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Magician's Map

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Magician’s Map

by Michael Turk

Paradise, California

The Magician’s Map. Illustration by Alise Suess.

Abstract

A five-thousand-year-old water pitcher on display for a limited time (1999 to 2000) during an exhibit titled *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology* shows the figure of a human framed in a panel. The human panel is one of four painted panels surrounding the belly of the pottery water pitcher. The other three panels are filled with repeating images of pictographs forming a pictographic inscription. Pictographic inscriptions are like complex characters — the meaning derives from the multiplication and manipulation of pictographs in a group.

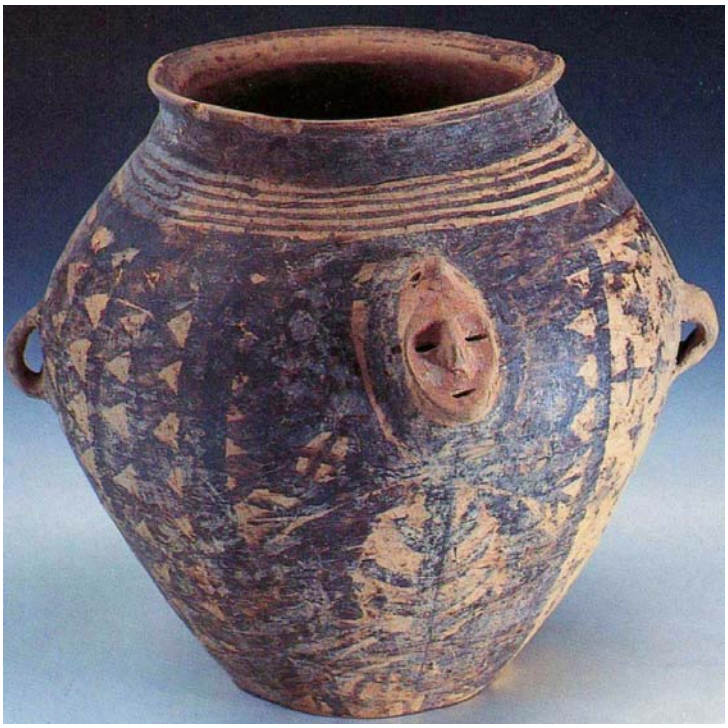
Decoding the pictographic inscription reveals a map of the Yellow River made with symbols that represent the landscape in three directions around the homeland in the middle: the great mountains to the west, a great river to the north, and the great marshland filled with plants to the east. It appears the modern theory of five elements is rooted in spatial associations such as four lands around a middle land. It seems certain that the pottery jar is a written document at least a thousand years older than writing found on Shang oracle bones.[*]

[*] I wish to thank Dr. Claire R. Farrer for encouraging me and suggesting certain scholarly works, Dr. Paul U. Unschuld for reviewing an earlier version of this manuscript and advising me how to strengthen my arguments, and Brenda Hamilton and Charlotte Harkness for their inspiration and editing.

I am especially grateful for Dr. Victor Mair and the staff of *Sino-Platonic Papers* for their suggestions and for providing this free online resource.

While other visitors to the museum commented on the human figure, I noticed the ancient symbol for “five” next to its head, and then I walked behind the pedestal and saw a wavy line pattern that looked like water.[1,2] I continued walking around to the front of the jar to take another look at the human. While looking at the face projecting out of the jar, I gazed into those eyes, knew it was a message, and wanted to decode it.

Rawson 1996 p36



Rawson 1996 p36

It was the first time the jar had been allowed to leave China, and after this exhibit it would return there. I could see the drawing of water on the back of the jar, but the jar’s back was not shown in the catalogue, and cameras were not allowed. What to do? I sketched it but wanted a truer reconstruction of its features, so I commissioned an artist, a student and friend of mine for twenty years, to paint the jar.[3] Her work caught the essence of this puzzling artifact of a human surrounded by symbols.

To decode the message on the jar, I examined the symbols and the Majiayao culture (c. 3000–2500 BCE) that produced it.[4] Descriptions and pictures of the jar are found in books written by two scholars, Yang and Rawson.[5,6] Both note some of the jar’s unique features

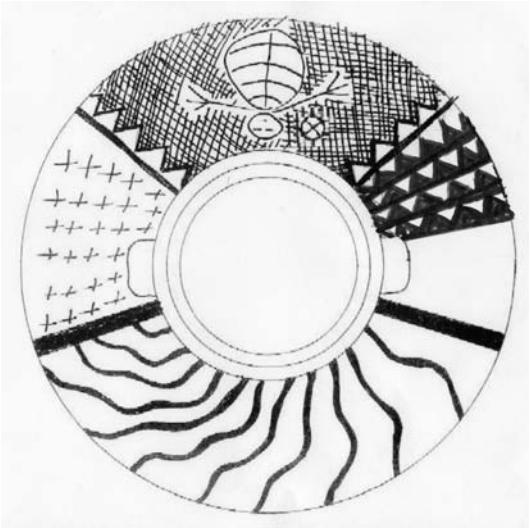
without attempting to interpret their meaning; neither mentions the image of water. This paper provides three additional views of the jar drawn by the author based on images from books, and a watercolor painted by Alise Suess during her September 2000 visit to an exhibit titled, “The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology,” at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. The exhibit catalogue listed the jar as item “9. Painted pottery *guan* jar.” A *guan* is a type of pitcher that holds water. When the handles are used to pour water out of this pitcher’s mouth, the flowing water will be above or below the water image.

