

“SHENDAO SHEJIAO” AND “TAWHĪD”: A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONCEPTS OF ISLAM AND CONFUCIANISM

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ABSTRACT

The “Shendao shejiao” [by “theistic ways” establishing the (moral) teachings] is one of the important religious views of the ancient Chinese (from the pre-Qin to the end of the Qing Dynasty) - the basic theory of cultural and religious views, and it has been influential to this day. “Tawhīd” (believing and affirming that God is one and unique) is the basic belief of Islam, and it is still the basic belief of Muslims all over the world. As core concepts, these two terms are culturally representative of both traditional Chinese culture and Islamic culture. Comparing these two terms will help deepen the cultural understanding and people-to-people bond between the two sides. Not only theoretical but also practical.

Keywords: Shendao shejiao, tawhid, Qing dynasty, Confucianism, Islam in China

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I. FROM "GOD" TO "SHENDAO SHEJIAO"

According to the study on oracle bone inscriptions, there was a belief in deities or gods in the religious concept of the Chinese people during the Shang (also called the Yin) dynasty. The term "Junzi" (a Chinese philosophical term often translated as "gentleman", "superior person", or "noble man") is an important sense of concept among the multiple theistic religious views in ancient China. This religious view highlights the meaning of "culture", emphasizes the spirit of "humanity", and aims at training ethics and morality.

1. The Shang People's Religious View of Deities and Gods

First, the Supreme Deity "Shang Di" (God) of ancient Chinese. Since 1928, about 150,000 pieces of oracle bone inscriptions used by the Shang royal clans for divination have been unearthed at the Yin Ruins (in Xiaotun Village, Anyang, Henan province today), which was the capital at the time, in the late Shang dynasty (1319 BC-1046 BC). Based on the research by Chinese scholars such as Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940), Wang Guowei (1877-1927), Dong Zuobin (1895-1963), Chen Mengjia (1911-1966) and so on, and they divided such oracle writings into the following five periods:

Period I, the reigns of Wu Ding (武丁, 1274 BC-1215 BC) and his previous kings (Jian Geng 监庚, Xiao Xin 小辛, Xiao Yi 小乙); Period II, the reigns of Zu Geng (祖庚, 1215 BC-1204 BC) and Zu Jia (祖甲, 1204 BC-1171 BC); Period III, the reigns of Lin Xin (廪辛, 1171 BC-1165 BC) and Kang Ding (康丁); Period IV, the reigns of Wu Yi (武乙) and Wen Ding (文丁); and Period V, the reigns of Di Yi (帝乙) and Di Xin (帝辛).

From these oracle bone inscriptions and the additional bronze inscriptions in the later Shang dynasty, we can see that the people of the Shang dynasty had a mentality of worshipping the gods. They called the gods "Shang Di" or "Di". Chen Mengjia concluded that there were three usages of "Di" in the inscriptions, and that "the first one is 'Shang Di (god) or 'Di'(king), which is a noun". In oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions, the Shang people called the gods as "Shang Di" or "Di", but never called them the "Heaven". The "Heaven" in the divination was not the title of god, but means "big".

According to Chen Mengjia, "Shang Di" was recorded once in each of the oracle bone inscriptions in the first three periods, respectively, and "Di Gong" appeared in the fourth period. "Di Gong" was the envoy of the "Di", which means "injury" or "hurt". Judging from

the fact that there were few divinations with the name of "Shang Di" in these inscriptions, we know that most of the times the Shang people would abbreviate the name of God into "Di". It was also recorded in other ancient documents that the god was called "Shang Di" or "Di"; for example, the commentary on "Dang" part in *The Book of Ode*, it expresses that "Shang Di was another name of the Heaven." In *Qu Li* part of *Book of Rites*, it states that "the god of the heaven was the Di." In *Yi Jing* it says, "the king, (having the virtues thus distinguished), employ them in presenting his offerings to God, and there will be good fortune"; Kong Yingda gives a commentary here, "Di was the Heaven."

According to relevant divinations, when the Shang people spoke of "Shang Di" or "Di", they often pledged to know whether there will be any disasters that would "spell". We can conclude that the "Shang Di" mentioned by the Shang people is the god who lives high in the sky.

