note 2), but in this particular passage he chooses to translate Alfred's Anglo-Saxon *bohtimbru* as "building-timbers" [2, p. 68]. Hargrove's rendering of "bowtimbers" is much closer to the literal meaning of the term, follows the definition in Bosworth and Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and supports the likelihood that Alfred may well have been thinking of a bowed cruck timber.

A famous example of how this system functions is the ninth century Alfred jewel, a beautifully worked piece of gold, enamel and quartz which has written around its base «ALFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN» [Alfred commanded me to be made] ⁵. The skill manifest in this jewel is a witness to the skill of Alfred the King, whose ultimate goal was to masterfully shape his kingdom according to the ideals of unity, harmony and justice. The kingdom is his jewel in the same way that the universe itself is the Creator's jewel.

A synthesizing power similar to what we find in Anglo-Saxon *cræft* is found in the Chinese «characterology». The Han emperor, just like the Anglo-Saxon king, has to «*cræft*» his kingdom, to make it his jewel, and that becomes an expression of his «understanding» of all the various elements Clemons mentions working in his wisdom. In the case of the Han, however, the best example is not jewelry (although there is plenty of that), but calligraphy. The art of calligraphy saw its most significant period of development in the Han dynasty, just as crafts like jewelry and the arts of translation, rhetoric and poetry saw a rebirth in Alfred's England. The most telling connection is between the art of the Anglo-Saxon scribe and the Chinese calligrapher. Speaking of Alfred's execution of a «centralised cultural policy» to bring about a cultural rebirth, Anne Lawrence notes that the entire project depended «upon the existence of some means of directing the training and work of scribes, which points once more to the existence of a writing office, and perhaps

a school, within the religious sector of the king's household» [13, p. 39]. So an enormous amount of effort was expended in Alfred's England to train scribes and to bring their skill up to or surpassing in some cases the level of excellence seen on the continent. The same passion existed in Han China with the rebirth of Confucian learning and the effort expended on the restoration of Confucian classic texts lost during the tenure of the Qin. Whereas in Anglo-Saxon England scribal practice held the spotlight, in Han China it was the skill of calligraphy. One's talent with the brush came to be seen as a primary way to detect the virtue at the very core of a scholar or ruler's character, and this magical ability to see through to the inner person was provided by the «practice of characterology, a belief that the inner nature or character of an individual can be determined through an examination of external traits or behaviors, including artistic efforts such as calligraphy» [15, p. 428]. So great was the value placed on the greatest examples of this art that even rubbings taken of them from stone tablets fueled intensely competitive situations among enthusiasts, even between emperor and subject as happened in the case of a rubbing of a work by Wang Xizhi. This treasure, the Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion, was owned by a monk, Bian Cai, so the emperor sent a trusted court official Xiao Yi to acquire it. Once he had it in his possession, he intended to keep it forever; he is rumored to have commanded that it be buried with him. Just the possession, then, of a great work

⁴ In regard to the ideals of kingship, the poem itself has long been seen by many scholars as a guidebook for kings, a type of «mirror for princes» showing what qualities make a successful ruler. The current *Beowulf Handbook* lists five early German scholars (Outzen, Earle, Schücking, Lieberman and Heusler) who «considered the epic a *Fürstenspiegel*, a mirror for princes designed to instruct them in kingly behavior» [14, p. 33].

For a description and interpretations, see D. A. Hinton, *The Alfred Jewel and Other Late Anglo-Saxon Decorated Metalwork*, Oxford, 2008.

of calligraphy could convey the authority, legitimacy and respect due to the artist directly to its possessor. If the rumor is true, this emperor was even keen to have all that glory follow him to the underworld [16].