The Four Panels

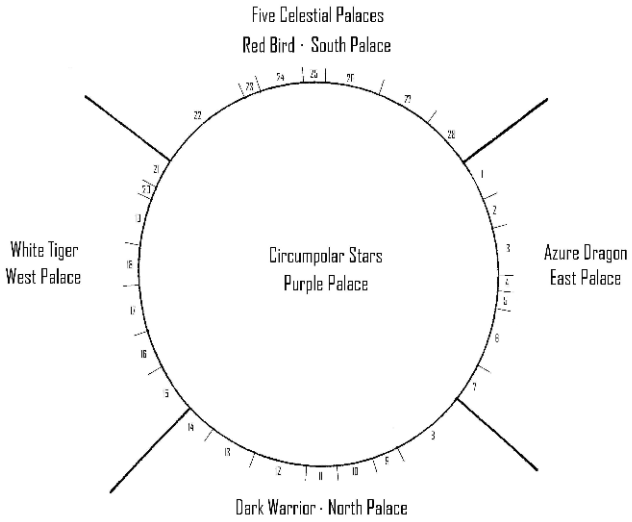
	Pottery Marks	Shang Script	Modern Form	Four-panel Jar
One			一	
Two			二	
Three			三	
Four			四	
Five			五	
Eight			八	
Ten			十	
			十	
Shell			甲	
Deer			鹿	
Hill			丘	
Mountain			山	
Mound			阜	
Well			井	
Field			田	
Water			水	
River			川or巛	
Island				
Human			人	
Big			大	
Heaven			天	
Earth			土	
Plants			卉	
Tree			木	
Foretell			卜	
Ordinary			凡	
Net			网	
Silk			糸	
Sun			日	

Table of Characters[7]

The four panels of the *guan* pitcher include a panel of triangles and a panel of crosses — both smaller than the front and back panels. The panels divide the belly of the jar into four uneven spaces like the frames of a comic strip or pages of a picture book, and I wanted to read this prehistoric book. The best page at which to start reading, the only panel completely pictured in any publication, is a framed portrait of a smiling human with outstretched arms and a cross next to its head. The scene is a complex combination of symbols featuring a sculpted human face placed in the middle of the panel; to the right and left are borders lined with triangles; the cross is between the face and the panel of triangles to the left. Going around the jar to the left, lines of triangles fill only part of the panel, while the remainder is unpainted. Further around and covering most of the back of the jar is the largest panel, a water panel filled with wavy lines. Further still, to the left of the water panel is another small panel filled with crosses; next is the human panel, completing the journey around the water pitcher.



Sifang Jar: Top View



Siling: Four Celestial Creatures

The top view matches a pattern called *sifang*, which places four lands around a middle land. The *sifang* (四方, four square-direction) pattern was established in antiquity.[8] A notable uneven pattern emerges from the four panels around the jar's middle when viewed from the top. A similar uneven pattern is found in the ancient *siling* star map showing four celestial creatures that divide the southern sky into four uneven palaces.[9]

Fang 方 means a square space, as in the common Chinese expression, "Heaven is round

and earth is square.” *Fang* was used during the Shang dynasty (1600–1050 BCE) as a political and geographic term for people, land, wind, and other influences from the four directions. Shang script, found on oracle bones and bronze vessels, employed pictographic and complex characters in a developed writing system. In oracle bone writings (1200–1050 BCE) the term *fang* identified foreign lands in the four directions, including the benefits and problems they can bring. Shang cosmology placed the Shang capital in the middle (*zhong* 中, the image of a line through the middle of a square).[10] The use of the terms *zhong* and *fang* to specify directional influence has not changed since Shang times. Today, however, *fang* is a common word; besides “square,” *fang* means “direction, side; method, way; formula, prescription; just when, at the time; upright, honest person.”

The ancient classics mention magicians called *fangshi* (方士 ‘square-way scholar’) employed by the royal government as scribes, astrologers, or doctors, although some are known for refusing government service.[11] Some *fangshi* claimed secret knowledge and advised about health and longevity. Confucian scholars scoffed at their sorcery, alchemy, and immortality potions.

Fangshi areas of knowledge were astronomy, astrology, calendars, divination, omens, alchemy, and medicine. Unfortunately, ancient *fangshu* books on these subjects were kept in secret archives and most have been lost. Two famous *fangshi* are Hua To (110–208 CE), a famous doctor, and Zou Yan (305–240 BCE), the founder of the Yinyang School during the Warring States period.[12] Some scholars believe Zou Yan invented the five-element theory (*wuxing*).

Two ancient books from the time of the Han dynasty (220 BCE – 201 CE) report on foreign lands: *Internal Classic* (*Nei Jing* 內經),[13] a book of internal medicine, and *Mountain and Sea Classic* (*Shan Hai Jing* 山海經).[14] Both employ a *zhong–fang* (‘midland–outland’) literary device: first it describes the environment and inhabitants of central China, then the lands in the four directions方. In the twelfth chapter of the classic on internal medicine, called *Unusual Ways of the Fang* (*Yi Fa Fang* 異法方), the *zhong–fang* literary device is used to discuss life style, diseases, and medicine. The chapter is divided into five sections comparing five cultures: the middle kingdom and four surrounding lands. It mentions indigenous food habits, common

diseases, and treatment methods. The *Mountain and Sea Classic* describes the land and people of ancient China and her neighbors in foreign lands 方, near and far. Because of its imaginative content, it has been called a mystical guidebook for sorcerers. Scholars believe it is a compilation of many authors; some say it is all or mostly forged writing on geography and culture, describing the mountains, the rivers, and the customs, noting medicinal knowledge, human rituals, and mythic lore.

The *guan* pitcher looks like a primitive record of neighboring lands 方 by a Neolithic artist. The simplest explanation for the four panels on the *sifang* jar is that they represent lands on the four sides of the middle land occupied by the magician. The puzzling jar actually has three types of crosses: an *x*-cross, many *t*-crosses, and a top-down cross-pattern. These and more crosses are found on Majiayao and other Neolithic Chinese artifacts.

Crosses are a common sight among prehistoric petroglyphs around the world, and almost four thousand years ago various crosses were used when the Shang wrote on bones. Comparing *x*- and *t*-cross symbols with images from other cultures yields an observation: western political symbolism abounds in *t*-crosses. Neolithic Chinese pottery has many crosses and cross patterns, but the panels on the *sifang* jar correlate crosses with triangles and wavy lines. This jar was found in an area later to be known as a cross-cultural zone along the Silk Road.