Second, the power of the God of the Shang

- a. God rules the weather. God controls rain, thunder, hail, wind, and clouds.
- b. God rules the harvest (of crops). (Divination:) Is there enough rain? Will this rain make a good harvest? Will God send a drought? Will God send disasters to hinder the harvest?
- c. God decides the safety of the city-state.
- d. God decides the outcome of the war.
- e. God decides the fate of the king of the Shang dynasty. Such as the divination of Period I: "Will Di treat the king of Shang well?" "Will Di treat the king of Shang badly?" From both positive and negative aspects, the divination asked whether God bless the king of the Shang. The divination of Period IV: "Will God not deliver lasting blessings?" "Will God deliver lasting blessings?" This means that the divination asked whether God would give permanent well-being. Therefore, the part *Instructions of Yi* in *Shang Shu* says, "(the ways) of God are not invariable: on the good-doer he sends down all blessings, and on the evil-doer he sends down all miseries." "Not invariable" (不常) here means "change". That is to say, God's blessings keep changing. When people do good deeds, God sends all kinds of (good) signs, and when people do bad deeds, God sends all kinds of disasters.

Third, the messengers of God.

- a. "Di Wu Chen"

For example, the divination of Period I (1) states: "Offering a sacrifice named "You" to Di Wu Chen, will it rain heavily?" The divination of Period I (2) states: "The king offers a sacrifice

named "You", "Sui" and "Zheng" to Di Wu Chen, will it not rain?" In this text, "You", "Sui" and "Zheng" were the names of the sacrifice. The divination can be paraphrased as "if the king used the three sacrifices "You", "Sui" and "Zheng" to Di Wu Chen, would there be no rain?" "Duke Gua 6th Year" as recorded in the *Tso Chuen* states, "If he offered a deprecatory sacrifice (Ying) to it, the evil might be removed so as to fall on the chief minister or one of the marshals." Du Yu gave the note that "Ying means exorcised sacrifice."

b. "Di Wu Feng Chen"

For example, the divination of Period IV (3) says, "Offering a sacrifice named 'Ning Qiu' to Di Wu Gong Chen (King Di Wu's ministers), praying during the day." This divination means: [The sacrifice] in the daytime of the day of divination, make sacrifices to Di Wu Gong Chen and pray to Di Wu Gong Chen to quell the plague of locusts."

c. "Di Gong"

The divination of Period I (5) says, "The divination asked the Di Chen (God's messenger) if he ordered the expedition." (6) says, "The divination asked if the sheep were used to worship Di Chen." The divination of Period IV (7) says, "The divination on the *xin-hai* day asked the Di Gong (God's ministers) if they want to do harm."

d. "Di Shi"

The divination of Period I (8) says, "It asked if two dogs can be used to worship God's messenger "Feng"? The divination of Period I (9) says, "Is it possible to make sacrifices to Di Shi Feng by burning a cow?" Here, "Di Shi" means "God's messenger", so Feng was one of God's messengers.

These showed the Chinese concept of God in the Shang dynasty. According to the research results on these oracle bone inscriptions, especially the sacrificial system of the Shang and the following Zhou dynasty, the sacrificial activities by the Shang people were many, and they were complex and strict, all relying on established sacrificial systems. The sacrifices to their ancestors were conducted almost every day, every season, and every year. Such activities aimed at praying to their ancestors' spirit in heaven in order to bless themselves and their clans for their reigns. By the end of the dynasty, the kings of the Shang had increasingly stricter control over sacrifices. In addition, they sacrificed to the gods (Shang Di or Di) and their messengers. This was a period while the ancient Chinese possessed continuous belief in God. "The great affairs of a State are sacrifice and war" (*Tso Chuen, Duke Ching 13th Year*), which was a true portrayal of the extreme importance of religious belief and their sacrificial activities. Religion occupied an absolute dominant position in the Shang people's lives.

2. The "Shendao shejiao" in the Warring States Period

The "*Guan*" part in *Yi Jing* states, "When we contemplate the spirit-like way of Heaven, we see how the four seasons proceed without error. The sages, in accordance with (this) spirit-like way, laid down their instructions, and all under heaven yield submission to them." It further records that the king's rule deserves no more attention than the ancestral temple, and the most noteworthy thing in the ancestral temple is the ritual of washing (*Guan*). "*Guan*", as a method, was used to influence senses.

