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COMMENT ON  
 “ANSAI PEASANT PAINTINGS: INHERITANCE OF CHINESE  
 PRIMITIVE CULTURE AND PRIMITIVE PHILOSOPHY”

*Ke Li*<sup>1</sup>

Commented Article: CHANG, Yaqian; ZHOU, Liming; LU, Peng; YASMEEN, Samina. Ansaï peasant paintings: inheritance of Chinese primitive culture and primitive philosophy. **Trans/Form/Ação**: Unesp journal of philosophy, v. 46, Special Issue, p. 366- 390, 2023.

This robust work is the product of the relentless efforts which were practiced by Chang et. al (2023). The writers have skillfully highlighted and brought to light all the relevant facts regarding this fascinating topic. Here are some examples of those great and memorable paintings which have made their way into the highest echelon of the world of arts. These paintings are etched in their beholders' memories. Such are the beauty and charms of these great gems of paintings and crafts. These paintings stir the readers' imaginations and fertile minds. The Ansaï painting of a farmer exhibits a breathtakingly gorgeous design, imaginative creativity, a daring aesthetic and a distinctive method of applying colors for a wonderful result. It is endowed with special creative effects and occasionally mistaken for having “Oriental Picasso”'s romantic allure. Ansaï County is culturally rich in China because it is home to

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the Three Strange Wonders of Ansai County, which include farmer painting, waist drumming and paper cutting.

However, on the downside, the writers mainly focused on the aesthetics and artistic values of the paintings instead of evaluating their worth in terms of giving an exposition of these paintings about Modern Chinese history and culture. This lack of interest in the Sino history and culture marred the overall impact of this writing. Second, the article does not sufficiently explore the idea of Yin and Yang, one of the pillars of Chinese philosophy. Third, the conceptual themes of these paintings were touched lightly, and no deep-dive analyses were presented. Fourth, the Ansai paintings portrayal of deities and their powers was overly exaggerated, and their relevance to modern times is ill-conceived. Fifth, the writers have excessively quoted various sources to cement their arguments. The bulk of the article was dedicated to these quotes and references, which was a strain on the work. The writers should have focused more on their interpretations of the topic.

Chinese folk art, which has a variety of styles and rich content, is an expression of group ideology because it depicts ethnic group life, folk customs and folk ideas not only artistically. But it also implicitly expresses the idea of the interaction between Yin and Yang, the survival and reproduction of all things, the adoration of life and the reproduction in Chinese primitive philosophy. Rural working women's Ansai peasant paintings feature a variety of masses with distinct ethnic and regional traits. It most closely resembles the original chaotic thinking style and collective unconscious inheritance and takes its aesthetic form and cultural connotation from the various ethnic groups' cultures and art. Its philosophical foundations come from the Yin and Yang, continuous life, the unification of man and nature, and the identity of object and self schools of ancient philosophy. The specific aesthetic manifestations, such as modelling ideas and color theory that are generated from them, can be considered as condensed crystallizations of Chinese fundamental culture and philosophy (DUAN, 2002).

The desire for life is the driving force behind human artistic creation, which is centred on the archaic aesthetic psychology and taste that emerged from the ancestors' veneration, the worship of life and the safeguarding of life. It has persisted from prehistoric periods to modern times. Ansai peasants dare to break the rules of reality, exaggerate and transform it, and bestow the objects with mysterious supernatural power, creating a distinctive artistic

language and modeling style. They place their adoration, love and awe of life, nature and universe deities above objective things (HE, 2015).