The Majiayao decorated pottery with various types of crosses and crossing patterns. What can be learned from the placement of the crosses and the crossing patterns? Some patterns are recognizable as woven netting. At first I thought the *x* represented “five”; however, an *x* could represent the object, the owners, or a characteristic of the owner.

a) “X” on axe

b) Netting with “x” and “t” crosses

c) “X” in mouth

d) “X” in head

The above four examples of crosses are found on Chinese Neolithic pottery: a) an *x*-cross marked on an axe handle next to a bird with a fish,[15] b) two crosses — *t*-cross above, *x*-cross

below — on a jar with netting,[16] c) a curious head with an *x*-shaped mouth,[17] and d) a crossed circle for the head of a stick figure.[18] The image of the white *x*-shaped mouth on a strange head was painted next to fish on the inside of a bowl with a rim divided into eight segments.

Not much can be said about the strange creature. Yet one thing can be said with a high degree of certainty. It has a face. The eyes and nose in the band across the circular head give the impression of a human face. The rest of the image is strange — its ears look like antennas, and its head has three pointy things, curious and enchanting. The mysterious mouth has an hourglass shape, an opening formed around an invisible *x*-cross.

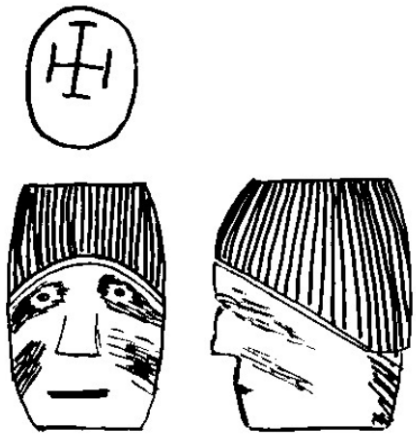
It seems the *x*-cross means more than “five.” The “*x*” on the axe handle marks a tool of physical power. What could an “*x*” and a head tell us about the idea of power in symbols?

Shang script, the earliest writing found on shoulder bones and turtle shells, has symbols of power.[19] Crosses are found within bone ideographs for powerful people: the king, the emperor, and the magician. Cross-marks indicate power. What is the difference between a worker 工 and a king 王? A cross marks the middle of the king. The king 王 (*wang*) and the worker 工 (*gong*) characters survived for over three thousand years unchanged since the time of writing on bone.[20]

The emperor ideograph

(帝, *di*) is a composite of *x*- and *t*-crosses; and some characters add the image of middle 中.[21]

The character for father 父 (*fu*) has a cross but the image does not resemble the original pictograph.[22]



The original father figure carved on bone  was the image of a hand holding a long object that most scholars agree is a symbol of power, although they disagree on what the object represents.

The magician  (*wu*) character, originally "a capped cross," was later changed to — 巫 (*wu*) — work and humans, interpreted by some scholars as dancing witches; however, a recently discovered artifact marked with the cross puts a face on a magician.[23] An ornament in the shape of a head with a Persian face, marked on its top with a capped cross made of local material, was found in the ruins of an ancient Chinese palace. This artifact is one of several heads with foreign features found in palaces dating from 1400 to 700 BCE; but the question remains — were Caucasians present in the palace? The question is discussed by Victor Mair in his article "Old Sinitic *Myag, Old Persian Maguš and English Magician."

Recent archeological finds shed light on the question — when were foreigners in China? A mummified body fully clothed with a rust-colored, two-piece tailored suit, deerskin boots and bright red, yellow and blue striped felt leggings, on a bearded man about fifty years old, who stood six foot, six inches, in life, was buried with his saddle around three thousand years ago.[24] Here is a magical correlation: painted on his temple is a bright yellow sun spouting short and long rays; the Sanskrit word for magician is *maga*, "priest of the sun."[25] Other mummies buried between 2000 BCE and 400 BCE have uniquely Caucasian features: blue-eyed, redheaded or blond. For over a thousand years there were Caucasians buried in the Tarim Basin, a high desert

north of Tibet and west of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.[26] Certainly some cross-cultural contact occurred, and someone carved the Caucasian features on an ornament and marked it 中 *wu*.

Of all the magicians mentioned in ancient Chinese texts during the time the Caucasians buried their dead northwest of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, only the *fangshi* served in government. That is why we know about *fangshi* theories and practices. Since antiquity, *fangshi* (方士) magicians have used *sifang* (四方) correlative cosmology to make maps and diagrams of heaven and earth.[27]

In my deconstruction of the symbols on the *sifang* jar, I hypothesize the four-panel jar is evidence the Neolithic Chinese mapped the lands and rivers around them on the jar, signifying knowledge of the Yellow River's course. The jar's map divides the earth into five lands — four territories around a middle land — mapping the flow of the Yellow River from the high mountains in the West to the fertile plain in the East.

In addition to the portrait of a human, the jar's prehistoric artist drew triangles, wavy lines, and crosses in panels on four sides (四方 *sifang*) of the jar. If the symbols represent landscape, and the panels indicate the four directions, it looks like a four-panel presentation on geography that correlates the four directions (四方 *sifang*) around the homeland of the artist—a correlation system such as yinyang and the five elements.

It could be that Neolithic Chinese used a symbolic correlation system to map the Yellow River. This is the simplest and most logical explanation for the message on the jar. What follows is my analysis of the jar's symbols.