To gain true and lasting authority in Han China, though, the ruler had to produce the right results. What emerged during the Han after the depredations of the harsh legalism of the Qin dynasty was a restoration of a Confucian model of leadership and a more democratic ideal of participatory government (although it was by no means fully realized):

«China was not only a technological and economic power but also an ideological power. The Han established the world's first university – the Imperial College. The numerous philosophical schools of thought that had emerged in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, continued to flourish. Confucianists, Legalists, Daoists, followers of the Yin-Yang school and others competed for government posts. The ideals of justice and harmony between man and nature were embodied in the political system and laid the ideological foundations of a unified civilization» [17].

The emperor who presided over such a civilization had to live up to some pretty high Confucian standards. This ideal ruler acted as a caring parent who put the needs of his children, the people, first. A story from the fourth century Confucian *Chronicle of Mr. Zuo* about a conversation between the singing master Shi Kuang and the Duke of Jin, outlines how the success of the ruler in providing security and a good life for his people establishes his hegemony. When the Duke asks Shi Kuang why another ruler had been unable to keep his kingdom, the singing master explains that such rulers fail to fulfill the primary

duty of seeing to the needs of the people and especially to the artisans and laborers whose roles at all levels of society support his kingdom:

«When a good ruler goes about rewarding good and punishing excess, he nourishes his people as if they were his children, shelters them like Heaven, accommodates them like the earth. And when the people serve their ruler, they love him as they do their parents, look up to him like the sun and moon, revere him like the all-seeing spirits, fear him like thunder» [18, p. 9].

Shi Kuang then goes into detail about how «all levels of society, down to the very lowest, are seen as participating», and the list includes «artisans, blind musicians, merchants, and commoners» as participants in a process that is not only restricted to the members of the elite [18, p.9]. The kingdom is one big Confucian family operating according to reciprocity. The emperor/parent nurtures the people/children, and they, in turn, admire the skillful and wise strategies he employs to look after their welfare and to strengthen, secure and unify the kingdom.

Alfred set similarly high standards for his rulers in works such as his translation of Gregory the Great's *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, [No note here.] but the value he places on justice and social harmony as a goal in his political theory is most clearly laid out in his translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*: There, in a passage not found in Alfred's original, Alfred responds to what the guide, *Philosophy*, says about freeing oneself from worldly desires, Alfred responds that the special demands of his duty as a king require him to pay close attention to the welfare of his kingdom, worldly though it may be:

«O Philosophy, thou knowest that I never greatly delighted in covetousness and the possession of earthly power, nor longed for this authority, but I desired instruments and materials to carry out the work I was set to do, which was that I should virtuously and fittingly administer the authority committed unto me. Now no man, as thou knowest, can get full play for his natural gifts, nor conduct and administer government, unless he hath fit tools, and the raw material to work upon. By material I mean that which is necessary to the exercise of natural powers; thus a king's raw material and instruments of rule are a well-peopled land, and he must have men of prayer, men of war, and men of work. As thou knowest, without these tools, no king may display his special talent. Further, for his materials he must have means of support for the three classes above spoken of, which are his instruments; and these means are land to dwell in, gifts, weapons, meat, ale, clothing and what else soever the three classes need. Without these means, he cannot keep his tools in order, and without these tools, he cannot perform any of the tasks entrusted to him. I have desired material for the exercise of government that my talents and my power might not be forgotten and hidden away, for every good gift and every power soon groweth old and is no more heard of, if Wisdom be not in them. Without Wisdom no faculty can be fully brought out, for whatsoever is done unwisely can never be accounted as skill. To be brief, I may say that it has ever been my desire to live honourably while I was alive, and after my death to leave to them that should come after me my memory in good works» [19].

This statement sounds startlingly Confucian with its emphasis on the ruler's virtue and learning being the source of his

authority, but all this goodness and wisdom is of no use if the ruler cannot make his skill manifest to the people through what he provides and produces. They are unable to see it except through the practice of «characterology» and an appreciation of «cræft». Alfred, like the most successful Han emperors, employed several different strategies to secure his kingdom. He authored a law code, he laid out forts to guard against invasion, and for one of his efforts, shipbuilding, he has even become known as the father of the English navy. However, his greatest contribution, his efforts at educational and cultural reform, aligns him most closely with the Han. It is in that endeavor that we see the most impressive evidence of his kingly «cræft». As minister Xiao speaking to Liu Bang might put it, his translation projects, his establishment of schools and scriptoria, and his recruitment of continental scholars and teachers like the highly respected and widely admired Benedictine monk Grimbald, all of these accomplishments provided him with a «way to display his authority» and a means to «establish the foundation for his heirs to build on» [1, p. 67].

