A new decade for social changes
A Physical Geography Theory of the Different Origins of Western and Eastern Civilizations

Hanwen Mi
Weifang University, Weifang, P.R.C., 261061
mihanwen@foxmail.com

Abstract. The idea that the common ancestor of the human family originated on the African continent about 7 to 5 million years ago is not much disputed by the academic community. However, humans who originated from the same place are nowadays very different. Due to historical origins, customs and living environment, not only are there huge differences in skin color, physique and appearance, but also cultural differences. As the saying goes, one side of the land nurtures one side of the people, and the difference in the geographical environment makes people from different regions not only different from other regions in terms of physiology but also significantly different in terms of culture and psychology. In this paper, we start with the difference in the geographical environment and analyze its influence on the religious, written aspects and science of Eastern and Western cultures. Thus, the conclusion that geographical differences are the root cause of the cultural differences between East and West is drawn to promote economic and cultural exchanges between East and West, and thus better promote the development of world culture.

Keywords. Physical Geography, Eastern and Western Culture, Religion, Script

1. Introduction

Today, what we call the world is its spiritual part because the material part of the world is the earth, which has existed for a long time. Therefore, it is the culture that makes the world different. The cultures of the East and the West are indeed very different because they are two separate cultural systems in their entirety.

The birth of life and the origin of civilization are closely related to water. Water is so important that the great rivers gave birth to the agricultural culture led by the four ancient civilizations of China, ancient India, ancient Egypt and ancient Babylon. The sea carried the maritime culture typified by the Greek city-states of the Mediterranean, in the form of the sea and rivers, which gave birth to the world's first civilizations. The agrarian civilization that survived on the banks of the great rivers, relying on the diversion of water from the flat rivers for irrigation, lived a life of sunrise and sunset, sowing in spring and harvesting in autumn, representing stability, peace, middle ground and conservatism.

The emergence of agriculture, called the "Neolithic Revolution" by Child, marked the development of human society from primitive to advanced forms, and the development of agriculture was closely related to the Great River civilization. People flourished on both sides
of the Great River, from settlements to villages, from towns to countries. People became more and more numerous, ideas became complex, social order was established, and civilization sprouted.

At the same time, rivers also provide channels for human migration. Along the veins of the great rivers, human society developed and grew, and civilization was further accumulated. The width of rivers determines the greatness of civilization. Several world-class rivers with large water volumes, wide basins and long flows, the Two River Basin (Euphrates and Tigris), the Yellow River Basin, the Ganges River Basin and the Nile River Basin, gave birth to the glorious four ancient civilizations of the world and are the source and birthplace of human civilization.

The rivers provide the environment and materials for human beings to survive. The water of life originated in the high mountains. It trickled into the rushing rivers, which alluvialized the fertile plains and provided water and energy for agricultural irrigation. At the same time, the rivers also changed the climate and provided a happy place for human, animal and plant growth. Slowly the division between East and West came into being.

2. The East-West Division

The origins of Eastern culture come from two main countries. China and India. Both cultures were nurtured by rivers - the Yellow River in China and the Indus River in India. They helped both cultures develop over the centuries, creating their own styles. Over time, during the Tang Dynasty in China, Chinese culture gradually went overseas and entered Japanese society, forming the Japanese culture of today. Although somewhat different from the Chinese culture, it should belong to the same system.

While the two mother rivers gave birth to the Eastern culture, the Mesopotamian plain also gave birth to another important culture, the Mesopotamian civilization. This civilization later formed the cultures of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. And these two cultures are the basis of the well-known European culture. Like Chinese culture, European culture crossed the waters. When the British settled in America, their culture crossed the Atlantic with them. Therefore, the culture of the United States is not very different from that of Europe. The maritime civilization that traded along the shores of the oceans led a life of constant outward expansion and exploration, specializing in commercial warfare skills, cultivating the tools of war for aggression and plunder, and representing exploration, migration, trade, and plunder.

