

A CRITIQUE OF INTERPRETATIONS OF
MAX WEBER'S "CONFUCIANISM AND TAOISM"
AND AN EXPLICATION BASED ON
SOCIOLOGICAL AND SINOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

The thesis presents an analysis and re-interpretation of Max Weber's essay on Chinese religions and society, "Konfuzianismus und Taoismus" (KuT). It aims at an explication and clarification of the text through reference to its sinological context, and its sociological context in Weber's series of essays on the economic ethics of the world religions. In particular, it attempts to demonstrate the inappropriateness of reading the essay as an "idealist" or "culturalist" explanation of the absence of modern rational capitalism from traditional China.

Part One (chs.1-3) identifies the essay's lack of an explicit and integral analytical structure as a key problem of interpretation, and reconstructs the one originally advanced by Weber in his general introduction to his essays on the "Economic Ethics of the World Religions". This identifies the three problematics of KuT as:

1. a configurational comparison of Confucianism, Taoism, and Puritanism as forms of practical rationalism;
2. a causal analysis of the historical development of the distinctive characteristics of Chinese religions, with particular reference to the dialectical influence of material and ideal interests;
3. a consequential analysis of the significance of Chinese religions for the formation of economic mentalities, and the non-development of a rational capitalist economy.

Parts Two and Three (chs.4-12) analyse and reconstruct the text in relation to these three problematics. Part Four (chs.13-14) reappraises Weber's conclusions in the light of the foregoing and considers the extent to which KuT advances Weber's theses on the relative autonomy of religious doctrines and their practical and economic ethics.

The overall conclusion is that Weber found the institutional complex of non-religious phenomena in China to be unfavourable to the development of capitalism, but this has itself to be explained as a product of the historical interaction between political organisation and religious traditions which underpinned fundamentally the specific course of both Western and Chinese social and economic history.

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PREFACE

This thesis grew out of an article (Molloy 1980) in which I argued that Max Weber's essay, "Konfuzianismus und Taoismus" (Weber, 1922 (KuT)), had often been misinterpreted as an idealist interpretation of the "Weber Thesis" on the relationship between the world religions and the emergence or non-emergence of modern rational capitalism. That is to say, Weber used KuT to conduct a sort of "comparative experiment" which demonstrated the decisive role of "ideal" rather than "material" factors in his "explanation" of the absence of modern capitalism from China, and its indigenous emergence only in the West. A preliminary attempt was made in that article to construct an alternative analytical structure for the essay based upon its original bibliographical context. Stated briefly, this involved a particular re-emphasis upon the essay which was misleadingly entitled "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" (SPWR) in the Gerth and Mills collection ("From Max Weber", 1970, first published in 1948). This essay had been written as an "Einleitung" or "Introduction" to Weber's series of essays on the economic ethics of the world religions (EE). In my original article, idealist interpretations of KuT were criticised on the basis of an analysis of this essay and its relationship to KuT, though no attempt was made at a sustained and detailed re-interpretation of KuT itself.

In the period since this article was first conceived and written, overly "idealist" interpretations of Weber in general have increasingly been challenged on similar lines.

The edition of the journal in which it was published was devoted to issues in Weberian scholarship, and two of its companion articles challenged interpretations of the "Weber thesis" in ways which re-emphasised the original unity of the EE series and the importance of the "Einleitung" to them. (Tenbruck (1980); Marshall (1980); see also Fulbrook, 1978,). Further advances in Weberian scholarship have since been made, including Marshall's (1982) critique of idealist interpretations of the "Weber thesis" in relation to Weber's analysis of the specific relationships between ascetic Protestantism and the emergence of modern rational capitalism. However, there has still has been no substantial and sufficiently elaborated attempt to explore the limits of an idealist interpretation of KuT in particular, or to present a systematic and comprehensive alternative reading. This is particularly regrettable given that sociologists such as Marshall himself, or a sinologist attempting to re-examine the sinological potential of KuT (Elvin, 1984), still have a marked tendency to ascribe an "idealist" or "culturalist" thesis to KuT itself. A major aim of the present thesis, and the principal justification for the method it adopts, stems from a claim that even the more recent phases in Weberian scholarship reinforce rather than resolve the need for an analysis and re-interpretation of KuT itself.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to rebut Elvin's or other sinological criticisms of Weber's analysis of specific social and economic institutions in China, still less to claim that Weber's attempts to understand the absence of capitalism, or his general vision of Chinese history, is

necessarily more valid than Elvin's (cf. Elvin, 1973). Rather, it is to try to demonstrate that a re-appraisal of the sinological and sociological potential of KuT must wait upon the reconstruction and re-interpretation of the essay which it offers. In general, this thesis aims to present a re-interpretation of KuT initially through a substantiation and documentation of the inadequacies of any claim that Weber attributed the absence of modern rational capitalism from traditional China exclusively or even predominantly to the influence of religious traditions and religious conceptions.

Towards this end, in part one of the thesis an attempt is made to identify the problems of interpretation associated with KuT and to suggest how they might best be overcome. Essentially, this consists of a relocation of the essay in its original bibliographical context and an analysis of the "Einleitung\Introduction (SPWR) to the EE essays in order to reconstruct Weber's originally intended analytical structure for the series as whole. This produces the claim that the essay was addressed equally to three major problematics: a configurational analysis of the distinctive features of the world religions; a causal analysis of the historical emergence and development of these distinctive features; and a consequential analysis of the significance of these differences in religious traditions for the development of the economic mentality which Weber identifies as one important element in the historical concatenation of circumstances leading to the emergence and consolidation of modern, rational capitalism in the West.

Parts two and three, concerned with Weber's analysis of non-religious and religious phenomena respectively, attempt

a comprehensive clarification and reconstruction of the essay's substance in relation to its sinological context and this preceding analysis of its sociological context. Each chapter of parts two and three is addressed specifically to one chapter of the original essay, or even to one particular section of a chapter. With one exception, it aims to facilitate comparison with the original by following the same order and arrangement as the chapters of the original text as we know it in Gerth's translation, "The Religion of China" (RoC). A tabular comparison of the chapter headings and sequence of the English and German versions of the essay is presented and commented upon in chapter one below.

Thus, chapters four to nine attempt an analysis and re-interpretation of chapters one to four of the original essay, which constitute the "Sociological Foundations" to Weber's textually ensuing discussion of the Chinese religions themselves. As such, the "Sociological Foundations" (RoC, pp. 3-106) constitutes something like 2/5 of the original essay but it tends to have been consistently neglected or misrepresented in the exegetical literature. For this reason, this part of the essay is examined in some detail and a slightly less detailed analysis is made of Weber's much more familiar characterisation of Confucianism as compared with Puritanism. The point of this thesis is not so much to take issue with sociological and sinological understandings of this particular configurational contrast, as to re-interpret its significance for Weber's theses and conclusions. Chapters ten and eleven do however make a more detailed attempt to re-construct Weber's analysis of the historical

development of Chinese religions themselves. It will be argued that this aspect of the essay has been almost entirely neglected in the commentaries, and certainly under-used in general interpretations of the essay. Part four attempts to summarise Weber's analysis of the significance of non-religious phenomena for both economic and religious development and re-interpret their significance for his theses on the relatively autonomous influence of religious beliefs in relation to the problem of capitalism.

Within part two's discussion of the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT, there are certain imbalances of treatment necessitated by the nature of the text itself, and its relationship to the current exegetical literature. The first chapter of KuT, "City, Prince and God", is probably the most inaccessible chapter of them all, and the very first section, on the Chinese monetary system, is certainly the most impenetrable of the whole text. Hence this section is accorded a particularly extensive analysis and discussion, partly as a necessary exercise in elucidation for its own sake, but particularly because it provides a specification of Weber's understanding of the problem of capitalism in China which has gone unregarded in the commentaries. Similarly, Weber's immediately ensuing discussion of cities and guilds in China is accorded an extensive discussion because of the centrality of a theory of urban development which plays a crucial mediating role between his analysis of the problem of capitalism in KuT and elsewhere in his work, and which is treated particularly obliquely in KuT itself.

Part two also gives greater prominence to Weber's causal as opposed to configurational analysis of Chinese religions

than has yet been attempted in the exegetical literature. It involves the attempt to identify the dialectical interaction of material and ideal influences upon their development, within the conceptual domain articulated in SPWR. This particular re-emphasis involves the one section of KuT which has been relocated, as it were, for the purposes of the present thesis. Chapter one of KuT contains a final section, comparing Middle Eastern and Chinese religious conceptions which at times sits rather oddly with the preceding discussions of the monetary system, and the following discussion of the Chinese city. One can see the rather tenuous links that Weber had in mind in trying to establish basic contrasts in religious traditions on the one hand, and in the nature of territorial political organisations on the other. However, the discussion of this particular section has formed the basis for chapter ten of this thesis, given its concern with identifying the political and economic foundations of the Chinese world-view out of which Confucianism and Taoism themselves were later developments.

In the most general terms, the thesis aims to clarify and explicate one particular essay, the text of which has created considerable difficulties for Weber's admirers and detractors, and for sociologists and sinologists. Essentially, it aims to make the essay more accessible and intelligible, in order to facilitate a more informed re-appraisal of its usefulness and validity. It tries to make the essay more intelligible to sinologists by clarifying its sociological context, and more intelligible to sociologists by clarifying its sinological context. No claim is made to

present a sinological critique of Weber's analysis. A fully substantiated analysis and sinological critique of any one of the essay's chapters could constitute a full-scale project in itself given the vast historical range of Weber's comments. The principal aim is to establish and clarify exactly what it is that Weber is attempting to do and say. Towards this end, references to sinological sources have rarely proceeded beyond the relatively standard historical texts, and sinological controversies themselves have been eschewed.

Accordingly, with the exception of chapter four's analysis and explication of Weber's discussion of the Chinese monetary system, which constitutes a special case for more technically extensive consideration, the footnotes for parts two and three have been kept to a minimum, as they would consist almost entirely of page references to RoC and can be incorporated less tediously in the text of the thesis itself. Part four very largely summarises perspectives and points documented in more detail earlier in the essay. Page references in the text correspond with the English translation produced by Hans Gerth and are identified by a reference to (RoC) or simply to the page number itself. On the very infrequent occasions on which reference is made to the German text, this is referred to as (KuT,p...). Otherwise, I have referred to the essay, when not citing a page number, simply as KuT. This has always served to remind me, despite a heavy reliance upon the English translation, of its original provenance.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

I

The Bibliographical Context

"That Max Weber made a fundamental contribution to Sinology, and in particular to the study of Chinese society and social institutions, is indisputable. The paradox is that he was able to do this despite a serious methodological flaw in his approach to the subject; despite having to work with a severely limited range of sources, available to him only in translation and often in versions that were faulty and sometimes even grossly misleading; and despite the fact that his writings on China abound in errors of detail, while some of his generalisations are as dogmatically wrong - headed as they are sweeping. This is a discouraging catalogue, but there is more. The determined reader still has to face the difficulties of Weber's style and the disorganised presentation he gave to his ideas."¹

(O.B. van der Sprenkel, "Max Weber on China", 1963)

These remarks of a distinguished sinologist reflect a common scholarly reaction to Max Weber. Admiration for the range and profundity of his vision are combined with a pained awareness of the opacity and circumstantial inaccuracy which mar so much of his work. D.G. Macrae, for example, a sociological contemporary of van der Sprenkel was not entirely convinced² that the "promise of revelation" would ever be realised.

For him, Weber's status as a kind of Magus is:

"bound up with his ambiguities, with the unadmitted or unexpressed belief that properly deciphered Weber would be found to conceal on his person the keys to both a specific society and to modern society at large".³

For Macrae, the Weberian legacy is as much infuriating as illuminating:

"eloquence, close reasoning, aridity, distinction for the sake of distinction, learning and superficiality go together in his work. To consult Weber, therefore, is often somewhat like divination, like using a Tarot pack or the I Cheng" (sic).⁴

In short, and employing Macrae's own metaphor, Weber presents us with a maze. Its contents may have made its creator "one of the master figures of the social imagination of this century" (Macrae, *ibid.*, p.9), but, like any maze, it has two distinctive properties. Firstly, its centre may be approached only through an indirect path, and secondly, "one of the disappointments about real mazes is that at their hearts there is often nothing".⁵

On this view, the problem becomes one of assessing the extent to which Weber's reputation is deserved. For his part, Macrae is guarded as to the outcome of future exegesis.