Ansai women from rural homes painted pictures and made ink lines. The praises of life and a brand-new world, where humans and nature cohabit together, are described, along with singing flying birds, laughing flowers and dancing trees, hardworking people and growing animals, rising dragons and leaping tigers. Peasants devote attention to intentional and emotional expression while expressing genuine and straightforward emotions, using simple artistic style, warm hues and varied forms of expression. They use basic, naive painting techniques and flashy colors to convey what they have seen, heard and thought about in their creation and life. They also use these same colors and methods to show their ambition, pursuit of a better life and love for life. Peasant paintings frequently embody the most ferocious and intense life tension due to their aesthetic consciousness, in contrast to the Chinese literati's quest for "emptiness," "charm" and "artistic conception." It embodies the earliest, hottest and most genuine life consciousness (LI, 2022).

A complete art system, in which the concept of philosophy plays a key role, is formed when the idea of art decides the concept of modelling art, and the concept of philosophy determines the concept of art.

This is a tenet of philosophy that applies to all people. Where individuals originated from was the central question of early philosophy. The phenomenon of human heterosexual communication and the birth of new life led ancestors to the conclusion that "men and women mingle with each other to nurture everything and create everything," which produced the philosophical concept of Yin and Yang, which is the solution to the origin of life extracted from reproductive worship (NING; RONG, 1990).

The core of original Chinese thought, which runs through the system of Yin and Yang, Eight Trigrams and Five Elements, that represent the historical concept of the human beings' ancestor, and which also contains the idea of reproductive worship of the mo, is the concept of Yin and Yang. It is also the concept of incessant life, with the connotation "[...] the combination of Yin and Yang and the endless life of all things." (ZENG, 2019, p. 8).

The Neolithic Age in a primitive culture is where the Yin-Yang Eight Trigrams, the original philosophical system of the cultural foundation of the Chinese country, developed. It is the Chinese people's magnificent invention. When they saw that every phenomenon had both excellent and opposing

sides, ancient ideologists adopted the ideas of “Yin” and “Yang” to explain the two opposed and mutually escalating material forces in nature. “Yin and Yang are both present in Dao.” (2009) (WANG; KONG, p. 259). Therefore, the Grand Terminus, which created the two fundamental Forms, exists in (the system of) the Yi. The four iconic symbols that resulted from these two forms gave rise to the eight Trigrams. (2009) (WANG; KONG, p. 277).

According to the Book of Changes, the alternation of Yin and Yang is considered the fundamental law governing how the universe functions. It is also believed that the Grand Terminus, which is where the primordial universe originated, is split into two parts, Yang and Yin, which are known as two instruments and are symbolized by “one” and “–” (namely, Yang trigram and Yintrigram). The two forms are divided into four states: Taiyin, Taiyang, Shaolin and Shaoyang. These four states are further divided into eight trigrams: Qian, Kun, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Li, Gen and Dui, which stand for heaven, earth, thunder, wind, fire, water, mountain and river, respectively. At the center of these trigrams are Yin and Yang, specifically the Kun and Qian Trigrams. Observing how things develop and change led to the creation of the Eight Diagrams. Through observation of themselves, the reproduction of various animals and plants nearby, the movement of the heavens, earth, sun and moon, the cycle of the climatic seasons, the long-term observation, the study of various relative concepts, orientations, and the relationship between images and numbers, people in ancient times gradually developed a philosophical system that included all natural sciences.

This is described in vivid detail in the Xicizhuan:

In the past, the planet was ruled by the head of the Xi family. After looking up at the sky, he then rotated his head to face the ground. He saw the suited to the earth, birds, and animals. He used abnormal changes in a person’s physiology and environment to assess various situations and forecast outcomes. He created the eight trigrams to convey the gods’ goodness and devotion to all things. (WANG; KONG, 2009, p. 284).

Lao Tzu also asserted that Tao is special. Yin and Yang can be found in the Tao. All things are created in a harmonious state when Yin and Yang connect. The combination of Yin and Yang creates a new harmonious body since everything is shaded or exposed to the sun (LIU, 2021, p. 227). A generalization of the ancient Chinese philosophical system, the idea that Yin and Yang are divided by chaos, merged to create all things, and that all

things are infinite has come to represent the core of Chinese national progress. The fundamental principle that Yin and Yang mutually generate all things in the cosmos, “Dao includes one Yin and one Yang,” is also the fundamental principle of art and aesthetics (ZENG, 2019, p. 11). The idea of the Yin and Yang eight trigrams has always been the intellectual underpinning of folk art models, from prehistoric times to the modern-day Ansai peasant paintings.