The texts that Alfred and his scholars gather become, to use his own words, «the material for the exercise of government» that permits him to show his «cræft». This particular exercise is part of a policy of educational reform outlined in his Preface to the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*. This project is not about creating anything new necessarily, but to recover what has been lost due to Viking invasions that tore England apart for most of the ninth century.

«When I considered all this I remembered also how I saw, before it had been all ravaged and burnt, how the churches throughout the whole of England

stood filled with treasures and books, and there was also a great multitude of God's servants, but they had very little knowledge of the books, for they could not understand anything of them, because they were not written in their own language. As if they had said: "Our forefathers, who formerly held these places, loved wisdom, and through it they obtained wealth and bequeathed it to us. In this, we can still see their tracks, but we cannot follow them, and therefore we have lost both the wealth and the wisdom because we would not incline our hearts after their example» [20, p. 4-5].

Alfred's act of «remembering» the past drives his present efforts at «remembering» the foundation of his legitimacy and of his cultural legacy. The house has been «dismembered» by the Vikings, and his job is to find the lost parts, to put them back together and to lay a foundation for the future development of England as a great nation. The type of «remembering» Alfred engages comes close to being what Sarah Foot describes as the act of recovering «a pool of shared remembrance to which the members of a specific social, political or, for example, religious community have access by virtue of their individual and collective ownership of the elements of which it is constructed». She goes on to distinguish the act as «the mental process involved in its recovery is that of retrieving a learned pattern, not the process of drawing out an experienced one» [21, p. 188].

Alfred wants to recover the treasures, the great cultural artifacts and achievements, but he primarily focused on replacing the lost learning found in the books. Thus begins his translation project and the work that will take up most of the remainder of his life: rendering Gregory, Boethius, Augustine and the first fifty

Psalms found in the Paris Psalter into English that could be understood by all his subjects, his specific social and political group. He carefully begins to rebuild the Christian cruck framework of the culture with these texts, and with the inauguration of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, he also secures a textual memory of England's past. Finally, with commissioning the *Old English Orosius*, he makes an effort to place English history in the context of world history and geography, as far as it could be known. He thereby extends the scope of English interests. The project, however, is not so much driven by a desire to build a new culture from scratch as it is motivated by the wish to recover the lost foundations needed to support his vision of a future English society that, restored to its previous glory, could one day enter into the ranks of the great civilizations of the world.

The task facing the Gaozu Emperor, who established the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), was eerily similar and every bit as demanding. This particular emperor, born Liu Bang, occupies the same legendary status in Chinese history as Alfred holds in the chronicles of English history and not just because he founded one of the greatest and long-lived dynasties China has ever known. He began life as a peasant and is one of only two emperors with peasant roots (the other is the Hongwu Emperor, who established the Ming Dynasty in 1368). To become emperor he had to defeat the Chu warlord Xiang Yu (the subject of the film *Farewell My Concubine*) and the accounts of the war between the Han and Chu (The Han-Chu Contention) became such an integral part of the culture that the Chinese chessboard to this day is divided not between black and white, but between Han and Chu. The previous Qin emperor had been a

ruthless tyrant who had structured his government according to the principles of legalism. He had unified China when he established the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) after defeating all the other contenders fighting for power after the decline of the Zhou dynasty. The code of legalism which he used to govern his vast empire and to extend his territory far beyond his capital at Chang'an (present-day Xian) could not have been more at odds with the teachings of Confucianism, which nurtured the notion that virtue is developed through the strict observance of rituals. In accordance with Legalist principles, the Qin Emperor Shi Huang «abolished the feudal system that was in practice in China and replaced it with a centralized, autocratic government. Additionally, laws were codified, and people were punished if they did not obey them. Moreover, the script used for writing, coinage, as well as weights and measures, which had previously varied from state to state, was standardized during his reign». To a Confucian, simply choosing to do the right thing through fear of punishment, which was the spring that made Legalism effective, was an act lacking any exercise of virtue. It was simply the cowardice of an animal who behaves in order to avoid the sting of the master's rod.