"If (my emphasis -SM) Weber matters, then much remains to be done both by way of translation and interpretation"⁶.

Similarly:

"Weber is only now settling into some sort of perspective and only now being sifted through so that we may take from him what is valuable and useful and discard what is disproved, what is a false lead, what is muddle, and what is mistaken. The process is far from complete".⁷

The present thesis attempts to assess the extent to which Weber's "Konfuzianismus und Taoismus" (KuT) still has a contribution to make both to current sociology and even perhaps to modern sinology.⁸ It arose out of a research project intended initially to examine Weber's work in the light of subsequent research on China. However it became increasingly clear that an elucidation of Weber's analysis of Chinese religion and society actually constituted a project in itself.⁹ Initially, in this chapter, I want to indicate the sorts of difficulty that must be surmounted if one is to help settle into perspective just one of Weber's essays on the "Economic Ethics of the World Religions".

The thesis makes two claims. Firstly, existing secondary accounts of KuT are unsatisfactory on one or both of two counts. Either they clarify some of the essay's main themes whilst still leaving its overall structure and conclusions unclear, or they produce a clear, overall account of the essay only through imposing upon it an alien analytical structure. Secondly, the common cause of these various shortcomings lies in a failure correctly to locate the essay within its appropriate sociological and sinological contexts. In extension of this latter claim, it suggests that KuT reveals a pre-occupation with a number of issues which recur over and over again throughout the whole of Weber's writings.

For the sake of convenience, these recurrent issues may be grouped under three rough headings: historical, sociological, and methodological. Until the essay is situated within the appropriate context constituted by these three groups of issues, it will not be possible to render a valid interpretation. At the same time, until one is able to offer a valid interpretation of the essay, the nature of the general issues engaged within it remains difficult to establish. As with almost all of Weber's writings, there is a complex relationship of reciprocity with a host of themes and assumptions many of which are never clearly disentangled by the author himself. This chapter attempts to re-situate KuT in its original setting in the Weberian oeuvre and to point out some of the problems which need to be addressed for a clarification of the essay itself and the issues engaged within it. In this way, one hopes to give oneself some slight chance of finding the centre of the Weberian maze and, more

importantly, getting out again.

The most appropriate way to begin such a discussion is to examine briefly the bibliographical setting of KuT.¹⁰ An early version of KuT was written in 1913 and was first published in 1915. The first part of this version appeared in the September issue of the "Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik"¹¹ and it was concluded in the November issue.

The essay was always intended to be part of a larger cohesive entity and was the first in a projected series of articles to be entitled, "Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen" (The Economic Ethic of the World Religions-EE). It was preceded in the September issue of the "Archiv" by an introductory essay to the whole series. This was originally entitled simply "Einleitung" or Introduction/Preface" but has since been translated, rather misleadingly, as "The Social Psychology of the World Religions", thus setting it apart, almost as an independent entity, from its original¹² introductory function.

KuT was followed in the November issue of the "Archiv" by an essay labelled by Weber as a "Zwischenbetrachtung" a sort of "intermediate working paper" designed to state preliminary¹³ conclusions and pose further problems for analysis. It was seen as leading on in time to essays on Hinduism and Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and early Christianity but it too has been wrenched out of context to suffer the fate of piecemeal translation, appearing in the Gerth and Mills collection as "Religious Rejections of the World and their¹⁴ Directions"(RR). Whilst no doubt valuable at the time, this effective de-emphasis on the original sequence of the EE

series means that some effort must now be made to recapture the essential unity of the enterprise, particularly the close relationship between KuT and the Introductory and Intermediate essays.¹⁵

An English translation of KuT, entitled "The Religion of China" (ROC), first appeared in 1951 and was reprinted in 1964 with a new introduction by C.K. Yang.¹⁶ The text used as the basis for ROC is a revised and much enlarged version of KuT which appeared in 1920-1 as part of the first volume of Weber's "Gesammelte Aufsätze Zur Religionssoziologie",¹⁷ (Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion-CESR). This volume contained, in sequence: a new "Author's Introduction"(AA), "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (PESC);¹⁸ "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism"(PSSC);¹⁹ "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" (SPWR) - the introduction to the EE series);²⁰ Confucianism and Taoism;²¹ and "The Religious Rejections of The World and Their Directions"(RR).²² Volume Two of the CESR contained the essay on Hinduism and Buddhism²³ and volume 3 the essay on Ancient Judaism.²⁴

As it stands, the received text of KuT is dauntingly opaque. Many commentators have remarked upon the difficulties of reading Weber's work, and have generally put it down to the vagaries of his style, or his disdain for "structure". As Marianne Weber remarked of her husband:

"He attached no importance whatever to the form in which his wealth of ideas was presented. So many things came flooding out of the storehouse of his mind....that time and time again he found it impossible to force them into a lucid sentence structure"²⁵

However, "vagaries of style" is a phrase which covers a multitude of sins. Some of these tarnish the surface of all

of Weber's writings but others present problems which are particularly acute in the case of KuT.

The first difficulty emerges directly from what may narrowly be described as the peculiarities of Weber's prose style. In their preface to the collection of essays "From Max Weber", Gerth and Mills point out that:

" the genius of the German language has a twofold stylistic tradition. One tradition corresponds to the drift of English towards brief and grammatically lucid sentences. Such sentences carry transparent trains of thought in which first things stand out first. The other tradition is often felt to be formidable and forbidding as readers of Hegel and Jean Paul Richter, of Karl Marx and Ferdinand Tonnies may testify."²⁶

Weber followed this latter tradition, inviting the comment:

"this school of writing is not what it is because of the inability of its practitioners to write well. They simply follow a different style in their use of parentheses, qualifying clauses, inversions and complex rhythmic devices... (The result is a)... series of polyphonous sentences in which ideas are synchronised rather than serialised."²⁷

Whether one considers Weber to be following a distinctive literary tradition, or as simply being unable or unwilling to forge a style appropriate to the substantive and methodological complexity of his thought, his style does nothing to enhance the intrinsic intelligibility of KuT. Moreover, the parenthetical style is more than literary edifice. It provides a vehicle through which various reservations, qualifications, and items of circumstantial detail may be inserted into the argument.

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The need carefully to separate essential arguments from extraneous detail points to the existence of a second difficulty. The number of themes running at tangents to the topic with which Weber is principally concerned at any one time constitute a formidable sub-text. Often the result is to

render the current discussion unintelligible until the reader is able to refer to the appropriate general context. A particularly clear example occurs within KuT when Weber embarks upon a discussion of legal developments in China.²⁹

These two difficulties are manifest to some degree in all of Weber's work but the third problem of interpretation occurs with particularly devastating force in KuT. It is clear that any given passage of a Weberian text needs to be unravelled with great care. However, even when this been attempted, it is often difficult to appreciate the relationship between the parts and the whole. In this sense, the third difficulty is posed by the essay's lack of an integral, explicitly formulated analytical structure. Neither the first nor the second version of KuT provides a coherently formulated set of overall aims, or a general account of the substantive and methodological apparatus through which these aims were to be realised.

As may be seen by a reference back to the essay's bibliographical setting this arises from the fact that KuT was never intended to form a self-contained entity. In both its original and revised editions it was part of a larger project, hence the absence of an introduction or preface specific to KuT. Acute problems of interpretation are posed by this lack, within the essay itself, of a clearly formulated or readily discernable analytical structure.

The interpretive freedom this accords to subsequent reworkers of the essay is demonstrated by Gerth's re-categorisation of the original text, one which has generally gone unnoted and unchallenged in the secondary literature. Gerth's translation of the German KuT into the English RoC

already imposes a more rigidly dichotomous structure than Weber intended, as indicated by the comparison of chapter headings and textual sub-divisions in fig. 1.1. Gerth retains Weber's original eight chapters and their headings are translated "literally", but they are re-categorised into three major parts: "Sociological Foundations" (Part 1), "Orthodoxy" (Part 11), and "Heterodoxy" (Part 111), followed by a concluding chapter.

It will be argued that this externally imposed partition of the original essay over-emphasises the distinctions Weber wished to draw between different aspects of his study. In particular it might appear to provide support for interpretations of KuT in which Weber is assumed to be applying a dichotomous analytical structure, dealing with "material" factors in Part One and "ideal" factors in Parts Two and Three. This sort of interpretation, in which the analytical structure of KuT is assumed to hinge upon a clearly maintained and unproblematic dichotomy between "material" and "ideal" factors, is central to C.K. Yang's introduction to the 1964 edition of RoC. This is examined in the next section of this chapter as a further exploration of the problems of interpretation raised by KuT.

Fig. 1.1

KuT.

RoC.

KuT.	RoC.
	Part One: Sociological Foundations
1. Soziologische Grundlagen: A. Stadt, Furst, Gott	1. City, Prince and God
2. Soziologische Grundlagen: B. Feudaler und praebendabler Staat	2. The Feudal and Prebendal State
3. Soziologische Grundlagen: C. Verwaltung und Agrarverfassung	3. Administration and Rural Structure
4. Soziologische Grundlagen: C. Selbstverwaltung, Recht und Kapitalismus	4. Self-Government, Law and Capitalism
	Part Two: Othodoxy
5. Der Literatenstand	5. The Literati
6. Die konfuzianische Lebensorientierung	6. The Confucian Life Orientation
	Part Three: Taoism
7. Othodoxie und Heterodooxie (Taoismus)	7. Othodoxy and Heterodoxy
8. Resultat: Konfuzianismus und Puritanismus	8. Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism

II

An Idealist Interpretation of KuT

C.K. Yang's introduction to the 1964 edition of RoC provides a particularly useful starting point for a re-interpretation of KuT. Firstly, it provides an admirably clear version of an idealist interpretation of Weber which appears, at least, to rely heavily on the work of Talcott Parsons. Secondly, it provides a useful baseline against which to consider alternative interpretations. Thirdly, it raises the crucial problem of the extent to which Weber himself subscribed to different forms of material:ideal dichotomies between religious and non-religious phenomena.

Yang's account of KuT offers an avowedly "idealist" interpretation of the essay. As will be seen, such an "idealist" or "culturalist" interpretation is far from uncommon. Yang insists that:

"The Religion of China cannot be properly understood apart from the wider context of Weber's intellectual endeavours, especially regarding his theory of religious values as independent voluntaristic influences on the nature of socio-economic development." (RoC., p.xiv)

In attempting to specify the nature of this wider context, Yang claims to follow the lead of Talcott Parsons. For Yang, all the salient elements of the wider context of KuT, are to be found in the following passage, which he quotes in full, from Parsons's "The Structure of Social Action" (SSA). Thus, the EE essays comprise:

"an ambitious series of comparative studies all directed to the question, why did modern rational bourgeois capitalism appear as a dominant phenomenon only in the modern West? What are the differentiating factors that account for its

failure to appear in other cultures? The comparative study is couched mainly in terms of the Marxian dichotomy of "material" and "ideal" factors. The general upshot is the thesis that at the relevant stages in the development of cultures the material conditions in China, India, Judea compared favourably, from the point of view of capitalistic-bureaucratic potentialities, with those of our own mediaeval and early modern times, while in each culture the "economic ethic" of the dominant religious tradition concerned was directly antagonistic to such a development. On the other hand, in Protestantism (to a less extent in Christianity as a whole) the economic ethic was directly favourable. This conclusion confirms the functional relationship between Protestantism and capitalism." (Parsons, SSA, 1968, pp.512-3, quoted by Yang, RoC, p.xviii)

Thus, for Yang, KuT is organised around a dichotomy between "ideal" and "material" factors and constitutes Weber's demonstration of the decisiveness of the former for the problem of capitalism. It was part of his attempt to establish the thesis that the economic ethics of the world religions were the crucial differentiating factors responsible for the emergence of modern rational capitalism only in the West. In China, where "material" factors were no more or less favourable to the emergence of capitalism than they had been in the West, its failure to emerge can be attributed primarily to differences in the "ideal" factors of religious beliefs and their influence upon economic orientations.