The basis of maritime civilization was maritime trade, and maritime civilization emerged later than agricultural civilization because a certain material basis was needed before the development of maritime technology. A typical maritime civilization was the Greek civilization of the Mediterranean. This sea, wrapped by continents, was the best place to nurture maritime civilization. The vastness, freedom, mystery and versatility of the sea made people regard it as a source of strength and wisdom, and at the same time inspired a desire for exploration. Eager to explore faraway places, the seaside ancestors crossed a sea, but this sea could not be too big. Otherwise it would be difficult to reach the other side with primitive shipbuilding technology, and this sea had to have an endpoint that could be worth exploring, so as to encourage generations of people to go forward and continue to nurture their own ocean-based culture. The Mediterranean, which connects Asia, Africa and Europe, is just a "Mediterranean." Explorers are constantly exploring these waters, bringing goods from this shore to the other shore, looking for buyers, and then bringing back goods from the opposite side ......, they happily shuttled between the three shores to earn the fees in between. Thus, a maritime civilization is a foreign trade-dependent civilization, which needs to constantly
colonize, develop overseas markets, and absorb foreign cultures and foreign populations.

At the same time, several other differences added to the cultural differences. Take the language system as an example. In the East, most of the languages belong to the hieroglyphic script, while most of the languages in the West are based on the Latin language family. Other reasons, such as ethnic differences, are also counted. But more importantly, because of the great distances and steep areas between the East and the West, until recent centuries the two cultures rarely communicated. As a result, they grew up entirely on their own terms, with little interference from the other.

3. Characteristics of the Eastern Great River Civilization

The great river of Eastern civilization has undoubtedly brought the most generous gifts to the people. Without the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. Without the two rivers, it would not have been possible to produce the Sumerian civilization. The Yellow River basin, with its fertile soil, was able to give birth to the 5,000-year-old Chinese civilization. The Great River civilization based on farming is characterized by stable inheritance and reverence for authority.

First of all, crop seeds and domesticated livestock needed to be screened and passed down from generation to generation. Knowledge related to cultivation and production, climate characteristics, and tool-making methods needed to be accumulated and memorized, and over time, records and texts were formed, and they recorded all knowledge that might be useful, hence the fine tradition of recording ancestral genealogies and revising history. In contrast to the need for a vein of knowledge and memory, the written word also has more stability and continuity.

Second, agriculture locked people into the land, and without serious natural or artificial disasters, people would rarely leave their land, so living in peace and contentment was the greatest characteristic of agrarian civilization. Natural disasters led to the formation of a cult of power and authority, and in the process of gradual development, centralized power emerged.

At the same time, the civilization of the East was agrarian and dependent on the vast green land. This determined the inevitable trend of the development of the Great River civilization towards ancient agricultural societies, which naturally led to the formation of a relatively conservative and straightforward culture and hierarchy. Still, since the Great River civilization also fed on the sky, there were naturally heavenly gods. The document "Gong Yang Zhan - Xi Gong 31" records the sacrifice to the sky." What is the reason for not sacrificing in the suburbs of Lu? The Son of Heaven sacrificed to heaven, and the vassals sacrificed to earth." What makes the suburbs of Lu unceremonious?" Such examples abound in the history books. This explains why the gods are so revered at the heart of Eastern mythology.

3.1 Characteristics of Eastern Religions

The typical Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism are indigenous religions brewed in the soil of the East. The more controversial religion, however, is Christianity, which is now popular worldwide, especially in the contemporary Western world. Christianity arose among the lower-class Jewish people of the diaspora on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, namely Pakistan and western Asia Minor. Christianity is a joint product of Eastern Judaism and Greek philosophy. It clearly inherited the Jewish theology of monotheism, original sin, the concept of "savior," and creationism, and accepted the classic Jewish Bible, called the Old Testament: at the same time. The Greek philosophy was interested in the Christian doctrine that "all men are slaves of God" and "all men are equal before God." [1] At the same time, Greek philosophy had an important influence on the formation of the ideas of.
"all men are slaves of God" and "all men are equal before God," as well as on asceticism, spiritual repentance, and fatalism. As Engels pointed out, Christianity has "emerged quietly from a mixture of universalized Eastern theology, especially Jewish theology, and vulgarized Greek philosophy, especially Stoic philosophy. So, Christianity can be said to be a common product of Eastern and Western religious philosophies, but its roots are from Judaism with a strong Eastern theology and arose in Pakistan and Asia Minor, the land of the East, so I classify Christianity as an Eastern religion.