«Humanism is the central feature of Confucianism, which revolves almost entirely around issues related to the family, morals and the role of the good ruler. It stresses the need for benevolent and frugal rulers, the importance of inner moral harmony and its direct connection with harmony in the physical world. Rulers and teachers, according to this view, are important models for society: a good government should rule by virtue and moral example rather than by punishment or force». [22]

The showdown between the emperor

and the Confucianists came when Shi Huang made the decree that «the official histories, with the exception of the *Memoirs of Qin*, be all burnt, and that those who attempt to hide [other works] be forced to bring them to the authorities to be burnt» [23, p. 695]. Many Confucian scholars were buried alive, and, most significantly, a lot of the classic texts were burnt.

If the situation had remained the same once the Han emperor Gaozu took over, it is very possible that Confucianism would not ever have become the foundation and framework of Chinese culture that it is. At the same time he was building his capital in Chang'an «to display his authority» and «establish the foundation for his heirs to build on», he was also busy recovering the lost teachings of Confucius and encouraging scholarship on the classical texts. He built a complex bureaucracy with Confucian scholars at the center of it all. «The criteria for selecting and advancing candidates for government office laid stress on Confucian learning and virtues» and «all over the country teachers attracted large numbers of students and disciples» [1, p. 78]. The main goal of these scholars was to restore the classic texts of Confucianism to the status they had once enjoyed. They «devoted enormous energy to the reconstruction of the books destroyed by the Qin government and the revival of traditions of interpretation that had grown up around them» [1, p. 79]. This effort would be given a huge boost later by the Emperor Wudi (r. 141-87 BC), who, among numerous other contributions that would shape Chinese culture, had the foresight to commission the famous history of Sima Qian, the Grand Historian. It is thanks to Sima Qian that we have a record of the earliest periods of Chinese history, all the way back to the fabled Xia and up to

the Han dynasty.

If we replace «Confucianism» with «Christianity», the Han mission of «remembering» sounds very much like Alfred's program of educational reform. At the center of his vision of a thriving English society was the teacher and such teaching is the foundation holding up his efforts to transform individual subjects and to fit them to his building, his new society founded on the compassionate and consistent application of laws and the Confucian virtues of mercy and virtue; he takes great pains to lay it out carefully and deliberately. Numerous scholars have noted how he identifies the ruler with the teacher in his translation of Gregory's Pastoral Rule, and he sees David as the model of the «ruler as teacher». From this work comes the line that could stand as the motto of his program to revive Christian culture in England: «teaching is the craft of all crafts». And like the Emperor Wudi, Alfred had the good sense to commission historical projects, the Chronicle and the Orosius.

All of these reforms were being carried out under intense outside pressure in both cultures in the form of Northern invaders in each case. The boundaries of the Han were constantly being violated by the Xiongnu barbarians from the Eastern Asian Steppe; the threat to the West-Saxons came from Viking invaders. But these invaders were eventually absorbed and assimilated in each case, and they themselves came to be a part of the social and political group drawing on the «pool of

shared remembrance» social and political group drawing on the «pool of shared remembrance»⁶.

In both these cases, textual «remembering» played a key role in culture building. Recovering lost learning and lost classics helped to lay the foundation for the empires that would develop later, one Confucian and the other Christian. The wood that Alfred uses as an analogy for the texts he believes all people should read and that the Han Emperor used in building his palace has in most cases decayed, but the texts themselves continue to exist as central ancient blueprints that lay out the values and goals of these two peoples.