For Yang, therefore, KuT has a correspondingly dichotomised analytical structure. In his account, Chapters I to IV, the "Sociological Foundations" of KuT, are intended to demonstrate the net neutrality of "material" factors in relation to the non-emergence of capitalism in China.

"The lengthy treatment of the characteristics of Chinese social structure (chapters I to IV) was apparently designed to give due consideration to the "material factors" before assigning primary importance to the "ideal" factor in the failure of rational bourgeois capitalism to appear in

China... Weber examined the economic, political, and social aspects of Chinese society, and presented a mixture of structural or "material" characteristics, some of which were favourable and some unfavourable to the development of capitalism; in other words, comparison of "material" conditions yielded no decisive distinction between Chinese and Western societies in terms of propensity for capitalistic development." (RoC, p.xix)

Yang goes on to identify these "material" characteristics of "social structure" as major "concrete" factors in the Chinese social system.

"To follow his own order of arrangement in Part I, Weber chose five major concrete factors in the Chinese social system as characterising features having relevance to the functional requirements of modern capitalism: monetary systems, cities and guilds, the patrimonial state, kinship organisation and law. If we regard structural factors as a category, we perhaps could add to them Weber's discussion on literati as a status group in the first chapter of part II." (RoC, p.xx)

Yang gives a summary presentation of what he takes to be Weber's analysis of each of these "structural factors", an analysis which, he claims, led Weber to the conclusion that they were, on balance, neither more nor less favourable to capitalism than their Western analogues. In fact, Yang's summary presentation of each one of these "structural factors" seems often to be at odds with his interpretation of the Sociological Foundations as a whole. However, Yang's commitment to what he considers to be the overall thesis of KuT, and the place of the Sociological Foundations within it, leads him to claim that any "material" factors favourable to modern capitalism were outweighed by a number of favourable factors.

"Although Weber saw in China many unfavourable conditions for the development of capitalism, he also presented many favourable factors such as the absence of status restrictions by birth, free migration and settlement outside of one's own home community, free choice of occupations, absence of compulsory schooling and military service, and absence of legal restraint on usury or trade.

'From a purely economic point of view a genuine bourgeois industrial capitalism might have developed...The failure of capitalism to appear in China was basically owing to the lack of a "particular mentality" such as that of ascetic Protestantism.' (RoC., p.100)". (Yang, RoC., p.xxvii-xxviii)

Having demonstrated the net neutrality of material factors in part I of KuT, Weber's next step, according to Yang, was to demonstrate the decisive contrast in the religious traditions of China and the West.

"In part II, Weber presented a decisive contrast between Confucian values and the ascetic Protestant ethic in the sense that the former lacked the dynamic motivation which the latter had for capitalistic development. Part III contains Weber's characterisation of Taoism as a system of negative and conservative values incapable of developing a dynamic social orientation towards capitalism. Weber thus located the decisive differentiating element in the passive and traditionalist character in Confucian and Taoist values, explaining why capitalism developed in the West but not in China." (RoC, p.xix)

However, there are certain nuances in Yang's account which do not fit in with this interpretation of the Weber thesis quite as clearly as he suggests. Apart from the fact that, as already noted, Yang seems to strain at times to square his account of Weber's discussion of "structural factors" with a net neutrality thesis, there is a certain tension discernable between, on the one hand, his reference to Weber's heuristic rejection of materialism and, on the other, the material:ideal dichotomy into which Yang casts Weber's own analytical structure and conclusions. Thus, although Yang sees the Protestant Ethic essay and the EE series as polemically directed against a Marxian materialism, there are clear differences in emphasis between his general account of the Weber thesis on China and the following passage:

"...ideas and ideals, instead of always being reflections of materialistic conditions, can be independent,

voluntaristic forces in initiating socio-economic change."
(Yang, RoC, p.xv)

This particular passage does not actually attribute to KuT the idealist thesis referred to above. Rather, it suggests the programmatic, heuristic assumption that it is theoretically possible for religious beliefs to have an autonomous influence upon socio-economic development. As such, it reflects what will subsequently be presented as Weber's own two-fold objections to certain materialistic interpretations of religious beliefs, viz.

- (1) religious beliefs are not to be regarded simply as epiphenomenal reflections of a putative material base;
- (2) religious beliefs can have an independent influence over the direction of socio-economic development.

However, Yang's general account of KuT goes some way beyond this recognition of Weber's polemical and heuristic orientation towards the dual autonomy of religious beliefs. Yang transposes Weber's heuristic into a more assertive thesis: not only was China's failure to develop modern capitalism "owing mainly to the absence of a particular kind of religious ethic as the needed motivating force" (Yang, p.xiv), but this also demonstrates the decisiveness of ideal as opposed to material factors. Yang assumes that Weber's rejection of materialist reductionism also commits him to accepting the same sort of ideal:material dichotomy himself, and this assumption lies at the heart of many disagreements and confusions in the commentaries. Yang, for example, assumes that Weber himself employs "structural factors as a category" (Yang, p.xx) and that they equate with non-religious phenomena as material conditions. It will be

argued below that the assumptions that Weber employs such a general category of material:structural factors himself, and equates them with non-religious phenomena in general, are both highly problematic.

Yang's reading of KuT offers an admirably clear focus for any discussion of the problems of interpreting and re-interpreting the essay. Other commentators, such as Marshall (1982) and Turner (1981), have suggested that the Parsonian foundations upon which such a reading of the essay is built constitute a standard, or orthodox interpretation which is highly suspect as a basis for understanding Weber's comparative essays. These foundations, originally laid down in the 1930's by Parsons's "The Structure of Social Action", have been increasingly and explicitly challenged since the 1960s in particular. However, there have always been interpretations of Weber's work which do not fit easily with the Parsonian account offered in the paragraph from SSA quoted by Yang, and there is some question as to whether Yang and similar interpreters of KuT do full justice to Parsons's own more nuanced reading of Weber. These issues will be examined in more depth in chapter three below. However, Yang's account of KuT provides a useful starting point for any discussion of the essay itself, and the existing commentaries. It will be argued during the course of this thesis that interpretations such as Yang's, seeing KuT as presenting an idealist explanation of the problem of capitalism, are mistaken, and that, where other commentators depart from such an idealist interpretation of Weber's work in general, there are still weaknesses and lacunae in the extent to which their alternatives are applied specifically

to the analysis of KuT itself.

The idealism of Yang's account stems from his assumptions about the form of material:ideal dichotomy employed by Weber in KuT. These assumptions are reflected in three interpretative equations underpinning Yang's account:

1. Chinese society = the Chinese social system at a particular stage of historical development;
2. Material factors = "concrete" material/non-religious/structural conditions of the Chinese social system;
3. Ideal Factors = concrete value systems, constituted primarily by religious beliefs.

In terms of these interpretative equations, Yang's account of Weber's conclusions and arguments can be formulated in a way which is particularly useful for subsequent comparison with other commentaries and for the identification of central issues in the interpretation of KuT.

1. Weber concluded that religious beliefs were the decisive factors for the problem of capitalism addressed in KuT;
2. this influence was exerted through the influence of religious beliefs upon concrete economic orientations;
3. the decisiveness of this influence was demonstrated by showing:
 - (a) the unfavourability for capitalistic development of the economic ethics of Confucianism and Taoism, as compared with Protestantism,
 - (b) the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena for capitalistic development in China and the West;
4. this further demonstrates the decisiveness for the problem of capitalism of ideal as opposed to material factors.

It will be argued throughout this thesis that Weber does employ certain forms of a material:ideal dichotomy in KuT and

that relationships between ideal and material factors are indeed central to the analytical structure and conclusions of KuT. However, misunderstandings of this crucial relationship, frequently arising from Weber's own uncertainties and ambiguities, make it necessary for the essay to be re-examined in its entirety. Moreover, in so far as the problems of interpreting KuT are posed primarily by the difficulties of identifying its general analytical structure, it is necessary to refer back to its original bibliographical setting and its relationship to the original introductory essay to the EE series in particular.

The Rationalisation of Culture: Historical, Sociological
and Methodological Issues

In chapter 3, it will be argued that any interpretation of KuT which sees it as demonstrating the idealist thesis attributed to Weber by Yang is mistaken. It will also be argued that where interpretations differ from Yang, by offering a qualified form of idealism or a different interpretation altogether, none of the existing commentaries offer a completely satisfactory account of the essay in terms of the analytical structure envisaged and developed by Weber himself. However, the remainder of this chapter returns to the difficulties of interpreting KuT and the possible solutions to them. It suggests that a contextual rather than technical solution is the immediate and major priority, and attempts to identify the most immediately appropriate sources of a contextual solution.

At first, it might seem more appropriate to adopt a technical solution to the problem of interpreting KuT. That is to say, the sort of approach advocated by van der Sprenkel when he suggests that:

"The understanding, and hence the use, that should properly be made of Weber's work, particularly in some of the highly specialised fields in which he entered, would be greatly facilitated by critical annotated editions (or translations) in which obstacles to comprehension were tidied away, and some guidance given to the results of more recent scholarship".²⁹

He has in mind here a detailed reworking of the original texts addressed to the difficulties of Weber's style, but

also to some of the barriers erected by errors of fact and transliteration stemming from Weber's reliance upon secondary sources and uneven translations of documentary material:

"additional minor, though real irritations that bear particularly upon the sinologist are the inconsistent and outlandish romanisations of Chinese names, titles, and phrases which Weber takes as they stand from the older literature in different European languages (without, it seems, always knowing to whom or to what, they refer) and the very inadequate references he gives to the sources from which he quotes (e.g. "the Annals").³⁰

However, it is not certain that a technical solution of this kind, helpful though it might be, would solve all, or indeed most of the problems. Roth, for example, mentions the criticisms made of his translation of "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft" by Wolfgang Mommsen, who takes him to task for retaining Parsons's translation of "geschehen" as "empirical process".³¹ Mommsen considers this a characteristic distortion due to the particular viewpoint of a predominantly empirical social scientist and offers "stream of events" as an alternative.³² Roth accepts this point, commenting that:

"... in drawing on a given passage, the choice of terms in translating it often depends on the issues with which the researcher is trying to deal. A straight translation of the whole work is more concerned with general readability than with multiple meanings and nuances, which may become visible only in a particular context".³³

This illustration relates primarily to problems of translation but it carries general implications for any attempt to apply an apparently straightforward "technical" solution. Firstly it points up the dangers of reading and translating Weber without recourse to an appropriate, accurately apprehended context. Roth seems to suggest that, in working on Weber, the translator's choice amongst a range

of technically acceptable alternatives is likely to be governed by this context to a particularly marked degree. Secondly, the specific issue of whether a term should be translated as "empirical process" or "stream of events" illustrates the extent to which different interpretations of Weber's ontological premisses carry clear implications for an account of his methodology and, ultimately, for the logic of his substantive analyses.

For these reasons, it seems plausible to suggest that technical solutions to the difficulties of KuT must wait upon the provision of an adequate contextual solution. This is especially so, given that the main difficulty is the text's lack of an analytical structure which can be obtained only through analysis of the relationship between the essay and its general context. Only when it is possible to produce a valid account of the major substantive problematics of KuT and an appreciation of the methodological apparatus through which these problems were to be addressed, will it be possible to proceed towards a revised or re-translated edition along the lines advocated by van der Sprenkel.

The bibliographical setting of KuT indicates those aspects of its general context which are most immediately significant. It was always intended as an integral part of the EE series and, in SPWR, Weber did in fact provide an introduction to the series as a whole. He set out a general rationale for the EE series, established a number of preliminary definitions, and reviewed a series of cultural processes which he judged to be particularly relevant. As noted above, SPWR was written at roughly the same time as KuT and was originally published in the same edition of the "Archiv fuer

Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik". Gerth and Mills mention the essay's original function in a footnote but it is only quite recently that this fact has re-emerged to the surface of sociological perspectives on Weber (cf. Tenbruck, 1980, Schluchter, 1981). However, despite having been wrenched from its original context, the SPWR essay is vital to an understanding of Weber's aspirations for the EE series. A second relevant introductory essay is that provided by Weber for the first volume of CESR. Though shorter than SPWR this "Author's Introduction" (AA) addresses not just the EE essays on the world religions but also the earlier PESC and PSSC. However, in this first volume of CESR, the only one of the three prepared for publication by Weber himself, he still distinguishes the EE series as a coherent entity distinct from the earlier essays on Protestantism. The introduction to CESR consolidates a number of positions adopted in SPWR and reinforces one's feelings that the significance of the conceptual distance between the Protestantism essays and the EE essays is highly significant, and has sometimes been overlooked in the commentaries. In the absence of a specific introduction within the text of KuT itself, the two collective introductions must be drawn upon in the search for an appropriate analytical structure. They do not in themselves offer a complete contextual solution to the problems of interpreting KuT but they offer a useful starting point.