The etiquette of "*Guan*" is consistent with the spirit-way of the Heaven. Kong Yingda interprets, "The so-called spirit-way means that it is very subtle and has no rules, and it is impossible to know its truth. The eyes cannot see its existence, and we do not know why it is like that." The spirit-way is the way that deities act, the mysterious and unpredictable way that ghosts and gods bless or bring disasters. Is the phenomenon of four seasons in different solar terms the will of the Heaven? We don't know where it came from. "The sages, in accordance with spirit-like way, laid down their instructions, and all under heaven yielded submission to them." This sentence means that the sages use "*Guan*" to educate the people. The Heaven does not speak nor act but things are accomplished. The sages follow the way of the Heaven, do good things themselves and use the influence of good deeds to educate others, without words, or severe punishment or intimidation, all under heaven yield submission. "*Xiang*" (a book interpreting *Yi Jing*) states, "the earth, and the wind moving above it, is form *Guan*. The ancient kings, in accordance with this, examined the (different) regions (of the kingdom), observed the (ways of the) people, and set forth their instructions." The wind represents the command of the gods exercised on the earth, just like the enlightenment imposed upon the people by the previous kings. The kings looked at all directions and knew the customs of the people in order to formulate educational system. This is the ideological content of the Daoism, i.e., to establish education system according to customs and to teach the people in order to form good customs. Ji Kang once asked Confucius about governance, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your governance, why should you not use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend when the wind blows across it" (*The Analects*). As a method of teaching, *Guan* means that those who are above should set an example, those who are inferior will naturally learn the way, imitate and abide by it. If not so, it will be that "the upper beam is not straight and the lower beam is crooked".

3. Zi Chan's Skeptical View on Religion

This view holds that the way of the Heaven is far away from that of Humanity, and the way of the Heaven is difficult to recognize, so it is beyond understanding.

a. Those who worshiped under order and cut trees are guilty and should be dismissed

"Duke Ch'aou 16th Year" in *Tso Chuen* states, "In the ninth month, we had a great sacrifice for rainfall. There was a great drought in Ch'ing, and T'oo Keih, with the priest K'wan, and attendant Foo, were sent to sacrifice on Mount Sang, when they cut down the trees; but there came no rain. A sacrifice on a hill is intended for the nourishment of its forests. But they have cut down the trees;—their crime could not be greater." He then took from them their offices and lands.

b. The way of the Heaven is distant, while the way of man is near. We cannot reach the former; what means have we of knowing it?

P'e Tsaou states, "If you do not do as I said, Ch'ing will suffer from fire again." The people (also) begged that his advice should be taken, but Tsze-ch'an still refused. Tsze-t'ae shuh said,

"The use of precious articles is to preserve the people. If there be (another) fire, our city will be nearly destroyed. If they can save it from that destruction, why should you grudge them?" Tsze-ch'an replied, "The way of Heaven is distant, while the way of man is near. We cannot reach to the former; what means have we of knowing it? How should Tsaou know the way of Heaven? He is a great talker, and we need not wonder if his words sometimes come true." Accordingly he would not agree to the proposal, and there was no repetition of the fire. (from "*Tso Chuen, Duke Ch'aou 18th Year*")

c. Ch'ing suffered great flood and refused to offer sacrifice

There were great floods in Ch'ing; and (some) dragons fought in the pool of Wei, outside the She gate. The people asked to sacrifice to them; but Tsze-ch'an refused it, saying, "If we are fighting, the dragons do not look at us; when dragons are fighting, why should we look at them? We may offer a deprecatory sacrifice, but that is their abode. If we do not seek anything of the dragons, they will not seek anything from us." On this (the people) desisted (from their request). ("*Tso Chuen, Duke Ch'aou 19th Year*")