The notion of the unity of heaven and man first emerged as a result of our ancestors’ long-standing understanding of the connections between the five elements, Yin and Yang, and human life as they investigated the connections between heaven and man and the changes between ancient and modern times (LIU, 2004, p. 69). Suppose the ancient ancestors’ understanding of how living things reproduced was the primary source of the notion of Yin and Yang. In that case, their classification of the substances worldwide is the primary source of the concept of the five elements. Long-term residents of the North Temperate Zone, our ancestors spent a lot of time on the Loess Plateau of the Central Plains, where they experienced “[...] many easterly winds in spring when vegetation recovers and everything is renewed; southerly winds in summer with sweltering sun and long days; westerly winds in autumn with withered plants and trees, as well as clear skies and crisp air; and northerly winds in winter with short days and cold weather.” (HE, 1975).

Chinese ancient philosophy is a sufficient and self-sustaining philosophical system that was developed in the late primitive society as early as before the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties, and the unity of the notion of Yin and Yang and constant life that is sublimated from the fundamental collective psyche of humans – life consciousness and reproduction consciousness. Chinese primitive philosophy is the unity of cosmological ontology, epistemology and methodology of the Chinese philosophical system. The Chinese primitive culture is a plastic art centered on the idea of viewing objects and taking images, which is a broad concept of fine arts that defines the Chinese people’s philosophical view, artistic view, emotional disposition, psychological quality and national spirit.

The Chinese primitive culture dates back 7,000 years and includes painted pottery, underground archaeology and group culture on the ground. The group’s cultural and social life has extraordinarily rich and full historical relics that have preserved the most primitive philosophy and culture of China. It is the only nation with a long history of civilization that has not seen a cultural split because of this. The ethnic groups’ social lives have thoroughly

accumulated the ancient Chinese culture and philosophical system, which serves as the intellectual foundation and primary meaning of ethnic group culture. The mother of Chinese national culture and art passed down from a prehistoric society to the present with distinct national and regional features. It is the folk art, which has amassed the rare wisdom of hundreds of millions of laboring people in China. It has a lengthy history and is a part of the Chinese national artistic state. The most extensive cultural connotation, widest public engagement and longest history are this group's all characteristics.

The rapid modernization of society threatens the ancient customs and folk arts, which are mostly retained in rural China. The unique and original human culture of China would thus no longer benefit from any research advantages. It is crucial to comprehend the Chinese people's genuine Chinese culture and intellectual underpinnings by utilizing this advantage. Since protection is close at hand and preservation is the long-term objective, studying primitive culture and philosophy has greater significance in contemporary civilization. Philosophical advancements precede every significant shift in human culture: the ancient Greek school of thought gave rise to western civilization; the Chinese Fuxi, Eight Diagrams, and Yin and Yang schools gave rise to Chinese culture. Ansai peasant paintings, which originated in the folk culture of China, carry on a philosophical symbolic modelling technique, or philosophical schema, that directly alludes to the foundational body of Chinese philosophy and expresses the concept of Yin and Yang and perpetual life in their subject matter, modelling and color.

The inheritors of this philosophical system are the working masses involved in grassroots production, particularly the rural laboring women who are the primary producers of folk art and culture in China. They depict the entire cosmos, which is neither limited to the author's emotional expression nor a visual and intuitive natural stimulation, giving rise to the aesthetic quality that their works are "beyond time and space." They applied the most fundamental philosophical concepts to every element of life, even in small doses, to creative creation. They consciously used them to developing new folk etiquettes and practices over time, resulting in one of the most prevalent social philosophies.

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