Although the analytical structure of the EE series cannot easily be disentangled from the polemics of SPWR, the latter's centrality to the essays in general and KuT in

particular makes a closer scrutiny of its arguments indispensable. In SPWR Weber makes clear his disinclination to address himself, even indirectly, to a sterile debate on monocausal philosophies of history. He rejects categorically any attempt to attribute a crucial role to either "material" or "ideal" factors in the development of cultures. This echoes his comments in the earlier essays on Protestantism, where he was more concerned to invalidate a crude materialist conception of history than to deny the causal significance of material interests or to set up an equally monolithic idealism.³⁴

A close examination of SPWR reveals Weber's primary concern in the EE series with distinctive forms of cultural rationalism and the historical routes through which they emerged. Although he is primarily interested in "those features of religion that are important for economic ethics",³⁵ this operates as a specific point of view from which to survey the more general world historical processes through which the effects of religious world-views upon the material and ideal interests of various status groups, influenced historically realised patterns of rationalisation. This led Weber to specify certain problems at greater length. Is it possible to identify specific points in the rationalisation of cultures at which one can say that a world religion has received its distinctive "stamp"? Will it henceforth provide a dominant world-view for all subsequent religious and non-religious development? How is any religion, and its associated world-view, affected by the interests of particular social strata?

Weber considers three types of socio-cultural process which need to be taken into account for a better understanding of these issues. Firstly, there is the relationship between "suffering" and specifically religious needs for the explanation and reduction of suffering, especially on the part of the masses. Secondly, there is the relationship between religious ideas and the material interests of various social strata, each of which has its own religious propensities, and each of which is capable of exerting a profound influence over the course of both religious and non-religious development. Thirdly, there is the relationship between religious ideas and the material interests of specifically religious personnel, whether priests, prophets, magicians, or whatever, in maintaining their religious eminence. One needs to analyse the historical operation of these socio-cultural processes, and assess their cultural significance.

The essay concludes with an outline presentation of several concepts which Weber suggests are vital to a more complete analysis of these processes:

"Finally, before going into the subject matter, some remarks by way of explaining terminological peculiarities which frequently recur in the presentation may be advanced." 36

He goes on to consider briefly the meaning of such concepts as legitimacy; office; charisma; charismatic authority; traditionalism; patriarchal and patrimonial authority; the routinisation of charisma; substantive and formal law; status-honour; life styles; class and status-situation.

This intimation of Weber's broad historical and sociological canvas is reiterated and reinforced in the "Author's

Introduction" (AA), the later of the two introductory
37
essays.

Here, Protestantism and capitalism are clearly identified as inter-related aspects of a more general modern Western rationalism. The latter is seen as an historically unique synthesis of logical thought, systematic observation, and instrumental control which itself emerged gradually from an earlier cultural context. Protestantism encouraged the development of a spirit of capitalism but there is no suggestion that the two were historically disconnected entities or "variables". Both emerged as interdependent components of Western culture, with Protestantism seen as an historically specific development from within the tradition of Judaism and Christianity. Thus, one needs to explain the emergence of capitalism by reference to the long historical process through which the West took on its distinctive form of rationalism. This was a process spanning many centuries of constant interaction between religious conceptions, ideal interests, and material interests.

For Weber, the eventual outcome of this process was influenced profoundly by the presence of Christianity as the dominant world religion of the Occident, and the content of Christianity was itself influenced by Judaism. This is why Weber intended to continue his studies of the world religions through a full circle with investigations of the emergence and development of the religions of the Near and Middle East:
38
Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. As a whole, the comparative studies of religion were intended to survey the world-historical processes through which distinctive forms of rationalism had emerged in the various culture-areas with

particular reference to the influence exerted by their dominant religious traditions.

Both SPWR and AA have enormous significance for the interpretation of KuT or indeed any of the essays in the EE series. Similarly, the essay translated as "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions" is particularly important. In general, the introductory and intermediate essays indicate a number of broad issues to which Weber addressed himself at considerable length in many aspects of his work. For the sake of convenience, they may be grouped into three general categories - "historical", "sociological", and methodological" issues,- though it must of course be remembered that Weber's interests in a particular problem tended to be relatively rather than absolutely historical or sociological. KuT is an exercise in both historical and sociological causality and, at the same time, it adopts a methodological strategy which Weber felt appropriate to the cultural sciences. This encompasses, as well as differentiates between, historical and sociological levels of analysis.

In the EE essays, the historical issues are engaged in a relatively direct manner through Weber's primary concern with the rationalisation of culture. In KuT, for example, Weber wanted to examine the distinctive forms of rationalism which developed in the Chinese culture area; to contrast this with the form of rationalism that was distinctive to the West and which alone was associated with the emergence of a modern capitalist economy; and to examine the influence which had been exerted upon these forms of rationalism by the world

religions operative within the relevant areas. This involved an historical span of at least 3,000 years of Chinese history! In particular it entailed an analysis of the relationship between China's dominant religious tradition, Confucianism, and its dominant social stratum, the Literati. It was also necessary to take into account the heterodox religions of Taoism and Buddhism; to assess the import of the state cult and the popular religion; and to survey the historical development of China's non-religious institutions, especially the state. As always, Weber's analysis of these disparate phenomena was one-sided: in his attempt to appreciate their significance for the development of Chinese culture he concentrated upon those aspects which offered comparisons with the course of Western development.

The more sociological issues operate on at least two levels. Firstly, as is clear from SPWR and RR in particular, Weber felt that a large number of socio-cultural processes operated in much the same way, and had similar implications for cultural development, wherever they appeared. Thus, he felt that the development of all the world religions had been influenced profoundly by what he termed "the directive elements" in the life-conduct of those social strata which had strongly influenced the practical ethics of their
39
respective religions. One major theme in all the EE essays which shows clearly the interdependence of historical and sociological levels of analysis is Weber's claim that certain social strata always had "typical" religious propensities and that religious development in any one area could be understood more fully by attempting to specify which particular strata had been influential in a particular case.

Similarly, he felt that all religious development had been influenced to some extent by a universal demand for a rational theodicy of misfortune typically articulated by intellectual strata.⁴⁰

Secondly, as Weber attempts to draw upon general sociological analysis to illuminate the historical rationalisation of specific culture-areas, the comparative religious studies are used as a sort of cultural laboratory in which general sociological constructs are formulated, refined, and almost simultaneously applied. At the time of writing KuT Weber had already turned his mind to the first outlines of what was to become "Economy and Society".⁴¹ Many of his more sociological concerns, in the fields of religion, law, and politics, find continual expression throughout the essay. The concepts of popular religiosity, religious prophecy, patrimonial bureaucracy, and traditional domination, for example, occur throughout KuT though they are never fully explained. They form part of a conceptual armoury which Weber knocks into shape, as it were, at the front line. In this sense, the need systematically to test and refine his general concepts constitutes a sociological problematic which engaged Weber's attention at the same time as the historical issues noted above.

Finally, the EE essays are an expression of Weber's "practised methodology". Guenther Roth uses this phrase to refer to the ways in which Weber himself proceeded in his own substantive studies.⁴² The methodological context of KuT is even less immediately clear than its substantively historical and sociological context. Weber aimed to apply his

observations of similar socio-cultural processes, occurring in different societies in different forms and at different times, to the analysis of any particular society. Moreover, although the logic of this procedure is one which has since produced enormous controversy, KuT provides a substantial (one cannot, unfortunately, say clear) indication of the ways in which the general sociological concepts were to be applied. There is a consistent methodological framework embedded within KuT, outward appearances notwithstanding, whose distinctive feature is the analytical application of hypothetical constructs in such a way as to avoid reification of the Chinese cultural process in an ahistorical concept of the Chinese "social system".

As will be seen, some of the misinterpretations applied to KuT may be attributed to a fundamental misconception of Weber's methods of analysis in general and his use of ideal types in particular. The most important problem, though not the only one, concerns the ways in which Weber intended his general sociological concepts to be used in analysing the historical development of particular cultures. Attention must be directed towards what Roth refers to as Weber's "practised methodology", although there may not be quite such an hiatus as the one implied by Roth between Weber's practised methodology and those of his writings directly concerned with methodological debates in the cultural sciences.

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Nonetheless, Roth's comments are extremely useful for present purposes, not least his insistence that the point of departure for Weber's practised methodology lies in his conception of cultural phenomena as providing the common

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subject-matter for both sociology and history. Roth takes Weber's claim that, for both historians and sociologists, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning of human action, to be essentially polemical in intent. It reflects Weber's opposition to organicist and other reified concepts of social life, rather than his espousal of a reductionist methodological individualism. The individual actions of social process constitute a "stream of events" to which sociology and history direct rather different sorts of question. Sociology formulates nomological propositions which are actually ideal-typical rather than law-like. History, by contrast, aims at the causal analysis and causal attribution of historically individual actions, structures and personalities that have cultural significance.

With some reservations, Roth goes on to assign to Weberian sociology the role of Clio's handmaiden, providing generalised constructs with which the specific features of any "historical individual" may be more clearly analysed. This is certainly close to Weber's own intentions but it is a pity that Roth does not extend his commentary to the more "philosophical" issues. The view of cultural phenomena as ongoing, historical process which the investigator may reconstruct partially and selectively but never "capture" or replicate fully is central to Weber's methodological vision and accords with much of the more recent work on its ontological and epistemological foundations. There are two vital strands to this methodological vision: (i) a philosophical anthropology involving a conception of cultural phenomena as humanly active, dialectical, creative, process:

(ii) the application of typifications of various sorts, whose common aim is the analysis of cultural process through concepts which avoid reification of the creative flux of human activity.

This methodological vision represents Weber's attempts to build on a neo-Kantian basis without recourse to the intuitionism of the neo-Hegelians, and reflects a greater reliance upon Rickert than Dilthey.⁴⁶

All of these historical, sociological and methodological issues can, and indeed must, be drawn upon as a contextual resource for the interpretation of KuT. However, this is not to suggest that Weberian scholarship has yet succeeded in offering satisfactory accounts of it all, yet alone clarifying the way in which the general issues mesh together within any one text. If one may be allowed to switch from the metaphor of a maze to that of a web, one might suggest that every strand of Weber's work is inextricably intermeshed with every other. Perhaps the overriding problem in interpreting Weber lies in deciding where to start. Much work remains to be done in all of these areas, particularly on the methodological context of the EE series, but it is possible to specify more precisely the nature of the historical and sociological problematics which inform the substantive discourse of KuT. In particular, the SPWR essay gives a more precise connotation to the rationalisation of culture problematic, and hence to the analytical structure of KuT, especially in its account of the relationship between material and ideal factors. These more precise connotations, and their implications for relationships between material and ideal factors in Weber's analysis, are the subject of the

next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

IDEAL AND MATERIAL FACTORS IN RELIGIOUS RATIONALISATION

I

Internal and External Determinants of Religious Doctrines

In SPWR, two passages are particularly useful in specifying the historical and sociological context of KuT. The first occurs in the opening pages of the essay, where Weber erects a conceptual framework for the analysis of those historical processes involved in any particular rationalisation of culture.¹ The second passage, again only two or three pages in length, is buried towards the latter part of the essay and constitutes virtually the only clear statement, in the whole of the Weberian corpus,² of his explicitly declared intentions for the EE essays. In the earlier passage, Weber makes a distinction between practical ethics and economic ethics which is crucial to the EE series. It is based upon a rather idiosyncratic usage of the apparently unproblematic term "religion". Weber sees each world religion as a determinate complex of theory and practice, writing of "man's attitude towards the world - as determined by religious or other (in our sense) inner factors", and of "the religiously determined way of life."³ His definition of religion as "religiously determined systems of life-regulation" involves a conception of two analytically distinct contexts within the overall religious complex. On the one hand there is the "psychological and pragmatic" context and, on the other, a non pragmatic ideational context, consisting of

those metaphysical and cosmological conceptions which Weber refers to variously as "sacred values", "supernatural values" and "supreme, sacred, values".⁴ The clear implication is that religion is not to be seen as a matter of either pragmatic or ideational factors but as some combination of both in which the former are held to be dependent upon, or influenced by, the latter.