Mountain 山

Tibetan Plateau

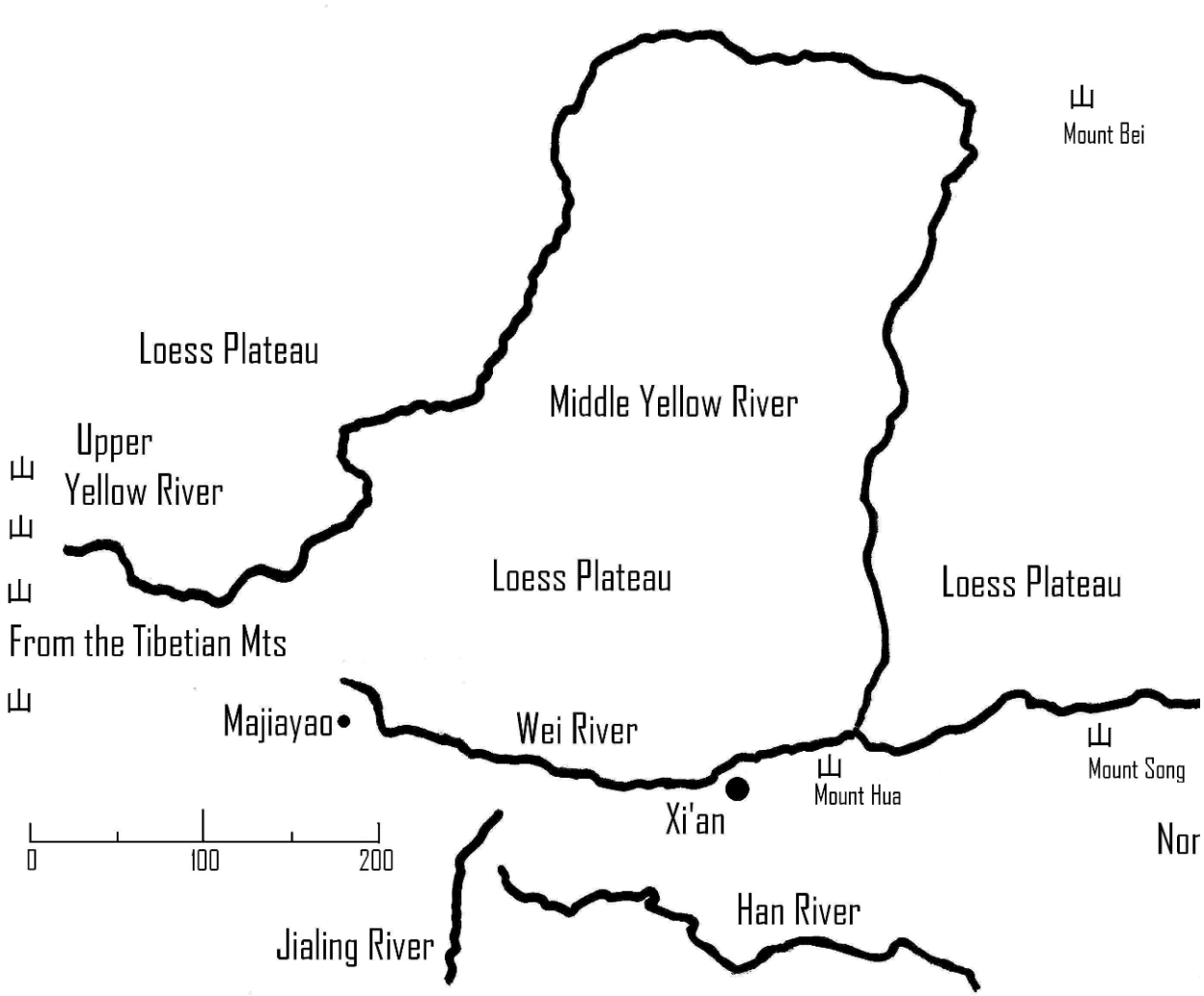
Mountain 山

Hill 丘

The simplest explanation for the repeating triangles on the jar is that they symbolize landscape.[28] Since ancient times, mountains have been sacred ground, especially those chosen to mark the

five directions (五方 *wufang*). Ancient texts mention the five high mountains (五岳 *wuyue*) located in four directions 四方 around Mount Song 嵩山, in Henan province, south of the middle reaches of the Yellow River (河 He), the heartland of ancient Chinese civilization.[29]

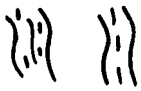
Mountains 山 give birth to rivers (川 *chuan*). Melting glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau feed China’s two great rivers: the Yangtze and the Yellow River. The *sifang* jar was buried near the great bend in the upper reaches of the Yellow River where the water runs clear. Here the river abruptly flows north onto the Loess Plateau, high in the mountains far to the west of Mount Song, past Mount Hua 華山, the sacred mountain in the west, higher and farther west than ancient China’s western capital at Xi’an. The jar was found near the headwaters of the Wei River, the Yellow River’s greatest tributary.

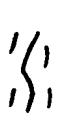


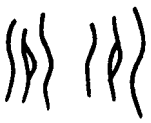
River 川


Meandering River


Water Fall


River 川 or 巛

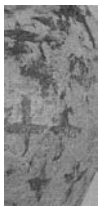

Water 水


Islands

The simplest explanation for the repeating wavy lines on the jar is that they symbolize flowing water (水 *shui*). The images of the most primitive pictographs for water 水, *river* 川, and island 州 are composed of solid and broken curving lines.[30] The wavy lines in the water panel illustrate the Yellow River河, falling steeply in the mountains to the west, serpentine through the Loess Plateau to the north, and onto the fertile plain to the east. The symbol for “river” repeats in width and length and forms the image of a vast river with water flowing from right to left slanting steeply upstream and meandering downstream.

Water 水 nourishes plants (卉 *hui*). Silt deposits make an alluvial flood plain very flat and fertile; any lakes formed by a meandering river quickly become marshland and mature into forests 森. Muddy water from the Yellow River’s annual floods fertilized China’s great alluvial plain. The soil on China’s great north plain and the Loess Plateau is very deep, deposited by wind and water over eons, building an enormous flat plain. The soil covers the mountains in the northwest and is ideal soil for terraced farming.[31]

Plants 卉


Marshland


Tree 木


Wheat


Fresh–Raw


Millet


Plants 卉 & ⺾

The simplest explanation for the repeating “*t*” crosses on the jar is that they symbolize plants 卉, forests 森, or marshland.[32] The vertical line represents the stem. Chinese writing evolved from pictographs into the ancient characters. It is commonly believed the pictographic images for “hill,” “mountain,” “water,” and “river” evolved into the characters this paper indicates; however, interpreting the crosses as plants will be provisional until viewed in context.