4. Confucius' (551-479 BC) Pragmatic View of Religion

Table: "Heaven" Mentioned in *The Analects*

Chapter	Text	Character of Heaven
3.13	He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray.	Heaven of Principle
6.28	Wherein I have done improperly, may Heaven reject me! may Heaven reject me!	Heaven of Domination
17.19	Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven say anything?	Heaven of Nature
7.23	Heaven produced the virtue that is in me. Huan Tui - what can he do to me?	Heaven of Domination
8.19	How majestic was he! It is only Heaven that is grand.	Heaven of Nature
9.5	If Heaven had wished to let this cause of truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have got such a relation to that cause. While Heaven does not let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of Kuang do to me?	Heaven of Domination or Destiny
9.12	Whom should I impose upon? Should I impose upon Heaven?	Heaven of Domination
14.35	I do not murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven - that knows me!	Heaven of Domination
12.5	There is the following saying which I have heard - 'Death and life have their determined appointment; riches and honors depend upon Heaven.'	Heaven of Domination

Taking *The Analects* as an example, according to Yang Bojun (1909-1992), in *The Analects*, Confucius mentioned the term "Heaven" eight times, and indirectly mentioned it one time (his student Zixia heard it), as shown in the table above; these include the "Heaven of Principle" once, the "Heaven of Nature" twice, and the remaining six times being all the "Heaven of Domination" or "Heaven of Destiny". Statistics affirms Confucius' recognition of the dominance of the "Heaven", but he adhered to a pragmatic view of religion and took a pragmatic stand on fate, gods, and the afterlife world; for example, "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?", and "He sacrificed to the spirits, as if the spirits were present." "Shu Er" in *The Analects* states, "The Master being very sick, Zi Lu asked leave to pray for him. He said, 'May such a thing be done?' Zi Lu replied, 'It may. In the Eulogies it is said, 'Prayer has been made for thee to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds.'" The Master said, 'My praying has been for a long time.'" Confucius euphemistically refused his disciple Zi Lu's

request to pray and offer sacrifices for his quick recovery under the pretext of "My praying has been for a long time." There is another instance. When King Ch'aou of Ts'oo was seriously ill and refused sacrifice, Confucius praised him for "knowing the great path of duty" (see "*Duke Gua 6th Year*" in *Tso Chuen*).

5. Xun Zi's (313-238 BC) Humanistic View of Religion

The "*Tian Lun*" in *Xun Zi* records,

When we sacrifice for rain, it rains. What sort of thing is that? We maintain, no special sort of thing. It's just like the rain when we don't sacrifice. We "save" the sun and moon when they undergo eclipse, we sacrifice for rain when Tian (has sent) drought, we engage in divination and then decide some matter of great moment. It is wrong to regard (these things) from the standpoint of obtaining something for which we beseech, but rather as the proper form. Thus, whereas the Junzi sees them as the proper form, the populace sees them as (influencing) spirits. If they are seen as proper form, good fortune follows; if seen as (influencing) spirits, misfortune follows.

Xun Zi believed that whether a sacrifice was performed or not does not interfere with a rainfall. The sacrificial offerings to "save" solar and lunar eclipses, sacrifice for rain coming down, and divination to make important decisions for events are practices from a cultural pattern and a civilizational custom rather than a religious belief *per se*. Therefore, Xun Zi clearly stated that "the Junzi [nobleman] sees them as the proper form, the populace sees them as (influencing) spirits." In another word, the Junzi (those with higher social and political status) regarded the above-mentioned prayers and sacrifices as a kind of cultural activities, while the populace (aristocrats without office and land) regarded them as religious activities.

Zi Xia said, "The mean man is sure to gloss (Wen) his faults" (from "*Zi Zhang*" in *The Analects*); "wen" means embellishment or decoration.

The humanistic religious view is a general understanding by the elites of the middle and upper classes on the traditional religious sacrifices activities, that is, they believed that all kinds of sacrifices belong to a kind of "culture" (called "Hua min cheng su" or "to instruct the people to form good customs) and "education" (called "Shendao she jiao" meaning "to establish the moral teachings by theistic ways); they acknowledged the "education" function

of such activities for the public, and they affirmed the social stability, mellowed folk customs, and cultivated the people's hearts.