If one accepts this usage then it is possible to arrive at a relatively consistent interpretation of the relationship between the terms, "practical ethic" and "economic ethic". Weber offers no explicit definition of either concept but their meanings become more accessible if one accepts, in addition to the notion of religion as a religious complex, two further propositions. First, that when Weber uses the term "practical ethic"⁵ he is referring to the pragmatic context of religion as established above. Secondly, and despite some ambiguity which Weber never fully resolves, an economic ethic corresponds loosely to what he refers to later in the essay as a concrete "economic mentality".⁶ In suggesting that the term economic ethics points to "the practical impulses for action which are founded in the psychological and pragmatic context of religion",⁷ Weber implies that although an economic ethic consists of certain "concrete" economic motivations, "practical impulses for action", it does not in itself constitute the pragmatic context of religion. Economic ethics may be "founded" in practical ethics, but the two are intended to be seen as distinct entities, neither analytically nor empirically coterminous.

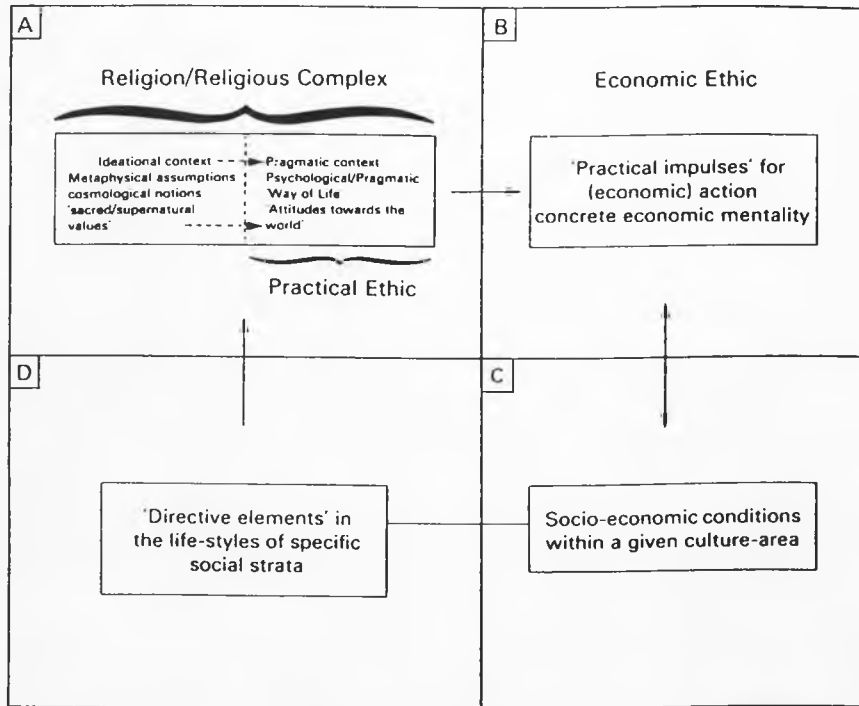
With these propositions in mind, it is possible to steer a consistent course through Weber's own circuitous account of the relevant interrelationships and arrive eventually at a set of "dependencies" or "causal mechanisms" which provide a reasonably stable set of preliminary definitions and pose the major problems for further analysis. The distinction between economic ethics and practical ethics introduces a rather curious mechanism of "double determination". The sense of this phrase can be conveyed adequately only through direct reference to two statements which follow each other closely in SPWR. Thus:

- a. "In the face of man's attitude towards the world -
- determined by religious or other (in our sense)
inner factors - an economic ethic has, of course,
a high measure of autonomy."⁸
- b. "The religious determination of life-conduct, however,
is also one - note this - only one of the determinants
of the economic ethic".⁹

Interwoven through these statements are two "causal mechanisms". The first occurs within the religious complex in the sense that the pragmatic context is determined by (influenced by is probably closer to Weber's intentions) the ideational context. The second mechanism involves the influence exerted over the economic ethic by the religious complex as a whole. "Double determination" may be said to exist in so far as the pragmatic context of religion, itself influenced by a specifically ideational context, then influences in turn the specific characteristics of an economic ethic.

This distinction between practical ethics and economic ethic, and the former's role as an integral, "internal" component of a given religious complex is reinforced

FIGURE I



further through Weber's comments on the ways in which religion may itself be influenced by social conditions. Having suggested that religion is one, albeit only one, of the determinants of an economic ethic, he goes on to claim that the world religions, especially their practical ethics, may be influenced profoundly, perhaps even decisively, by other socio-economic factors:

"Of course, the religiously determined way of life is itself profoundly influenced by economic and political factors operating within given geographical, social, political and national boundaries."¹⁰

Thus, it becomes possible to identify a sub-set of "causal mechanisms", "channels of influence", or "systems of determination" which operate within an overall set of "dependencies", linking religious beliefs and ethics to non-religious factors within given cultures.¹¹ This analytical extraction of a finite number of relationships which Weber judges to be especially significant is his solution to the problem posed by the fact that:

"We should lose ourselves in these discussions if we tried to demonstrate these dependencies in all their singularities."¹²

The relevant sub-set of significant inter-relationships may be delineated more clearly along the lines suggested in fig.1. This diagram maps the conceptual domain within which Weber outlines his three basic concepts of world religion, practical ethic, and economic ethic. It establishes a clear distinction between the latter two concepts and erects a substantive framework within which it becomes possible to investigate more closely what Weber himself means by the relationships between material and ideal factors in the rationalisation of culture.

It must be remembered that Weber's own conceptual schema, as opposed to his polemical comments about "materialism", never really refers to material and ideal factors as general categories. Rather, he writes in more specifically substantive terms of the influence of religious doctrines on the one hand, and economic, political, and other non-religious factors on the other. In these terms he displays an almost paranoid anxiety that he should not be interpreted as emphasizing one set of dependencies at the expense of the other. In the course of one paragraph he asserts that: no economic ethic is ever determined solely by religious factors; that religion is nevertheless a highly influential factor in determining the nature of economic ethics; but that religion is only one such factor and that the religiously determined way of life is itself profoundly influenced by economic and political factors. ¹³

It is possible to go beyond this rather characteristic hedging of bets and introduce a more positive ordering of Weber's position at this point on the basis of the conceptual domain mapped out above. This allows one to isolate three historical issues and two sociological problematics, in terms of which material and ideal factors might conceivably be distinguished more clearly. The historical issues are concerned with attempts to analyse closely related aspects of the rationalisation of culture within any one, given, cultural region. They may be listed thus:

- I. The first is concerned with the specific nature of any given world religion, with particular reference to its practical ethics.
- II. The second is concerned with economic ethics, and the

general economic mentality associated with a given religion and operative within a particular culture.

III. The third is concerned with the significance for cultural development, particularly economic development, of the relationship between a given economic ethic and its general socio-economic context.

With the first two of these historical issues Weber is concerned with practical and economic ethics as explananda, dependent factors to be explained. His two sociological problematics identify determining factors which are internal ("inner factors") or external to the historical development of religious doctrines. These internal and external factors identified by the sociological problematics differ from the historical issues in two ways. Firstly, they stem from Weber's analysis of socio-cultural processes which are held to occur within all culture-areas. Secondly they originate from Weber's concern with the effects of different sets of analytically "independent", explanatory factors.

Thus, religiously internal factors within the sociological problematic direct one's attention towards:

- (i) The influence exerted by the ideational context of religion over its pragmatic context (practical ethics);
- (ii) The influence exerted by religious doctrines over economic ethics, in so far as the latter are grounded in practical ethics;
- (iii) The influence exerted over the historical development of religious doctrines themselves by the pre-existing doctrines of a religion at any particular period during which there occurs a process of doctrinal change.

However, religiously external factors direct one's attention towards:

- (iv) The influence exerted by the "directive elements" in the life-styles of various social strata over the

world religions, with particular reference to their practical ethics.

Weber's crucial point is that any attempt to explain the historically specific features of practical and economic ethics necessarily involves reference to both internal and external factors and processes. Furthermore, the need to account for the specific features of religious doctrines ranks equally with the need to explain the origins and significance of their specifically economic ethics and the influence of the latter upon economic mentalities in a particular culture area. In fact, much of the greater part of SPWR, and each of the separate essays in the EE series, is concerned with precisely this historical issue: what factors need to be considered if one is to account for the distinctive doctrines of the world religions, and how in each individual case, have factors internal and external to specifically religious phenomena combined in historical process to influence the course of their development?

This emphasis upon the historical process through which each of the world religions comes to display characteristic practical ethics emerges clearly when, later in the SPWR essay, Weber attempts to set out explicitly his aims for the EE series. This account occupies no more than two or three pages but reflects very clearly Weber's focus of attention upon the "historical realisations of the religious ethics".¹⁴ He suggests that each of the essays is intended to be a "presentation" of selected aspects of each of the world religions but that they are not intended to offer a purely historical survey, nor a purely typological classification of the distinctive

features of each.

"Thus, the following presentations do not in any way constitute a systematic "typology" of religion. On the other hand, they do not constitute a purely historical work."¹⁵

They are certainly to be thought of as "typological" but Weber uses this term in a rather distinctive sense to denote a perspective based upon several cross-cutting principles of selection and classification, three of which are central to this analysis.

Firstly, the presentation of his material is intended to be typological in the sense that it considers "what is typically important in the historical realisations of religious ethics"¹⁶. This accords with Weber's view that each world religion emerged as the result of a lengthy historical process in which its distinctive features arose from specific combinations of certain general or typical features which influenced to some extent all religious development. Thus, all the world religions have been influenced by the typical demand for a rational theodicy of good and ill fortune, and by the typical religious propensities of different social strata, but the unique outcome of each process of "historical realisation" may be explained only by reference to the relative strength of such typical factors in each particular case.

Secondly, the presentations are typological in so far as they emphasise:

"those features peculiar to the individual religions, in contrast to the other religions".¹⁷

The kind of typology which Weber has in mind here derives from his insistence upon seeing the historical realisation

of religious ethics as one manifestation of a more general process: the rationalisation of life-conduct. This is a process which may occur, and has occurred, in all spheres of culture including economic and civic life. Any such process may be classified in terms of the specific form of rationalism which it progressively embodies and tends towards. Thus, both Confucianism and Utilitarianism may be classified as different types of practical rationalism, the former differing from the latter and indeed all other Occidental types of practical rationalism in being still tied within traditionalist bonds.¹⁸

This is a principle of one-sided selection which, as Weber acknowledges, detracts from a balanced presentation of the world religions. He has concentrated upon certain:

"special accents of importance...those features in the total picture of a religion which have been decisive for the fashioning of the practical way of life, as well as those which distinguish one religion from another."¹⁹

To this extent, Weber acknowledges that he must take the liberty of being unhistorical;

"in the sense that the ethics of individual religions are presented systematically and essentially in greater unity than has ever been the case in the flux of their actual development."²⁰

The third principle of selection concerns Weber's interest in:

"the connection of religions with the great contrasts of the economic mentalities."²¹

The means through which this connection was to be analysed were the concepts of rationalisation and rationalism outlined above, but Weber says very little at this stage about the precise nature of this connection. He seems

reasonably clear in his own mind that each of the world religions displays a characteristic form of rationalism and that these are related to different forms of economic rationalism. He suggests, too, that he is particularly interested in the relationship between forms of religious rationalism and the:

"economic rationalism of the type which, since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has come to dominate the Occident as part of the particular rationalisation of civic life, and which has become familiar in this part of the world."²²

However, there is no further specification in this essay of the mechanism through which religious rationalisation is connected with economic rationalism other than the earlier comments on the general relationship between practical and economic ethics. At this stage of his work, Weber is reluctant to go any further in this direction than a declaration of his intention, when examining the forms of rationalism progressively displayed by each of the world religions, to give particular emphasis to those features which he judges to have relevance for the development of economic mentalities. At most, there is a barely stated inference that the type of rationalism displayed by economic ethics will be influenced by the type displayed by practical ethics.