The influence of geography on religious culture is undoubtedly enormous.

Originally, a man was insignificant in front of nature, and in front of the generous gift of the great rivers, he felt that nature was omnipotent. Thus, nature worship and totem worship emerged. Animal worship originated from hunting life, but with the development of agricultural production, the worship of the sun, the moon, the sky, the earth and the river, and other mysterious things in nature that are beyond human knowledge, was raised to the ultimate level. The Dragon Totem of the Yellow River Basin is a typical example.

Due to the generous gift of the great rivers of the East, humanity became heavily dependent on and worshipped the fertile land. The gods thus imagined were nearly omnipotent, and the Eastern religions on this basis were far more mysterious and influential and binding than those in Greece.

3.2 Characteristics of Eastern Scripts

The four ancient civilizations correspond to the following scripts: oracle bone script, ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, cuneiform script, and ancient Indian seal script.

Coincidentally, these scripts are all pictorial scripts. Although the cuneiform script gradually evolved from the initial pictorial script to an abstract pictorial script, it is undeniable that it is still a pictorial script.

It is not just a coincidence that the Eastern civilizations shared similar geographical environments and created similar scripts in a relatively isolated geographical space.

Needless to say, Egyptian hieroglyphs are typical and belong to the typical pictorial script. As for the Indus Valley, although the seal script is indecipherable with the mysterious disappearance of ancient Indian civilization, its various ideograms engraved on seals, jars, copper plates, bangles and amulets fully illustrate that its writing is a pictorial script[2].

The Chinese characters, on the other hand, evolved from the oracle bone script, a pictographic script, and it can be said that China is now the only ancient civilization that still uses pictographs.

3.3 Characteristics of Eastern Science

In the ancient political system of the East, the unity of church and state was a characteristic feature. The rulers needed the support of religion to maintain their rule, and the religious leaders were willing to cooperate with the rulers in order to expand their influence and compete for power. Thus, in the East, a very distinctive ruling class was created: the priest class.

The priestly class was most typical of the caste system in India under the Aryans, from top to bottom: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The highest-status Brahmins were the priestly class of the ruling class.

In the Arabian Empire, where the unity of church and state was most typical, the Qur'an served as both the doctrine and the dogma of Islam and as its social policy. The leader of Islam, Muhammad, and his successor, the caliph, were the rulers of the Arab states.
4. Characteristics of Western Maritime Civilization

The maritime civilization was open, innovative, and self-rational. The high frequency and wide range of foreign exchanges promoted the openness of ideas and culture, enabling the city-state's inhabitants to easily tolerate and accept various heterogeneous cultures different from their own, and selectively absorb foreign advantages. Conflicts and competition are bound to arise when multiple cultures coexist in a small area. In order to gain an advantage in the competition, they all have to strive for continuous development and survival by development. Openness, competition, development, and pluralism were the elements that made ancient Greece a unique democracy.

The move from land to sea was a courageous and challenging one, so the maritime civilization emphasized self and reason. The seaside people who rode the sea did not believe in authority, but only in themselves, and even the gods were praised for their outstanding deeds, rather than gaining supremacy. As a result, even at the height of Greek power, the region did not form a truly unified state, but at best a loose confederation.

4.1 Characteristics of Western Religion

The Greeks believed most in a new generation of gods, led by Zeus, whose palace prison was on Mount Olympus, hence the name Olympus Gods. The basis of their beliefs is ancient Greek mythology, which is mainly made up of stories of gods and heroic legends intertwined. The most important shrine dedicated to Zeus is Olympia, where the largest all-Greek games are held, known as the Olympic Games. Its main distinguishing feature was the "isomorphism of gods and men," which distinguished it from Eastern theology [3].

Compared with the fertile land in the East, nature in Greece is quite stingy. Greece belongs to the Mediterranean climate, with warm and rainy winters and hot and dry summers, which is not suitable for vegetation growth, and therefore not suitable for the development of agriculture. In addition, the peninsula is mountainous, the plains are small, and the soil is very poor, so it is often difficult to feed oneself, and it can be said that the mountains are poor.