II. FROM IDOLATRY TO "TAWHĪD"

In the Arabian "Time of Ignorance" (100 years before the rise of Islam, from the beginning of the 6th century to the beginning of the 7th century AD), in addition to Judaism and Christianity, the Bedouins in the Arabian Peninsula basically practiced polytheism, including worshipping water, rocks, and tribal gods, and so on. In 609, Islamic prophet Muhammad (ca. 570-632) began to enshrine the "revelation" of Allah, and secretly promoted Islam's "monotheism" in Mecca, adhering to the principle of belief in One God. The "Allah's Revelation" received by Muhammad during the Mecca period (609-622) became the "Mecca surahs" of the Qur'an, and "Allah's Revelation" received during the Medina period (622-632) became the "Medina surahs" of the Qur'an.

1. Polytheism in the "Time of Ignorance"

The period from the beginning of the 6th to the beginning of the 7th century AD is known as the "jāhiliyah". The term jāhiliyah, usually interpreted as "time of ignorance" or "time of barbarism", but in reality indicating the period during which Arabia having no dispensation, no inspired prophet, and no revealed book; for ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and lettered society which had been developed by the South Arabians.

The Bedouin religion represented the earliest and most primitive form of Semitic belief. The South Arabian cults with their astral features, ornate temples, elaborate ritual and sacrifices represented a higher and later stage of development. The cultured communities of Petra and Palmyra emphasized the importance on sun-worship. The Bedouins' religion, like other forms of primitive beliefs, was basically on spirits. Even after the formation of the conception of deity, natural objects such as trees, wells, caves, stones were still regarded as sacred objects. Zamzam was regarded as sacred. Caves became sacred because people associated them with underground deities and forces. Such caves, like the Ghabghab in Nakhlah, the Arabians conducted sacrifices to al-'Uzza; while Ba' represented the spirit of springs and underground water. The Bedouin's belief was centred upon the moon. Hence Wadd, the Moon-God who stood at the head of the Minaean Pantheon. Al-Lāt in al-Taif was represented by a square

stone. Most of these deities owned a reserved grazing-land (hima), they did not permit others to use their own land. Then the four months of "holy truce" per year and the pilgrimage season have been established. In Hijaz al-Uzza, al-Lāt and Manāh, the three daughters of Allah, had their land sanctuaries which later became the cradle of Islam. Koran reads, "Have ye seen Lāt and Uzza, and another, the third (goddess), Manāh?" (53:19-20) Hubal (meaning vapour or spirit) was the chief deity in al-Kābah, having the shape of human being; beside him stood ritual arrows used for divination by the soothsayer (kāhin). The Kābah was in simple cube-like building; it was originally roofless and was in a wall, worshipped by people as a spirit. The usual sacred territory (haram) spread around it. Annual pilgrimages offer their special sacrifices thither.

Allah (the god) was the principal spirit but not the unique deities in Makkah. The name was from ancient times. There were two survived inscriptions in Southern Arabic language, one was the Minaean inscription found at al-Ula and the other, the Sabacan inscription, in the second century; the name of god in the latter inscription was recorded as "Hallāh". Be noted that the name of Muḥammad's father was 'Abd-Allāh (Abdullāh, the slave or worshipper of Allah). The high position Allah held was recognized even by the pre-Islamic Makkans as the Creator and supreme provider and the sole god to pray for help in the time of any critical danger.

2. "Tawḥīd" in Islam

In 619 AD, Islamic prophet Muhammad made "The First Pledge of 'Aqabah" with Arabs from Yasrib (today's Medina) who expressed their Islamic faith in Mecca:

[We pledged] not to shirk (associate partners with Allah), not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to kill our children, not to bring calumny upon one another and not to be disobedient [when ordered] to do a good deed. The so-called "shirk", as a proper term in Islamic studies, refers to the recognition that the only God, Allah, is the Creator, and that all things in the universe and human beings are creatures. If you match any creature to Allah the Creator, you practice *shirk*.

Quran al-Ikhāṣ (Surah CXII) says, "1. He is Allah, the One. 2. Allah is the All-embracing. 3. He neither begat, nor was begotten, 4. nor has He any equal." This chapter is to clarify the fundamental beliefs of Islam: unification or oneness of Allah, that Allah has no children, no parents, no spouse, and He is the only Lord.