On the basis of these two passages from SPWR, one can see that the EE essays were intended to examine the historical development of each of the major world religions, with particular reference to the following aspects:

1. A characterisation of each of the world religions as a distinctive form of practical rationalism;

2. The socio-cultural processes responsible for imparting distinctive characteristics to the religious doctrines and practical ethics of each religion;
3. The ways in which these distinctive forms of religious rationalism are related to economic rationalism - more specifically, to the great contrasts of economic mentalities indicated by the distinctiveness of the modern form of economic rationalism.

These three themes provide, respectively, the configurational, causal, and consequential problematics central to Weber's analysis of the world religions in the EE essays. Bearing in mind the fact that they are particularly germane in the case of KuT, which followed immediately upon SPWR, it becomes possible to identify two overall themes which provide the essential substantive thrust of KuT and which resonate most clearly with the issues raised in the introductory essay:

1. To what extent were the religions of China, especially Confucianism, influenced in the course of their development by social conditions, especially the life-styles of those social strata for whom they operated as a status ethic?
2. To what extent did the religions of China, especially Confucianism, influence the rationalisation of Chinese culture, especially its characteristic form of economic rationalism?

SPWR provides therefore a clear guide to Weber's intended analytical structure for the EE essays in general and KuT in particular. The analysis of SPWR offered above has attempted to demonstrate that the EE essays were directed equally towards a configurational, causal, and consequential analysis of the world religions. Moreover, the causal analysis was directed towards the long-term historical development of the distinctive features of each world-religion and Weber saw both the internal and the external determinants of religious doctrines as equally

significant for this process.

What must also be noted at this point is the highly significant fact that, thus far, it has been possible to articulate this analytical structure without reference to a distinction between "material" and "ideal" factors except in the context of Weber's anxiety about not being seen to replace a one-sided materialism with a one-sided idealism. There is, however, a sense in which Weber seems to feel that his identification of the internal determinants of religious doctrines corresponded in some way to a more general category of ideal factors whilst the external determinants were related to material factors. It is necessary, therefore, to examine more closely the precise sense in which any general dichotomy between ideal and material factors was employed by Weber himself and precisely how this related to his distinctions between factors internal to specifically religious phenomena and those external to them.

The next section of this chapter pursues this issue by looking once again at the sort of idealist interpretation represented by Yang's introduction to "The Religion of China". The third section of the chapter attempts to articulate more precisely the sorts of material:ideal dichotomies that might be attributed to Weber himself after having identified the problems with the approach to this issue typified by Yang.

II

The Interpretive Equations of Idealist Interpretation

Some of the problems arising from the type of idealist interpretation represented by Yang's account of KuT can be seen more clearly by comparing the interpretive equations he applies to the essay with the analytical structure and problematics of the EE series outlined by Weber himself in SPWR. These interpretive equations are re-stated and examined below.

Chinese Society = the Chinese social system at a particular stage of historical development;

Material Factors = non-religious/structural conditions of the Chinese social system;

Ideal Factors = concrete value system, constituted primarily by Confucianism as the dominant religion.

"Material and Ideal Conditions"

The first set of interpretive problems arising from these equations is the identification of material and ideal factors with non-religious and religious conditions at a particular stage in the development of social systems. In Yang's idealist interpretation, it was necessary for Weber to establish the decisive role played by "ideal" factors through an analytical inventory of both "material" and "ideal" conditions in China and a comparison of these with their Western analogues at the relevant stage of development. In fact, in SPWR Weber's own discussion of

the relative influence of material and ideal factors is directed primarily towards the rather different problem of the historical realisation of distinctive religious doctrines and practical ethics. In this context, the clearest form of ideal:material dichotomy adopted by Weber himself is a distinction between material and ideal determinants of religious doctrines. This distinction is related to, but not exactly the same as, his distinction between external and internal determinants.

The external determinants of religious rationalisation identified most clearly by Weber are the "directive elements" in the life-styles of particular social strata. The EE essays devote at least as much attention to these factors and their influence upon the content of religious doctrines as to what might, in the literature of the subsequent sociology of development, be called the non-religious conditions for capitalistic "take-off". Weber's point is that each of the world religions was crucially affected in the course of its development by the "life-conduct" of those groups which acted as its historical bearers and for whom it operated as a status ethic. Thus, as the status ethic of a stratum of prebendaries, the practical ethics of Confucianism were influenced profoundly in the direction of a "secular rationalism". Similarly, in the course of its early development, Hinduism was the status ethic of the Brahmans, a group of cultured literati who differed from their Chinese counterparts in being a group of specifically religious professionals. Their role as the only exclusively

religious status group placed them at the stable centre of the "status stratification" and imparted to practical ethics an excessive concern for ritualistic traditionalism. At a later stage of development, in what Weber refers to as the "Indian Middle Ages", Indian religions were borne by lower strata who imparted to practical ethics a more ardent, sacramental religiosity of a saviour.²³

Moreover, Weber assumes that the historical processes through which particular social strata influenced religious development in particular cultures were underpinned by more general sociological processes. The secular rationalism of the Chinese Literati is further explained as an expression of the "natural" or "typical" religious propensities stemming from the interest situation of a patrimonial bureaucracy. The Brahmins, however, were, according to Weber, remote from any office. Their vested interests were much more typical of "genteel" strata of religious intellectuals whose remoteness from the cares of state channelled their religious propensities into mystical other-worldliness. Both strata, however, were closer to each other in many respects than they were to, say, the civic strata whose practical rationality influenced so strongly the development of Christianity in the cities of the West.²⁴

Thus, in so far as Weber himself does identify a general category of non-religious factors as specifically material factors these refer more precisely to interests which can be regarded as material interests in so far as they can be distinguished from specifically religious interests in

salvation from suffering. Unlike Yang, Weber does not equate such material factors with non-religious, socio-economic conditions in general, still less with the general non-religious conditions favourable or unfavourable to modern capitalism at a particular historical conjuncture.

Similarly, the clearest set of factors which Weber himself might be said to treat relatively unambiguously as ideal factors are the internal determinants of religious development. Again, Weber's concern with the long-term historical influence of these determinants upon religious doctrines themselves makes them distinguishable from "ideal" factors in the sense of religious beliefs and orientations that might be said "concretely" to exist at any particular stage of socio-economic development. The internal determinants of the historical development of religious doctrines provide a type of idealist problematic which is quite distinct from the latter, and which encompasses three inter-related elements.

Firstly, doctrinal factors place severe restraints upon the extent to which religious development is likely to reflect purely material interests. The sacred values of a religion, constituted by its metaphysical, cosmological doctrines, provide a world-view within which the dynamics of interest operate. This is the sense of Weber's oft-quoted remark that:

" Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet, very frequently, the "world images" that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest."From what" and "for what" one wished to be redeemed and,

let us not forget, "could be" redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world."²⁵

The second aspect of Weber's approach to a more detailed consideration of this particular idealist problematic concerns his claim that religious development passes through a series of "typical" stages. Although he takes some pains to avoid an "immanentist" position there is a strong implication that specific sequences of religious history represent variations upon a general typical pattern. There tends to be a progression from the primaeval cult towards cults of redemption, with the gradual development of religions of salvation culminating in fully realised rational theodices of suffering. To a certain extent, Weber wanted to claim that religion obeys its own, autonomous "laws" of succession without attributing a positivistically law-like status to such rules of historical experience.²⁶ His argument is couched in meta-theoretical, rather than theoretical terms, establishing certain spheres of culture which are not fully explicable within a materialist rubric. It is noteworthy that, in SPWR, this polemic is frequently directed not against Marx, or even vulgar "economic determinism" but against the "psycho-analytic" theories of writers like Nietzsche who claimed religion to be purely epiphenomenal, offering subconscious compensation for, or displacement of, inferior social status.²⁷

This approach is reiterated in a third, closely related aspect of internally religious determination, involving the claim that religious development is powered by an internal, specifically religious dynamic. The dynamic of

religious history is provided by a basic human need; the need to cope with, and explain, suffering and misfortune. The precise sense in which Weber utilises the notion of human needs here is difficult to establish. On occasions, as when writing of the way in which religion has been able to provide a "theodicy of good fortune for those who are fortunate", he takes religion to be satisfying:

"highly robust (pharisaical) needs of men which are essentially psychological."²⁸

At other times, Weber interprets the universal demand for a rational theodicy of misfortune, in which suffering is "explained" within a meaningful world-image, as essentially a "metaphysical" need:

"Thus, the demand has been implied: that the world order in its totality is, could, and somehow should be a meaningful "cosmos"...The avenues, the results, and the efficacy of this metaphysical need for a meaningful cosmos have varied widely."²⁹

It may do no more than cloud the issue to suggest that Weber refers here to some sort of existential need, a universal condition of humanity's being-in-the-world, but the point is that some such need is represented as specifically religious, irreducible to any concatenation of material interests, and underlying all particular manifestations of religiosity.³⁰

This is how Weber himself construes the distinctions between religiously external material factors and religiously internal ideal factors to which he directs his attention in both SPWR and KuT. To a certain extent the two are dichotomised but in nothing like the sense suggested by Yang. Weber's account of the influence exerted by ideal factors upon the historical development

of religious doctrines is intended as a warning against reading a reductionist interpretation into the "materialist" position which he adopts himself when emphasising so vigorously the ways in which religious doctrines and ethics are influenced by the material interests of those social strata who act as the historical bearers of the world religions.

As is suggested by the famous but sadly under-applied "switchmen of history" passage noted above, Weber consistently sees material and ideal interests as the central motivating dynamic of human action. In these terms, the relationship between specifically religious "ideas" (Weber himself so often places this "simple" word in quotation marks) and the interests in specifically religious salvation generated by these "ideas" constitutes an idealist nexus central to the EE essays. However, whilst it may be legitimate and relatively harmless in this particular context to see religious doctrines and interests in religious salvation as a complex of ideal factors, the situation with "material interests" is rather more complicated.

These material factors, which Weber sees as affecting religious development as part of the complex of ideal and material interests which constitutes the interest situation of particular social strata, are not to be equated with non-religious phenomena in general, still less the total complex of non-religious phenomena at any particular historical conjuncture. This point will be examined in more detail in section III of this chapter. For the moment, it is enough to note that the material

interests influencing the historical development of religious doctrines are only one set of external determinants of this historical process. Other external determinants, such as the influence exerted by physical or political geography for example, cannot simply be regarded as part of the same general category of "material" factors.

Thus, in relating Weber's concern with material and ideal factors directly and exclusively to a conjunctural, consequential analysis of the significance of economic ethics as compared with non-religious phenomena for the problem of capitalism, Yang "short-circuits" Weber's analysis. He misses out the crucial intermediary processes involved in the long-term historical development of religious doctrines, and the inter-related influence of specifically ideal and material interests upon this historical process. Hence, his misplaced equation of "ideal" and "material" factors with religious and non-religious phenomena in general. At the same time, in over-emphasising Weber's rejection of a crudely reductionist form of materialism, Yang neglects the attention given within KuT to the ways in which material and ideal interests operate, and inter-relate, within this historical process.