Regional specialties were olives, grapes, and other crops, and because the food was often not self-sufficient, the Greeks had to trade by sea to exchange their specialties for enough food. The Greek peninsula, with its winding coastline, provided a large number of excellent ports that were very convenient for maritime trade, and many islands were easy to navigate. Hence, the maritime industry was very developed. Unlike the East, most of their food was not directly gifted by nature, but by their brave development of maritime trade, in exchange for their own agricultural products. So they felt that their efforts were even more important than the gifts of nature. And the perennial overseas trade opened up their own horizons and insights, and the mystery of nature was greatly reduced.

The Greek gods were not as omnipotent as the gods of the Eastern religions but rather "homeopathic." The gods were as human in appearance, with all humans' emotional qualities, strengths and weaknesses. But at that time, human beings were still small in front of nature, and nature was still irresistible. Even though people in the Greek region did not worship nature as strongly as the Easterners, it did not mean that they could defy nature, but to a lesser extent than the Eastern religions. Therefore, although the ancient Greeks insisted that "gods are the same as humans," they were different from humans in that they were more intelligent, more powerful, and immortal than humans.
4.2 Characteristics of Western Scripts
A few dozen years after the formation of hieroglyphics and cuneiform, several new writing systems emerged: the development of epigraphic scripts suitable for writing local languages based on the principle of the phonetic representation of symbols. The change from ideographic to the phonetic linear script was a leap forward, and it was in the Aegean region, that the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations took this step.

In both Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations, the officials of the Minoan court civilization on Crete used a linear script called "Linear A" to record the amount of oil and grain stored in those huge storage jars, while the Mycenaean civilization, after invading the declining island of Crete around 1450 B.C.E., used the Minoan "Linear A" to record the amount of oil and grain stored in those substantial storage jars. After invading the declining island of Crete in about 1450 B.C., the Mycenaean civilization modified Minoan "Linear Script A" and created "Linear Script B" to write their own language.

The Greeks later introduced alphabetic writing from the Phoenician alphabet and made a leap forward - they added vowels. This led to the evolution of the Latin and Russian Cyrillic alphabets used in Europe and most of the modern world.

4.3 Characteristics of Western Science
Religion played a major role in the emergence of society and in maintaining its stability, yet it also created great resistance to its progress. Eastern religions, in particular, created great resistance to the progress of society, especially after the fall of Greek civilization and the overwhelming introduction of Eastern theology into Europe, which ushered in the darkest of the Middle Ages. And at the dawn of the world's modern science and technology, Copernicus died in the year he dared to publish his main work "The Theory of the Movement of the Heavenly Bodies" in the world. Under the threat of fire, Galileo had to declare that he had renounced his faith. On the other hand, religion in the ancient Greek region was relatively open, and the resistance to social progress was not as great as in the East. Thus as early as a few centuries B.C., the scientific knowledge of the ancient Greeks reached a very mature stage.

About 310 BC, Aristarchus proposed the sun center theory, more than 1800 years earlier than Copernicus' sun center theory (1543); Eratosthenes (Eratosthenes 276-194 BC) calculated the diameter of the earth as 12,630 km, which is similar to the 12,756 km measured today, and concluded that Euclid's (Euclid, 330 BC-275 BC) Elements of Geometry systematically summarized the geometry of the time and deduced the world's earliest and most scientifically rigorous mathematical system of formulas: and Archimedes of physics. (Archimedes of physics, Aristotle of biology, and Hippocrates, who is known as the "father of medicine."(Hippocrates, the scientists of ancient Greece were as bright as the stars, and the scientific knowledge of ancient Greece overshadowed the eastern civilizations that had lasted for thousands of years.