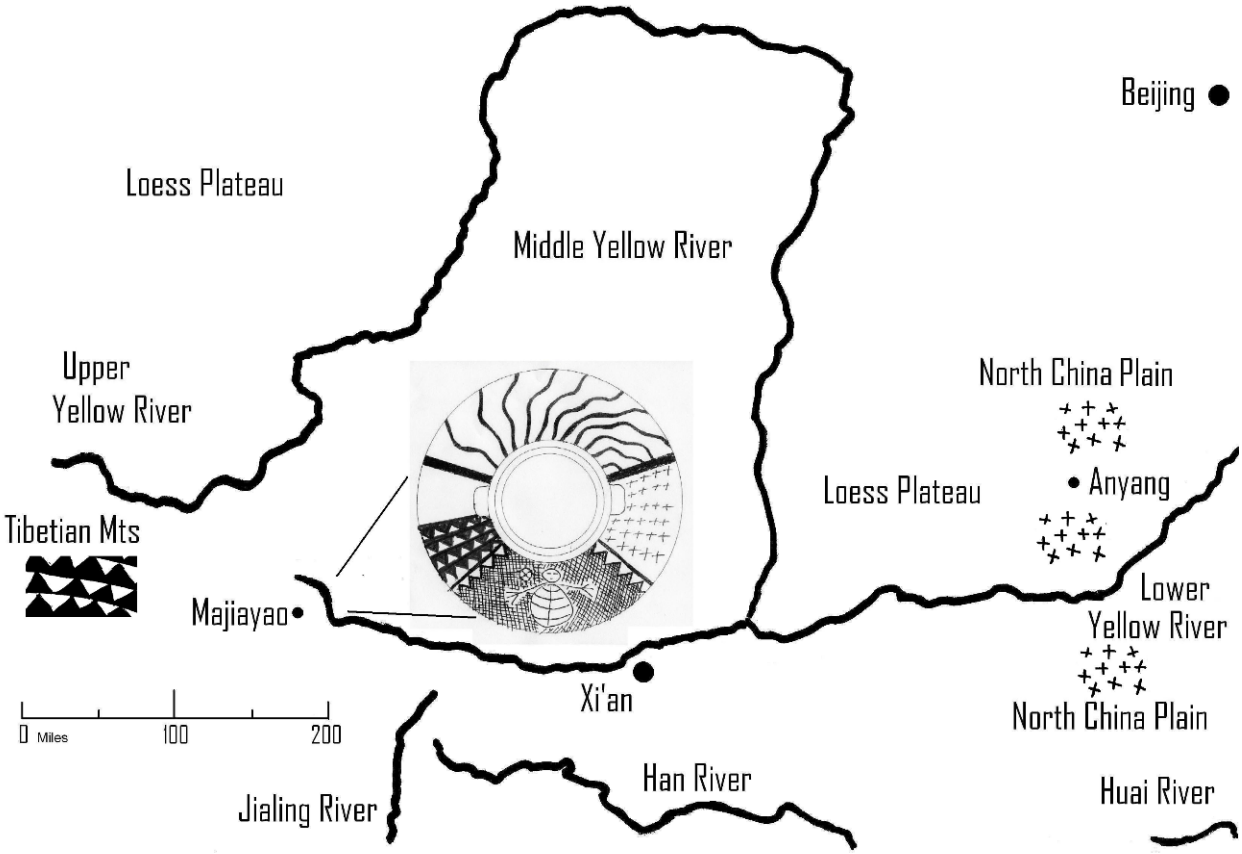
Plants 卉 nourish humans (人 *ren*). Marshes were a major source of food for the Majiayao culture. In Neolithic China the fertile soil of the Loess Plateau supported marshes and forests 森 teaming with life. Further east, marshes flourished on the Yellow River 河 flood plain.

Panels filled with symbols of mountains, a river, and a marshy fertile plain surround the

human panel on the jar. Mountains and rivers are great barriers to travel. Tall mountains, a long river, and a great fertile plain surround the Majiayao site located near the source of the Wei River. If the jar is arranged with the mountain panel facing west, the river panel facing north, and the plant panel facing east, then the human faces south in the south panel.

Yellow River Map

The Yellow River 河 flows from the western mountains to the east coast of China after making a great loop north around the mountain chain out of which flows the Wei River tributary. The Yellow River’s great loop north begins at a sharp bend high in the western mountains near the headwaters of the Wei River and resumes its flow east to the Yellow Sea at another great bend where the clear water of the Wei River joins a muddy Yellow River flowing into the marshy Yellow River basin and then into North China’s vast alluvial flood plain. Finally the silt-laden river empties into the Yellow Sea.



The jar’s four panels chart the flow of the Yellow River from left to right through the land of the north panel. In the opposite panel the jar’s artist drew the human sitting[33] on the ground facing south to the left in the west panel — the land of mountains, and to the right in the east panel — the land of plants. In the north panel the river changes the angle of flow from the left side to right side falling steeply out of the mountains in the west panel and flowing serpentine onto the fertile flood plain in the east panel.

The Majiayao knew that two great rivers — one clear and rapid, the other muddy, wide, and slow — were actually the same river. The clear river crossing their territory flowed north while a muddy river flowing from the north joined the Wei River and then both flowed east nourishing the land. The crosses in the east panel must represent the great fertile plain to the east of the jar’s location. In addition to confirming the ancient use of *t*-crosses as plants with the power to provide food, the *sifang* jar confirms an *x*-cross correlation system, a powerful use of symbolism. Furthermore, a cross symbolizes power within a character; therefore the *x*-cross as the ideogram for “five” indicates it is a powerful, magical number. “Five” is the middle digit in 1234–5–6789; *x* marks the middle digit with two crossing lines, the *x*-cross, the power of the middle.[34] Five is always in the middle of a magic square.

Conclusion

This paper presents evidence that the five-thousand-year-old painted pottery *guan* is a map of the Yellow River. I believe it is the oldest extant written document. The symbols on the map represent the *sifang* pattern of lands in the four directions, while the cross may mark the human as powerful with symbols, a teacher perhaps. Prehistoric teachers must have seemed magical, reading mysterious markings. Also, since antiquity, it was good fengshui for the king to face south. The human on the jar may be a Neolithic *fangshi* or sage king.

The ancient jar initially presented itself as a puzzle to me, but gradually the jar’s symbols led me to a strong hypothesis that they constitute a map, and that the symbols used in this map are the precursors of Chinese characters. Chinese written characters evolved from symbols and pictographs of nature. Pictographs for “mountain,” “river,” and “water,” and the ideograph for

“five” appear early during the development of Chinese writing. The Chinese characters evolved from marks on pottery, to ideographs on bones, and into ancient, then modern characters.

The *sifang* jar strongly suggests the Majiayao used a symbolic correlation system to make a map of the Yellow River five thousand years ago. They used symbolic images to record features of the landscape. The jar’s prenatal writing symbols are with us today in modern Chinese characters. These and other pictographs and ideographs became tools for teaching and classifying. Symbols enable humans to record, retrieve, and study information to this day. The jar’s symbols are the precursors of writing in books that now fill libraries to the four corners of the earth.