Chinese Society and Chinese History

A recognition that the ideal and material factors central to Weber's own analysis are the ideal and material interests influencing religious rationalisation renders

invalid another of Yang's interpretive equations: the identification of Chinese society with a particular stage of development of the Chinese social system. Weber's account of the actual historical inter-relationships and influence of material and ideal interests in relation to religious development is necessarily sketchy in SPWR but is tied indissolubly to the notion of social change.³¹ He suggests that, on the one hand, the "annunciation and promises" of a religion may be reinterpreted fundamentally from one generation to the next, reflecting non-religious influences. On the other hand, no matter how incisive such influences may be in a particular case, a religious ethic "receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and first of all, from the content of its annunciation and promise". Similarly:

"For every religion, we shall find a change in the socially decisive strata has usually been of profound importance. On the other hand, the type of religion, once stamped, has usually exerted a rather far-reaching influence upon the life-conduct of very heterogeneous strata."³²

Again, Weber is more concerned to avoid a meta-theoretical materialist interpretation of the connection between religious development and material interests, one which sees the former as a mere "function" of the latter, than he is to assert the meta-theoretical primacy of either material or ideal determinants. This reflects an image of social process which is essentially dialectical, in the sense in which this term has been used by Martin Albrow:

"The basic modality of existence for the objects of a dialectical gaze is "becoming" rather than "being".³³

In looking at Chinese history, Weber adopts precisely such a dialectical gaze, attempting to offer a developmentally sensitive account of the historical process within which the doctrines of Confucianism, and the interests of the Chinese Literati, led to a progressive reconstitution of practical ethics. At various points in KuT he discusses: the basic religious conceptions of the Chinese which were drawn upon and modified by the groups of princelings' advisers which eventually produced Confucius himself; the way in which these beliefs were synthesised by Confucius and his near contemporaries; the later utilisation of Confucianism as the basis of a state ideology when the Literati had come to adopt the role of an Imperial bureaucracy; and the subsequent successive modifications as the Literati strove to establish and maintain a Confucian orthodoxy which had to survive even in those periods when the Empire was ruled by a non-Chinese dynasty, or when the Emperor favoured the Buddhists or Taoists.³⁴

In a process of dialectical interplay between external and internal determinants, religious beliefs were influenced by the interests of the dominant stratum but these interests were themselves always constrained, and partly constituted, by religious beliefs. The analyst's task is to identify particular courses of action in which material or ideal interests seemed to have causal efficacy and assess their cultural significance. The analyst can say nothing about whether material or ideal interests have some sort of ultimate primacy. The alternative is to involve oneself in an infinite regress, attempting to establish which came first: the chicken of cosmological

belief, or the egg of material interest. Weber's account is thoroughly dialectical in that he makes no real attempt to arrest the flux of historical development in the course of his analysis. There is no over-reliance upon a "timeless construct" of Chinese society, still less some sort of functionally integrated social system in which Confucianism operates as a controlling value-system.

For Yang, Weber's account of the history of China's social and religious institutions is often presented as no more than a preliminary to his characterisation of their distinctive features at the relevant stage of development. In fact, Weber was primarily concerned, not with a Chinese social system analogous to the social system of pre-capitalist Europe but with a unique and immensely lengthy historical process: the rationalisation of Chinese culture. If Confucianism inhibited the development of capitalism in China, it did so through an influence exerted over more than two millenia. Similarly, the ideational roots of Western capitalism must be sought not simply in the "Protestant Ethic" but in the lengthy influence exerted by Christianity in the rationalisation of Western culture and, indeed, in the crucial influence of Judaism as the fount of Christianity.

35

Religious Doctrines and Value-systems

Weber's dialectical perspective places in jeopardy the third interpretive equation employed by Yang, in which

Confucianism is conceptualised as a coherent value-system, concretely existing at the vital pre-capitalist stage. As such, it is possible to subject it to analysis at the level of meaning, abstracting its economic ethic and comparing it directly with that of Protestantism. However, Yang treats this relatively ahistorical configurational construct of Confucianism as though Weber sees religious doctrines and ethics quite unproblematically as a concrete value system controlling economic actions at a particular stage of historical development. Thus, Yang's interpretation of the economic influence of Confucianism is embedded within, and in turn reinforces, a more general account of the way in which meaning systems, as ideal factors, are held to have influenced the course of economic development.

On this proto-functionalist account, a value system provides an integrative cultural core to the social system, controlling all concrete motivations, including economic motivation. As an explanation of the origins of rational, bourgeois capitalism, this account is held to be adequate on the level of causality when it can be demonstrated that a meaningful contrast in the economic ethics of different religious traditions is reflected in subsequent differences in economic development, other conditions being equal.

In fact, this does not accord with the principal ways in which Weber conceptualised Confucianism and its role as a factor inhibiting the development of capitalism. Although he concludes KuT with a summary configurational contrast of Confucianism and Puritanism, his account of the

economic significance of Confucianism relies upon his earlier account of the historical interaction between the religion and its bearers, the Literati. It was this historical dialectic which endowed Chinese culture with its distinctive form of rationalism, providing the specific courses of social action crucial to economic development in China. These are examined in the main body of the essay, leaving for the concluding chapter a summary emphasis upon the ways in which, in so far as they did influence the development of concrete economic orientations, Confucian doctrines might be supposed to have been counteractive to the development of economic rationalism.

Although Weber did contrast the two religions as abstract belief systems he was more concerned to clarify and establish his emergent typology of religious ethics than simply attribute to Confucianism at this generalised abstract level a direct influence upon economic development at a particular historical conjuncture. At the consequential as opposed to the configurational level of analysis, Weber operates with a developing, diffuse and, fragmented concept of Confucianism, appreciating that the religion "concretely" existed only in different forms in different historical periods.

A problem with Yang's interpretation is that it treats Weber's configurational construct of Confucianism, which was intended principally as an heuristic orientation towards a more historically specific analysis of its causes and consequences, as though it were itself an

historically specific concrete value system whose consequences for concrete economic action can be "read off", unproblematically, at the appropriate historical period. In this sort of interpretation, Weber's construct of Confucianism is effectively less a selective abstraction than a concrete entity, thus conflating two distinct levels of Weber's own analysis.

The following section of this chapter will re-examine Weber's own distinction between material and ideal interests as external and internal determinants of religious doctrines and ethics, having noted the problems of interpretation posed by equations such as Yang's in which ideal and material factors are identified with religious and non-religious phenomena in general.

Material:Ideal Dichotomies

It was suggested above that in attempting to articulate the conceptual field and analytical structure of the EE series Weber can be seen to be making at least one clear distinction between ideal and material factors. In focussing upon the historical development of distinctive religious doctrines as the specifically causal problematic of the EE series, Weber identifies ideal and material interests as internal and external determinants of religious doctrines. However, it might be argued that this particular form of material:ideal dichotomy is part of a more general distinction between material and ideal factors which Weber employs, explicitly or implicitly, throughout the EE series. In the next chapter, it will be suggested that interpretive assumptions about Weber's use of ideal:material dichotomies underpin and produce much of the confusion and disagreement amongst the secondary commentaries on KuT. In the remainder of this chapter, an attempt will be made to relate Weber's distinction between these ideal and material determinants of religious doctrines to other more general forms of material:ideal dichotomy which might conceivably be discernable in the EE essays.

For example, when Weber addresses himself to his consequential problematic, i.e. the influence of religious doctrines upon economic orientations, he also acknowledges the co-determining influence of non-religious factors such

as economic , political, or geographic conditions. The argument advanced below is that the material interests identified as external determinants of religious doctrines within Weber's causal problematic, and the non-religious determinants of economic orientations identified in his consequential problematic, do not constitute a unitary general category of material factors.

Rather, the causal and consequential problematics of the EE series utilise distinctions between different general categories. The consequential problematic does utilise a general distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena. However, unlike the distinction between the ideal and material determinants of religious doctrines, the general distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena is not treated by Weber as an ideal:material dichotomy. It will be argued that non-religious phenomena, such as the state or kinship systems are themselves treated by Weber as complexes of material and ideal factors.

The following discussion attempts to expand and clarify this argument by identifying the following five forms of material:ideal dichotomy and suggesting that not all of them are employed by Weber himself in the EE series.

1. Meaning Systems and Material Practice.

1a. Motives and Behaviour

1b. Institutional Ethos and Institutional Form

1c. Cultural Rationalism and Cultural Practice

2. Ideal and Material Determinants of Religious Doctrines

3. Idealist and Materialist Emanationism

4. Ideal Culture and Material Structure

5. Religious and Non-religious Phenomena

1. Meaning Systems and Material Practice

This is a form of material:ideal dichotomy which pervades the whole of Weber's work. However, Weber establishes and employs this distinction at different levels of social aggregation. Fig. 2. plots the forms taken by Weber's general distinctions between meaning systems and material practice at each of his three principal levels: the social act/relationship, the institutional sphere, and the cultural formation.

Fig. 2.

MEANING SYSTEMS
(IDEAL FACTORS)

MATERIAL PRACTICE
(MATERIAL FACTORS)

LEVEL OF
SOCIAL
AGGREGATION

Social Acts and Social Relations	Motives		Overt Behaviour
	Types of Interest		
	Ideal	Material	
Institutional Sphere (Institutionalised Social Relations)	Institutional Ethos/Spirit		Institutional Form/Substance
Cultural Formation (Societal or Civilizational Complex of Institutionalised Social Relations)	Cultural Rationalism		Cultural Practice

Weber articulates these distinctions with different degrees of explicitness. His account of the relationships between motives and behaviour in the methodological foundations to E+S is rather more rigorous, for example, than the distinction he makes between the form and ethos³⁶ of modern capitalism in the Protestant Ethic study. Moreover, Weber's distinctions between beliefs and action are ambiguously related to a distinction between ideal and material interests which sometimes seem to cut across the former distinction and sometimes seem to run in parallel with it. The result is a conceptual domain replete with ambiguities and inconsistencies which often remain unresolved and unexplicated by Weber himself.

What follows is an attempt to delineate this conceptual domain of beliefs and action in a fashion which reduces the ambiguities and inconsistencies to manageable proportions. It makes no claim to establish a watertight compartmentalisation of Weber's own conceptual domain which is immune from semantic seepage, still less to effect an improvement on Weber. Rather it attempts to provide a means of clarifying the sorts of distinctions made by Weber and his interpreters.

1a. Motives and Behaviour

Weber's own basic distinction is the one between motives and behaviour examined most fully in the methodological foundations to E+S. Both motives and behaviour of course, for Weber, are integral components of action. Meaning

systems are the subjectively understandable complexes of motivation which Weber sees as the proximate causes, albeit adequate rather than necessary causes, of overt behaviour.³⁷ In this sense, ideal factors are complexes of motivation which cannot be directly observed but only inferred by other actors, including the cultural scientist. Material practices are the overt behaviours whose meanings are interpreted by other social actors, including, again, the cultural scientist. "Theory and Practice" might be a more elegant way of expressing this distinction, given that all such meaning systems are the theoretical constructs of motivation produced by social actors and cultural scientists about their own and other people's practical behaviour. However, this might introduce neological confusion, given the usual meanings of the terms, theory and practice. A distinction between meaning system and material practice seems more appropriate given Weber's predilection for constructing the former as central elements of his own substantive work.

The general distinction between meaning systems and material practice as ideal and material factors is complicated by Weber's frequent recourse to another form of material:ideal dichotomy which actually operates within the ideal factor of meaning systems: distinctions between ideal and material interests. Any general distinction between material and ideal interests remained largely unexplicated by Weber himself, and its particular connotations tend to be relative to the specific substantive context in which he invokes it. Nonetheless he

treats both ideal and material interests as motives for social action and he sees all such motives as ideal factors, on a more general level, in so far as they constitute the sorts of meaning system which can be construed as the adequate proximate causes of material practice. Thus, the distinction between ideal and material interests is best seen as one between different types of motivating meaning system.

For Weber, ideal interests are grounded in the cognitive and evaluative elements of meaning systems and these are not necessarily or exclusively religious meaning systems. Weber's study of East-Elbian agrarian relations, for example, explains the migratory behaviour of agricultural workers as expressing a commitment to their ideal interests in personal freedom which transcends their material interests in a secure, but rather servile,³⁸ economic livelihood. In cases such as this, ideal interests can motivate action independently of material interests and often in apparent contradiction of them.