Eastern civilizations, especially Chinese civilizations, have lasted for thousands of years, but they have never been able to break through the shackles of religion and escape the shadow of the ruling class. Although the pyramids were built with great ingenuity, they were built so that the souls of the pharaohs could ascend to the realm of eternal life after death; the terracotta warriors and horses of Qin were magnificent, but they were used to accompany the emperor for burial; among the four great inventions, the invention of printing and papermaking was used to publish Buddhist scriptures in large numbers, and the first printed book was the Vajra Sutra. In contrast, the invention of the compass was made for telling fortunes. The invention compass was made into a compass to tell fortunes, and finally, the invention of gunpowder was used in rituals and festive celebrations. The technological achievements of
Eastern civilization were forever bound to religion and the ruling class, unable to go further. When Western civilization resurfaced and revived the Greek spirit after the Renaissance, leading countless advanced technologies to knock on the doors of the East, the civilized countries of the East seemed so overwhelmed.

5. Conclusions

The physical-geographical differences between the birthplaces of Eastern and Western civilizations are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

1. Great rivers flowed in the Eastern origin, while the oceans were vast in the Western origin;
2. The fertile land of the Eastern origin is suitable for cereal cultivation, while the soil of the Western origin is barren and mainly produces olives and grapes;
3. The plains of the Eastern origin are predominant, and the mountains of the Western origin are predominant;
4. The subtropical climate of the Eastern origin, with wet and rainy summers, is suitable for the growth of vegetation. The Mediterranean climate of Western origin, with high temperature and little rain in summer, is not conducive to the development of vegetation.

As for the differences in mythology, the deep-seated reason may lie in the different forms of social civilization.

As we all know, the distinctive feature of Western civilization is the blue ocean civilization. Ancient civilizations represented by ancient Greece and Rome all originated from the sea, and according to historical records, ocean civilizations often have the spirit of exploitation and adventure, due to the narrow and mountainous islands, agriculture could not be developed for a long time, and could only survive through the development of foreign trade and commodity economy, which caused the Western individualism and Humanism. This led to the sprouting and development of Western individualism and Humanism. For example, it is recorded in the History of Western Philosophy that the ancient Greek sage Protagoras said, "Man is the measure of all things." (πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος.) This fully affirms man's role, which is naturally represented in Western mythology as similar to the gods, who have the distinct characteristics of man and are "higher beings with supernatural powers."

The geography of nature can be said to have a decisive influence on the emergence of religion. "It may be said that primitive religions all over the world originally arose in one form or another mainly from this 'relationship' of the human heap to nature." [4] Indeed, in the initial stage of human social development, in primitive societies, due to the relatively low productivity of society, human beings appeared extremely soft and powerless in front of nature, and the relationship between human beings and nature then prominently manifested itself as an animal-like relationship of dependence, conformity, and obedience. Thus, man's dependence on nature has become the fundamental basis and central content of religion. Nature worship or nature religion with nature worship as its essential prescriptive nature became the original form of human religion. As Marx and Engels emphasized: "Nature began as a completely alien, infinitely powerful and unpayable force in opposition to man, and man's relation to nature was exactly like that of animals to nature, and man was like cattle to nature, thus, it was a purely animal consciousness of nature (nature religion) " [5]In fact, it is this 'purely animal consciousness' of man and the great contrast between the uncontrollability of nature and the apparent inadequacy of primitive man's technology that makes a man feel an infinite fear and dependence on nature. The history of human writing, however, is originally a history of the world.
The history of human writing, on the other hand, originally evolved from figurative graphic writing to complex abstract linear writing.

However, there is a question: Why did the four ancient civilizations take the first step in the development of the Greek and Aegean civilizations in the Aegean region, despite their remarkable achievements? The development of writing in Eastern civilizations has stagnated, and what is more, the people of Chinese civilization are still using pictographs that have been handed down to them.

The reason for this is that the geographical environment of the East is much more potent than that of Greece, so the people of the East worshiped and superstitiously believed in nature, and in the process of creating writing, they played the role of a mere describer in front of nature, describing natural phenomena and things in a graphic way, and stopped there.[6]

On the other hand, the people of the Greek region were more inclined to act as a creator in the creation of words. Not satisfied with the laborious graphic description of phenomena and events of the natural environment, they creatively invented linear scripts to spell out their own language.

To sum up, it is precisely because of the different physical and geographical environments that people have different attitudes toward nature, and therefore different roles in nature, creating different types of writing in Eastern and Western civilizations.

References