Conclusion

One of Joseph Needham's most oft-quoted statements is what he said about the study of China: «But Chinese civilization has the overpowering beauty of the wholly other, and only the wholly other can inspire the deepest love and the profoundest desire to learn» [24, p. 176]. The study of the wholly other is what motivates us to learn about ourselves, it turns out. It is not just that the same sort of thinking and ideas were circulating in ancient China and Anglo-Saxon England, nor is it a question of influence; the real benefit lies in the fact that the understanding of another, seemingly radically different, culture puts the familiar one into a different light, allows us to regard it from a new, refreshing perspective that brings out details and important concepts that might otherwise go unrecognized. This

⁶ Richard Green states, «England still remained England; the conquerors sank quietly into the mass of those around them; and Woden yielded without a struggle to Christ» [25, *qtd. in Algeo 84*].

⁷The complexities of this perspective are examined by Stefan Jacobson in the article «Chinese Influences or Images? Fluctuating Histories of How Enlightenment Europe Read China». For his discussion of Said's remarks, see page 625 and following.

essay is just an attempt to put a few of the Western and Eastern pieces of the world-historical puzzle together and to make connections that give us an organic global perspective versus the culturally specialized disciplinary «gaze» of Western scholars to the East that has been described by Edward Said as a key feature of Orientalism. The goal is to make Chinese history less something external to Western history and more like an element that is a part of it. And vice versa.

Taken together, these two great cultures have an important legacy and message to future generations: if you want to build a great state and to enrich the lives of its members, put art, aesthetics and beauty at the center of your efforts. The craft and the attention shown to what seem like pursuits with no connection to affairs of state actually have a power that resonates with the society at large and can give birth to great civilizations

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КӨНЕ ЕКІ ҚАЛА ТУРАЛЫ ЕСКЕ АЛҒАНДА

Аңдатпа:

Біздің дәуірімізге дейін үшінші ғасырда Хань Чанъань (қазіргі Сиань) астанасымен және тоғызыншы ғасырда батыс сакстар Винчестерде «қайта ену» таңғаларлық әдісіне немесе қайта құрылысты нығайтып, мәдениеттерді қайта құру үшін пайдаланылған жоғалған мәтін мұрасын қайта қалпына келтіру әдісіне сүйене отырып өздерінің әулеттерін құрды. Император Хань Уди (ок. 141-87 до н.э.) жобаны іске қосты, оның шеңберінде ол император Цинь Ши Хуан шығармаларының көзін жойған Конфуцидің легитимділігін қайта қалпына келтіруге үміттенді. Конфуциандық классикада және императорлық емтихандарда білім беру дәстүрі осылай басталды. Альфред Патша Григорий Великийдің *«Regula Pastoralis»* трактатының ағылшын тіліндегі аудармасының алғысөзінде жазылған өзінің білім беру реформаларының жобаларымен белгілі.

Кілт сөздер: еске алу, реформалау, Хань әулеті, Батыс Саксония, астана

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ПОМИНАЯ О ДВУХ ДРЕВНИХ ГОРОДАХ

Аннотация

Хань с его столицей в третьем веке до нашей эры в Чанъане (современный Сиань) и западные саксы со столицей в девятом веке в Винчестере построили свои династии, следуя удивительно схожему методу «повторного вступления» или восстановления потерянного текстового наследия, которое использовалось для подкрепления перестройки и последующего переустройства

культур. Император Хань Вуди (ок. 141-87 до н.э.) запустил проект, в рамках которого он надеялся восстановить легитимность Конфуция после того, как его произведения были уничтожены легистом Цинь императором Ши Хуаном. Так началась традиция обучения на конфуцианской классике и императорских экзаменах. Король Альфред, конечно, известен своим проектом образовательных реформ, объявленным в его предисловии к его английскому переводу *Regula Pastoralis* Григория Великого.

Ключевые слова: воспоминание, реформирование, династия Хань, Западная Саксония, столица.

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