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I am grateful to all the scholars who labored to produce books that fill my library and helped me to understand Chinese culture on my journey to become a better teacher and practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine.

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Notes:

[1] When the intriguing jar was in San Francisco, in 2000, the Asian Art Museum was housed within the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park.

[2] The *x*-cross “**X**” is one of two ideographs for the number five (五 wu); it is also written 𝌆 in Shang script, the image of an “**X**” with vertical lines above and below. While the Neolithic Chinese, like the ancient Romans, wrote the numbers one through three with vertical strokes (丨, 丨丨, 丨丨丨, a Roman variant I, II, III), Shang script layered lines horizontally (一, 二, 三). Curiously the ancient Roman numeral for ten is identical to the Shang number five; both are written **X** with the same variant character 𝌆. The most common variant on Chinese Neolithic pottery is the **X,** and on Shang bronze vessels it is the 𝌆; however both variants appear on oracle bones.

There is a simple explanation for “five” making an x-cross, based on the image of two crossing diagonal lines. A straight line is between two points, two parallel lines mark four points, and when two lines cross, the crossing point in the center becomes the fifth point. The number five 五 fascinated the ancient Chinese. Five represents the center. Five — the middle number — has unusual qualities. When counting from one to nine, five is in the middle (1234 5 6789). When you pair up single digit numbers to equal ten (1–9, 2–8, 3–7, 4–6), five is unused; the middle number five stands alone in the center. Adding all the digits makes 45, which is divisible by five. Five is a lucky number. Discussions on interpreting x as “five”: Cheng (1983, 174) published a table of the evolution of numbers 1–9; Wang H. (1993, 192) gives seven examples of the Shang character for five written on oracle bones; also see Woon 1987, 17, 38, 46, 64; Lindqvist 1989, 336.

[3] The original watercolor of the *guan* water jar by Alise Suess is on the front page.

[4] See Chang 1980, 107–156; Chang & Allen 2005; White & Otsuka 1993; Yang 1999; Yang 2000; Watson 1995; Linduff & Sun 2004; Dexter & Mair 2010.

[5] See Yang 1999, 77; Rawson 1996, 36; Yang 2000, 63. Catalogue *Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology* (Yang 1999, 77; fig. 9):

> “Painted pottery *guan* jar”
> Neolithic Period, Majiayao Culture (c. 3000–2500 BCE)
> The Institute of Archaeology, CASS, Beijing
>
> The most arresting feature of this vessel’s decoration is the human face, in relief, centered on one side. The body is represented below, in painted lines alone. The sensitivity with which this face is modeled, and the refinement and sweetness it conveys, set it entirely apart from its earlier and less expressive counterpart from Dadiwan (cat. 3)….

[6] Rawson (1996, 36) comments on the jar from item 3:

> "Jar decorated with human features"
> Loam clay with painting in black and red pigment
> Height 21.7 cm
> Excavated in 1982 at Shizhao, near Tianshui, Gansu province (cai 01)
>
> The Majiayao culture, from which this vessel comes, produced some of the most elegantly painted of all decorated ceramics in neolithic China, some of them bearing unusually complex spiral designs. This rounded jar with two small handles at the belly has a design in black on a red ground. Its principal motif is unique in the context of Chinese neolithic ceramics….
>
> These pieces, taken together with the Yangshao ceramics discussed in the first two entries, give us some, if not very extensive, evidence of the representation of human figures among the western neolithic cultures. It is almost certain that the figures had some ceremonial significance, but we cannot work out what it was….

[7] This table was constructed from the works of Woon (1987) and Yang (2000) for the Neolithic pottery marks and Wang H. (1993) for Shang script.

[8] The *sifang* pattern dominates Shang culture in geography: foreign land and people; meteorology: the winds; and construction: graves and temples. Allan (1991, 78–93) refers to *sifang* as the four quadrates and pushes back the use of *sifang* correlations to the Shang dynasty. Wang A. (2000, 23–74) writes about *sifang*; see Chapter 2 "Sifang and the Center: The Cosmology of the Ruling Clan."

[9] The 4 palaces and the 28 mansions vary in width; the palaces vary from 76 to 108 degrees while the mansions vary in width from 2 to 30 degrees. (See table below.) The brightness of stars that mark the borders and define the four palaces varies by several orders of magnitude from 1st to 4th degree. Stars that mark the lunar mansions are as dim as 6th degree, barely visible. The table lists the star that marks the border of each of the four celestial palaces. Notice the width varies for each equatorial palace.

Star	Magnitude	Width	RA	Direction	Animal	Season
Spica	1st	76	11h 37m	East	Azure Dragon	Spring
Tejat	3rd	108	4h 17m	South	Red Bird	Summer
H And	4th	83	23h	West	White Tiger	Autumn
Φ Sgr	3rd	93	16h 35m	North	Dark Warrior	Winter

For discussion and illustrations of the irregular palaces see Needham 1959, 3.239–241; Walters 1987, 94. For more discussions of ancient Chinese astronomy see Needham 1959, 3.171–461; Kistemaker & Sun 1997; Walters 1987.

[10] Allan (1991, 75) suggests the *ya* 亞-shape, a cross made of five squares 五方 formed the Shang image of the earth:

> In the following, I will first examine the problem of the shape of the earth as it was understood by the Shang. I will first argue that the *si fang*, conventionally translated as the ‘four directions’ were four mythical lands which surrounded a central square. Thus, the shape of the Shang earth was that of a cruciform of the Chinese character *ya* 亞.

Wang A. 2000, 39:

> Culturally, the centrality of royal ancestor worship was symbolized by material constructions, particularly in the *Sifang*-center structure call the *ya* 亞-shape by many scholars. Evidence of such material constructions can be grouped into three categories: textual, archaeological and epigraphic.

[11] See Dewoskin 1983, 3:

> Fang-shih knowledge was the stuff of early hagiography, remote-land geography, and miracle lore, and this put fang-shih at the center of important developments in early fiction. They introduced varieties of magic and conjury into court social life, entertaining at the dinner parties of the rich and powerful with feats of “Guessing the Contents” and “Shrinking the World.” Their versatility was the key to their survival in the constantly changing social and political worlds of their era.