Wang Daiyu (1570-1660), a Chinese Muslim scholar in the late Ming-early Qing period pointed out: "The Real Lord is the Only One, and nothing can be compared to Him. He is the Original Being without beginning, the Being that does not receive the mandate." That is to say, firstly, Allah is unique; secondly, Allah is original, not created. It means that Allah is the creator, not creature. Ma Zhu (1640-1711), a Yunnan Muslim scholar, believed that "Allah pours the light of no form into the hearts of servants, and then manifests in the mountains, rivers and the earth with a myriad of shapes and images". That is, Allah gives life to human and creates tangible things. That's why Ma Zhu pointed out that

Though all things are produced in the earth, they are not the self-energy of water and soil; although all things come from the heart, they are not the self-energy of the human body...Inferring from this, fire is hot, water is cold, gold is hard, and wood is soft. Although these qualities are the nature of matter, while what makes matter have such properties as cold, heat, hardness and softness cannot without the omnipotence bestowed by Allah.

The text means that, if it were not for the creation by the Creator, all things would not have happened. Accordingly, Ma Zhu continues,

Wu Ji is not the Lord, and if it is not *Wu Ji*, it cannot manifest the first order of Allah; *Tai Ji* is not the Lord, and if it is not *Tai Ji*, it cannot manifest the great power of Allah; *Yin* and *yang* are not the Lord, and if it is not *Yin Yang*, it cannot manifest the miraculous effects of God; *Wan Xiang* (All images) is not the Lord, and if it is not *Wan Xiang*, it cannot manifest the entire contribution of Allah; *Zi Xing* (Self-nature) is not the Lord, and if it is not *Zi Xing*, it cannot manifest the full grace of Allah. [Be noted that *Wu Ji*, *Tai Ji*, and *Wan Xiang* are all the Daoist terms to describe supremacy].

Liu Zhi (about 1660-1730), a Muslim scholar from Nanjing, stated,

Allah is unique and has no appearance. He gave birth to heaven, to earth, to people, to living things. There was no beginning before him, no end after him. He is so big that there is nothing outside and so small that there is nothing inside. He has no shape, no position, no distance, no companion. (He is the) general principles and reasons mastering the heaven and man.

The text is saying that Allah transcends time and space, creates the intelligent world and controls the mortal world; He rules heaven, earth and human beings. Liu Zhi summed up the mighty deeds of Allah, including "the most knowledgeable, the most capable, supreme perfection and supreme good." Liu Zhi had the similar understanding, as stated in his book "*Tianfang sanzijing*" (Three-character classic of Islam), "At the beginning of heaven and earth, all things were born; there was a supreme being, except the one called Allah." From the first sentence "the beginning of heaven and earth" to the twenty-fourth sentence "Knowing the Dao", it affirms that Allah has created all things in the universe including human beings, and "descended sages, preached the orthodox religion, taught us people, and made the Dao clear." Such narration has a clear meaning, affirming the religious purpose; This is also the basis of belief in Chinese Islamic culture.

In short, the Prophet Muhammad spent 23 years (40-63 years old) to spread Islam, and the most basic point is: firstly, there is no deity but God; secondly, Muhammad is Seal of the Messenger of Allah.

To conclude, the people of the Arabian Peninsula worshipped polytheism and various gods during the "Time of Ignorance" (6th to 7th century AD); in the Islamic period (the beginning of the 7th century AD to the present), they gradually established their belief in the unique god Allah. In the name of Islam, they absorbed the ancient civilizations of the East and the West and formed a splendid Arab-Islamic culture, adding radiance and beauty with the Tang culture in China at that time.

III. "SHENDAO SHEJIAO" AND "TAWHĪD"

The "Shendao shejiao" is an important concept in traditional Chinese culture. It is also the practical representation of the ancient Chinese thinkers with the belief about deities and gods to pragmatic exercises. How did this converting happen? According to scholars' research on oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty in China, we may make a rough analysis here. First, there was no independent and original religious individual who could be possibly regarded as founder so far, such as described emissaries of "deities and gods", religious prophets, or sages. The divinations discovered so far all served as a guidance and reference for the kings' future actions, or as an explanation of what has happened, or as a service in social etiquette.

Second, no "revelation" from "deities and gods" which offered a "Holy Book" which has yet been regarded as so. God's revelation is not only the core and foundation of religious belief, but also a valuable resource for theologians to elucidate religious belief. However it was obvious that it lacked such a book.