[12] See Dewoskin 1983, 1–3; for Huato 141, 140–150; for Zou Yan (Tsou Yen), 5–6, 11–12, 168n24. Dewoskin 1983, 6:

> …Tsou Yen and his thought shape only one of many facets of a complex intellectual ancestry, …

Allan 1991, 74:

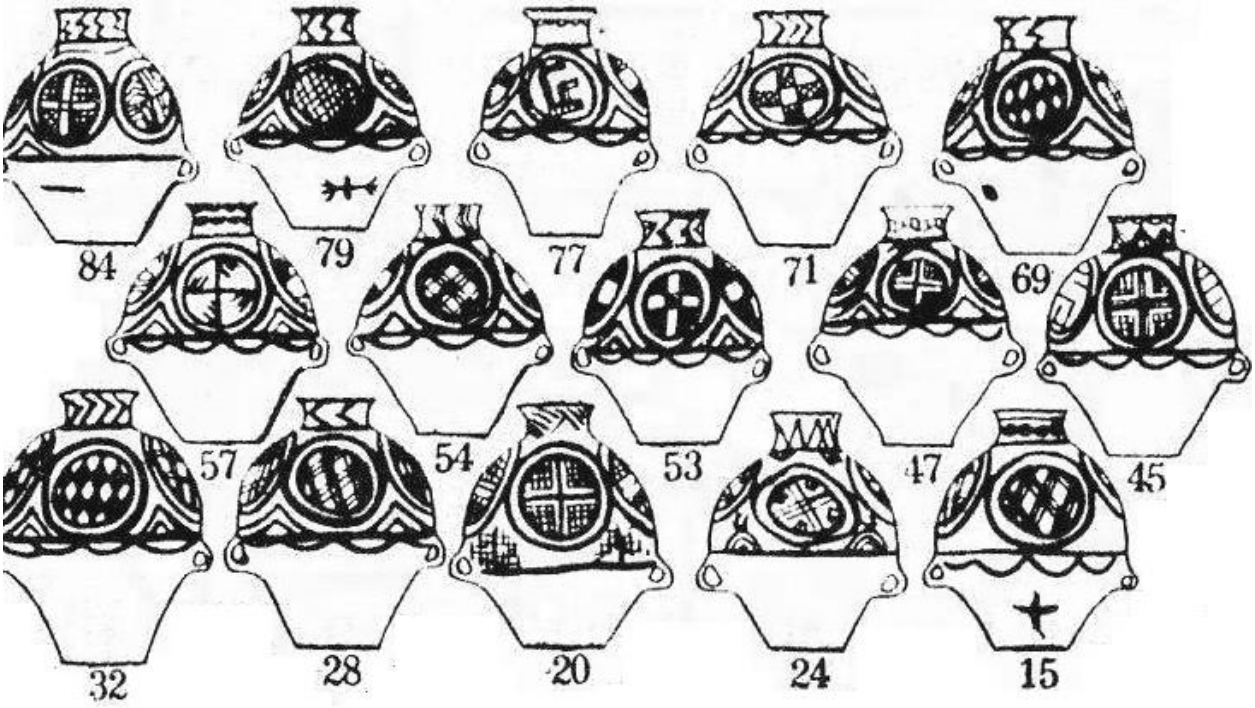
> Indeed, the first references to the shape of the cosmos are the questions posed in the *Chuci Tian wen*, as much as eight centuries after the fall of the Shang dynasty, and direct speculation about the shape of the cosmos is associated in the textual tradition with the rise and development of five element (*wu xing*) theory in the third century B. C. most importantly with the philosopher of the *yin-yang* school Zou Yan, though it undoubtedly had a longer history.

[13] Chinese and English translation is in Lu 1978, 1:79–81. The common definition of *fang* in traditional Chinese medicine is “remedy”; here the term denotes foreigners.

[14] See Birrell’s (2000) excellent English translation of *The Classic Mountains and Seas*.

[15] See Yang 1999, 66. An *x*-cross marks an ax handle.

[16] See Wu 1938, 39, no.43. Two crosses mark a jar.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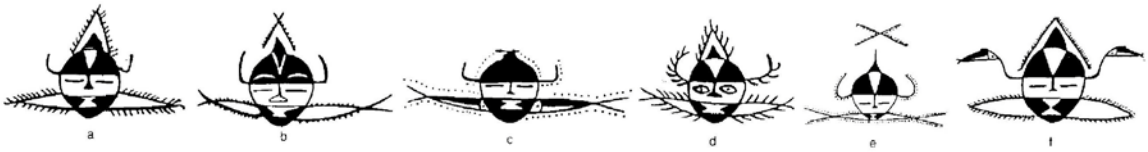
Chang KC 1986, 149, no. 114. A Majiayao culture burial has intriguing pottery.

[17] See Rawson 1996, 34. A curious face has an *x*-shaped mouth.



Rawson (1996, 34) includes more strange faces; one has an x-cross above.

[18] See Linduff & Sun 2004, 45. A zoomorphic figure has an *x*-cross in the head.

Rawson 1996, 39 Wang H. 1993, 5 Rawson 1996, 38

[19] Wang H. 1993, vii:

> Whether borrowed or created, a character generally begins its life in Chinese with one meaning and its ancient pronunciation. Yet no living language is static, and in time words develop a new pronunciations or meanings and lose old ones. However, the forms of the ideographic characters are somewhat static, especially the pictographs which derive the "letters" of Chinese from common objects or beings.

[20] Worker and a king images see (Wang H. 1993, 158, more ref). Just as with "five" there are variants. To simplify, I show only the common shape that survived the variants.

[21] Emperor image see Allan 1991, 77, Wang A. 2000, 37.

[22] Father image see Wang H. 1993, 156.

[23] Mair 1990, 27–47. *Early China* 15.

[24] See Mair 1995. "Mummies of the Tarim Basin," New York: *Archaeology*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 28–35.

[25] Macdonell 1924. *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*.

[26] See note 24.

[27] See Dewoskin 1983.