Third, no systematic theological thought with the worship of "deities and gods" as the core part has yet been established.

Fourth, a diviner in China was in a level in the official-hood, bound and constrained by the political system and social relations at that time, and divination was just a routine job involving technical calculations, conductions, and interpretations.

Fifth, the secular utilitarian nature of the Shang people's sacrifices dispelled its sacredness. The Shang people performed "various and complex sacrifices" not only to the various gods they believed in, but also to their ancestors; because they were also abided by an established sacrificial order.

By studying the ancestor worship system of the Shang people, scholars have found that their sacrifices were numerous, complex and strict. They followed an established sacrificial system and performed sacrificial rituals almost every day, every season, and every year. The purpose of such frequent sacrifices was nothing more than praying to ghosts and gods for blessing them and their clans' rules. However, when the Zhou clan replaced the Shang clan that had ruled for several hundred years, "great ruin came down on Yin [Shang] from the cessation of forbearance in compassionate Heaven" (see "*Zhou Shu*" in *Shang Shu*). "The way of Heaven is to bless the good and make the bad miserable. It sent down calamities on (the House of) Xia [dynasty], to make manifest its guilt" ("Announcement of Tang" in *Shang Shu*), which gave a political interpretation of "deities and gods". The sacrificial activities respected by the Shang people lost their effectiveness, and the Zhou people, who had seized the discourse power, carried out a new political theological interpretation of the "mandate of the Heaven". This might be the realistic social and political foundation on which the idea of "Shendao shejiao" came into being. This new political theological interpretation, in turn, gave new legitimacy and sanctity to the sacrificial and divination activities in the new dynasty.

From the "Time of Islam" to the "Time of Ignorance", the Arabs entered a new age of belief in one God out of a social and historical stage of polytheistic beliefs. At the same time, the Arabs, scattered and oppressed by the two great empires of the East and the West, quickly entered into a united Arab Islamic caliphate from the period of separate and independent tribal societies. They conquered the Persian Empire in the east, completed expedition over the

Byzantine Empire in the north and west, liberated the vast areas and peoples colonized by the Byzantine Empire in West Asia and North Africa, and established an Arab-Islamic empire spanning Europe, Asia and Africa. In the name of Islam, they absorbed the achievements of human civilizations such as Persian civilization, Egyptian civilization, Greek civilization, Roman civilization and Indian civilization. The Caliphate government appointed Jews, Christians, Sabians and Persians to do the translation work of cultural classics and the administration job of the caliphate, so that the Arab-Islamic culture boomed as one of the advanced cultures in the Middle Ages. The belief in Islam was the third monotheistic faith after Judaism and Christianity. Compared with Zoroastrianism in Persia, Shamanism in Central Asia, and Buddhism in South Asia, it has more lasting vitality.

The "Shendao shejiao" was a transition from the belief of "deities and gods" to a cultural belief, and "recognizing the indivisible oneness of the Lord" ("Tawhīd") was the primary part of monotheistic thought. Islamic culture took monotheistic belief as the core and basis, and has formed its systematic disciplines such as Qur'anology, Hadith studies, dogmatic studies, jurisprudence, ethics, etc., which actually played an active role in "education" of Muslims. Qur'an says,

Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the slaves, and maintain the prayer and give the zakāt, and those who fulfill their covenants, when they pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant], and it is they who are the Godway.

Islam, as a way of life, is followed by the majority of Muslims.

"Shendao shejiao" and "Tawhīd" seem to be in opposite directions because the former is a cultural belief that is "de-theified" while the latter is a firm belief in "One God", yet in terms of "education" of recipients and believers and in the construction and persistence of ethics and morality such as training people's hearts to be kind and educating the people to hold good customs, both of them, by different means, have shown wonderful effects of reaching same goals. This is also the internal rationale for Chinese Islamic scholars who kept "communicating between Islam and Chinese culture" during the Ming and Qing dynasties,

insisting on "interpreting the Islamic scriptures with Confucianism". Islam and traditional Chinese culture are highly coupled in terms of ethics and morality, and there remains a great theoretical space for the communication between the two.

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