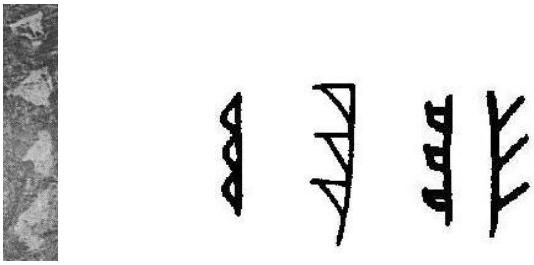
[28] For "mountain" and "hill" see Woon 1987 28–30, 97; Lindqvist 1989, 56; Wang H. 1993, 37.

[29] See Chapters 1–5 of Birrell's (2000) *The Classic Mountains and Seas*.

[30] For "river" and "water" see Woon 1987, 61–2; Lindqvist 1989, 53–55; Wang H. 1993, 36.

[31] See “mound” in the table of characters on p. 3. The ancient pictograph is shown in Yang 2000, 59; Woon 1987, 18; Wang H. 1993, 96. Five thousand years ago, the blossoming of Majiayao culture transformed the emerging Chinese civilization. It took place within Yangshao culture after thousands of years of cultural stability. The Majiayao lived in villages along rivers and marshes in northwest China, a cross-cultural zone. Their innovative pottery decor and new geometric designs on standard Yangshao pottery coincided with the introduction of farming and metallurgy. They farmed the land by terracing the mountains, and from that time forward, wooded forests began to disappear from the geographic record in China.

Terraced Farming



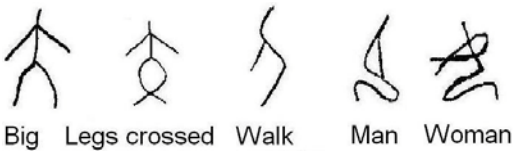
Mound, a radical 阝& a phonetic 阜.

Yin and yang 陽 陰 both have the mound radical 阝. Some plants prefer the sunny side of a mound and some prefer the shady side. The human panel on the jar has mounds to the left and the right. This agrees with the archeological record, which shows Majiayao culture started the practice of cutting down the forest to establish terraced farms.

[32] For “plants,” “forest,” or “marshland” see Woon 1987, 18, 28, 59–60ff; Lindqvist 1989, 174; Wang H. 1993, 38f. All interpret the *t*-cross as “seven” and/or “ten.”

[33] I think the human with arms outstretched is sitting; however the drawing of the legs is ambiguous. Commentators discuss the sculpted face, line-drawn upper body, and outstretched arms, but only Rawson (1996, 34) notes the legs look curved. The position of the legs could communicate something about the status of the human. Even today posture communicates status. As writing evolved, establishing more characters, the number of symbolic human postures expanded from the original Neolithic “big” posture: standing up, facing front, with outstretched arms.

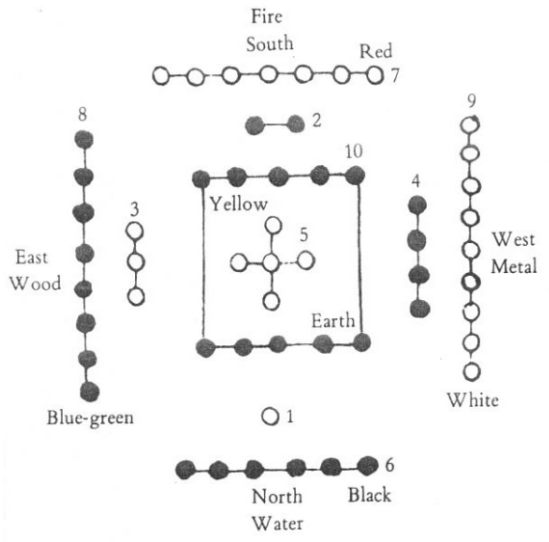
Ancient Body Language.



	Big	Legs crossed	Walk	Man	Woman
Wang H. 1993, pp	3,	8,	2,	9,	4.

Five Shang script pictographs represent four postures of the human body: 1) big (大 da4) standing forward, 2) legs crossed (join, 交 jiao1) sitting, 3) walk (人 ren2) standing profile, 4) kneeling profile (kneel, 卩 jie2) male and female (woman, 女 nu3). I think the human’s legs are crossed in the sitting position shown in join 交 jiao1. Curiously, there is an acupoint called “three yin join” 三陰交 located where the legs cross near the ankles.

[34] The He Tu 河圖 Yellow River Chart has a cross in the middle. It has been revered by *fangshi* and Daoists as their most ancient document and kept secret for thousands of years. Today its authenticity is questioned. Traditionally the He Tu was attributed to Fuxi (2953–2838 BCE), who invented pictographic writing and lived in the Wei River valley five thousand years ago; during that time Majiayao culture (3100–2700 BCE) produced intriguing pottery. The He Tu has paired dot-and-line images in a *zhong-fang* pattern. The ten-dot-square and five-dot-cross represent the middle. The He Tu and the *sifang* jar both pay homage to five domains—one marked with a cross.



He Tu 河圖: Yellow River Chart

The writings of Confucius are one of many ancient sources that mention Fuxi. Confucius edited, studied, revised, and commented on ancient writings. He wrote a series of commentaries for the *I Ching*, and in a section on history it reads, “A long time ago, (Fuxi) the Xi clan king ruled below heaven. Looking up he saw images in the heaven. Looking down he saw models on earth. He saw that bird and beast pictographs educate on earth by consensus. Nearby he studied the body. Faraway he studied all things. Start with the *bagua* to reach illuminating insights by virtue of its useful categories. He made knotted cords and snare nets for use in hunting and fishing.” (From the “Great Commentary” 大箋 Da Jian or Ta Chuan)

Fuxi seems to be a memory of a time when someone classified things. Comparing information embedded in the ancient myths of Fuxi and the culture of Majiayao, I observed both lived at the same time in the Wei River valley and practiced the domestic arts of weaving, cooking, hunting, and fishing; both fashioned pots, nets, and metal knives, and developed writing and correlation systems. The difference is the Majiayao used quinary correlations in a

five-lands pattern of four directions around the middle, and Fuxi used binary correlations ($2^3 = 8$) in heaven, earth, and people.

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