Thus, religious interests for Weber are those specific types of ideal interest grounded in specifically religious interests in salvation which in turn are grounded in the evaluative and cognitive components of a religious meaning system. The East-Elbian study reminds us, however, that Weber regards non-religious phenomena as equally capable of generating ideal interests, grounded in non-religious meaning systems such as those related to the value of personal freedom.³⁹ In general, Weber uses the term "material interests" mainly to refer to economic self-

interests in the accumulation of material possessions and privileges. His distinction between ideal and material interests is largely an ordinary language, relatively untheorised distinction, and perhaps none the worse for that. Interests in exerting domination also tend to be regarded by Weber as material interests whilst, rather more equivocally, he tends to regard interests in prestige or social honour as ideal interests.⁴⁰

In the final analysis, the substantive issues concerning Weber at any one time provide the grounds of his distinctions between material and ideal interests, in keeping perhaps with his neo-Kantian assumptions that all conceptual distinctions reflect the cognitive interests of the cultural scientist. Rigorously deployed ontological distinctions between ideal and material spheres of being are more easily associated with the idealism and materialism of Weber's protagonists, detractors, and interpreters. Thus, as suggested above, within the context of his own substantive problematics for the EE series, ideal and material interests are contextualised primarily as different types of historical determinant of religious doctrines. This means that the category of material interests occupies a somewhat anomalous position within Weber's conceptual domain of ideal and material factors. In so far as they constitute a motivating meaning system, material interests are ideal factors as opposed to the material practice of overt behaviour. However, as distinctive types of motives, material interests might be referred to as material factors when distinguishing them from ideal interests in the contextually specific senses

indicated above. (see fig.2, and p.49 above)

2b. Institutional Ethos and Institutional Form

The second level of social aggregation at which Weber employs a distinction between meaning systems and material practice is that between the ethos or spirit of a particular institutional sphere and its form or substance. The example which springs to mind most readily is that between the spirit and form of modern capitalism. However, one would suggest that all institutional spheres, including the religious sphere, are treated by Weber as institutionalised complexes of meaning system and material practice. Thus, both "religion" and, let us say, "the state", have a meaningful content which can be interpreted as proximate, adequate causes of material practices within their own or other institutional spheres.

Weber's concept of social relationship is important here. Roth suggests that in so far as the methodological foundations to *Economy and Society* were intended primarily as a polemic against reification, and especially organicist reification, of the concepts of social analysis, they do not commit Weber to a form of methodological individualism incompatible with the analysis of socially structured determinants of individual⁴¹ behaviour.

In these terms, Weber effects his own linkage between agency and structure, or between social action and social

institutions through his oft-misinterpreted concept of social relationship. This is not an injunction towards the analysis of face-to-face interaction, still less a claim that all sociological explanations must be reduced to an account of the states of mind of all individuals in a social collectivity. Rather it helps to explain the nature and function of the generalisations of E+S. These are ideal-typical and hence hypothetical propositions to the effect that, if social actors are parties to a certain type of social relationship, their subjective orientation towards this relationship will motivate them to act in certain ways.⁴² Weber's concept of a social relationship thus tries to avoid any reification of social institutions, social structure, and structural determination, whilst providing him with a conceptual link between structure and agency which allows him to operate with constructs of socially structured phenomena as complexes of meaning systems and material practice.⁴³

Social relationships can be regarded as institutionalised in so far as courses of social action reproduce typically patterned material practices and their meaningful content. Thus, social institutions, or institutional spheres, do concretely exist but can be interpreted only as social relationships between individuals whose subjective orientations towards social action may be influenced by their involvement in this relationship.⁴⁴

The most important point which arises from accepting such an interpretation of Weber's basic sociological concepts is that an institutionalised complex of meaning and practice can be characterised in terms of a meaning system

taken to represent its general ethos or spirit, and this meaning system can be analytically distinguished from its material practices. However, this material:ideal distinction once again operates within all institutional spheres, including religion. It does not distinguish the religious sphere as an ideal factor dichotomously opposed to the material factors of non-religious institutions.

1c. Cultural Rationalism and Cultural Practice

The third level of social aggregation at which Weber employs a general ideal:material dichotomy between meaning systems and material practices is that of the societal, civilizational, or even global formation. In Weber's work, this is the level of the cultural formation: a complex of inter-related institutional spheres which can be recognised in more conventional terms as a society, nation-state, or civilizational complex such as that of Western civilization. This is the level at which Weber might be presented as employing a material:ideal dichotomy through a distinction between social structure and a cultural ethos characterised in terms of a particular type of rationalism.

In the separate essays of the EE series, Weber is interested in cultural formations as complexes of interrelated institutional spheres. This allows him to examine: (a) the relationships between meaning systems and material practice within particular institutional spheres such as the economic, and (b) interrelationships between

the meaning systems and material practice of different institutional spheres, for example the reciprocal influence of religious meaning systems and economic practices upon each other. This treatment of cultural formations as complexes of institutional spheres, which themselves are integrally related complexes of meaning systems and material practice, also helps to explain why there is no general concept of "social structure" as a complex of non-religious/"material" institutions or phenomena in Weber's own work in the way that such a concept is employed by Yang's interpretation of Weber for example.

For Weber, it might make sense to characterise the aggregate, or average, or dominant, or typical ethos of a cultural formation in much the same way as he characterises the ethos or spirit of a particular institutional sphere. Similarly, it might make sense, although Weber never really does this, to refer to the institutionalised material practices of the cultural formation as a whole as its form or substance. However, whether he is dealing with particular institutional spheres or with the institutional complex of a societal or civilizational formation, Weber regards both meaning systems and material practice as equally and inextricably structured. Thus, in so far as there is any approximate equivalent in Weber to current sociological concepts of "social structure", as there is between the modern concept of social institutions and Weber's references to institutional spheres, the appropriate approximate equivalent in Weber would be that of the cultural

formation as a whole, rather than the institutionalised material practices of this institutional totality. Weber's sense of social structure relates to the cultural formation as whole and not to a specific part of it which can be dichotomously opposed to its "cultural" or "value" sphere.

2. Ideal and Material Determinants of Religious Doctrines

This is the form of material:ideal dichotomy which Weber employs most directly and least ambiguously in KuT. It derives from his attempts to specify the relative autonomy of religious doctrines in the introductory essay to the EE series (SPWR) and in the SR chapter of E+S. As noted above, Weber's case for the relative autonomy of religious doctrines is premised on his claim that their historical development cannot be explained simply in terms of the influence exerted by "external" factors such as material interests. There is also an "internal" dynamic generated by the combination of two ideal factors. These are:

- a. The pre-existing religious doctrines of a religion at any particular period during which there occurs a process of doctrinal change.
- b. The specifically religious quest for rational explanations of good or ill fortune typically articulated by intellectual strata.

The combination of these two determinants generates the historical process through which ideal interests in

religious salvation influence the rationalisation of religious doctrines.

In this context, the relevant material interests are those of various social strata, particularly but not exclusively the professional and lay adherents of particular religions who acted as their historical bearers. As such, they include the material interests of religious professionals in initiating, furthering, or maintaining their professional eminence in the religious sphere. Material interests are generated by the social and historical location of particular interest groups within an institutional complex which includes religious institutions.

Thus, for Weber, the determinants of religious doctrines can be regarded as material or ideal in so far as they exert their influence through constellations of material and ideal interests. As such, they influence the introduction and institutionalisation of religious doctrines. However, religious doctrines can also be influenced through a nexus of symbolisation rather than interests. For example, as happened according to Weber in both the Middle and Far East, monarchically controlled irrigation systems may stimulate conceptions of a harvest-creating king which in turn influence conceptualisations of the supreme religious power as an anthropomorphic, life-creating deity. Thus, the external determinants of religious doctrines include interest-free conditions as well as material interests. (see chapter nine below)

In accordance with his dialectical perspective, Weber

does not attribute any absolute historical or original primacy to either external or internal determinants of religious doctrines. Moreover, whether and how the determinants of religious doctrines are regarded as material or ideal factors is arguably less important for Weber than his attempts to analyse their combined influence as a major problematic of the EE series. In this context, the distinction between the internal determinants of religious doctrines which give them a relative autonomy from the external determinants constituted by material interests and interest-free conditions is probably a more important distinction for him than the distinction between ideal and material interests. In the causal analysis of specifically religious development, the former distinction includes and incorporates the latter.

Having said this, Weber's heuristic orientation towards the relative autonomy of religious doctrines does lead him to identify a specifically ideal nexus conjoining: (1) the influence of ideal interests upon religious doctrines; with: (2) the influence of religious doctrines upon specifically economic meaning systems. However, this religiously ideal nexus is not dichotomously opposed to some sort of material nexus encompassing all non-religious institutions and their inter-relationships. For Weber, an ideal nexus could just as easily be concerned with the influence of political beliefs and values upon economic orientations. Weber pays particular attention to the ideal nexus of religious doctrines because this is the one deemed to be epiphenomenal by the materialist reductionism to which he is opposed. His principal claim is that it

should be seen as an integral, rather than an irrelevant
nexus within historical processes of socio-economic
development.

3. Materialist and Idealist Emanationism

This is a form of dichotomy between two perspectives, both of which Weber takes great pains to avoid. As noted above, he is anxious not to substitute a one-sided form of idealist emanationism from the sorts of emanationist perspectives on religious or general historical development associated with what he saw as the one-sided materialism of Nietzsche or the economic determinist versions of Marxism.

One of the strengths of Parsons's interpretation of Weber, as will be seen in the next chapter, is his insistence that Weber's claims for the relatively autonomous historical development of religious doctrines and their relatively autonomous consequences for socio-economic development does not commit him to a version of neo-Hegelian idealist emanationism. However, it will be argued in chapter three that one of the problems with Parsons's reading of KuT is that he explicitly distances Weber from this version of idealism whilst still committing him implicitly, at least so far as this particular essay is concerned, to another version of idealism employing a form of ideal:material dichotomy between "culture" and "structure".

This point will be taken up in more detail in the following chapter. Here, it is sufficient to note that this is a form of material:ideal dichotomy which Weber explicitly and vigorously takes pains to avoid.

4. Ideal Culture and Material Structure

4 Ideal Culture and Material Structure

This sort of dichotomy is particularly clear in Yang's interpretation of Weber, as has been noted. There, it rests upon a series of interpretive equations in which religious conceptions, economic ethics, and concrete economic mentalities are regarded as constitutive elements of a society's concrete value system at a particular stage of development. As such, they are regarded as ideal factors in opposition to such "material/structural" factors as the state, law, and kinship systems. In this dichotomous formulation, all non-religious institutions are regarded as material conditions of social structure. In the next chapter it will be argued that the commentaries on KuT reveal a considerable degree of variation in how such "cultural" and "structural" spheres are conceptualised as ideal and material factors. Yang casts the dichotomy into a rather simplistic functionalist distinction between a concrete social system and its controlling value system. Other commentators, such as Marshall (see chapter three below), are markedly disinclined to adopt such a functionalist cast, but have certain tendencies to employ a different version of the same culture :structure dichotomy through a distinction between "objective" and "subjective" factors.

However, it was argued above that although there is space within Weber's conceptual domain to categorise and characterise the material practices of a cultural formation as distinguished from its general ethos, this is not to be equated with a concept of social structure such as that employed by Yang. Even more clearly, there is

no suggestion or implication in Weber's own work that one particular institutional sphere, that of religion, can be equated with the cultural sphere of the institutional totality, whilst the non-religious institutional spheres can be regarded as a distinct structural sphere. In these terms, Yang not only attributes to Weber an inappropriate form of material:ideal dichotomy, but also compounds this by assigning non-religious phenomena, both meaning systems and material practice, to the material/structural side of this dichotomy. As has already been noted, an institutional sphere such as "the state" is, for Weber, neither more nor less an ideal factor than "religion". Political meaning systems are as much a part of the ethos of an institutional totality as religious meaning systems, and religious practice is as much a part of the institutionalised material practice of the societal formation as political practice.

5. Religious and Non-religious Phenomena

Finally, there is a distinction between religious and non-religious institutional spheres which Weber certainly employs but not in the sense of a material:ideal dichotomy. Weber's methodological writings are useful here. In the "Objectivity" essay, he outlines his emergent discipline of "social economics" in a way which is not substantially different from the vision of sociology embedded in the architectonic of E+S. The analysis of economic phenomena is placed squarely at the heart of this enterprise. This in turn should embrace a configurational

analysis of specifically economic phenomena, a causal analysis of how they are influenced by "economically relevant phenomena" and a consequential analysis of how they influence "economically conditioned phenomena".⁴⁵

This is nothing more mysterious than a programme for the analysis of the inter-relationships between cultural phenomena as institutionalised spheres of cultural process. What Weber does here, reflecting his own healthy respect for the materialist conception of history as a sociological heuristic, is to insist that full attention should also be given to the relatively autonomous influence of non-economic phenomena, including religious phenomena, over the economic.

This approach is clearly reflected in Weber's own heuristic orientation to the EE series, in so far as he essays an analysis of the inter-relationships between religious and non-religious institutional spheres at successive stages in the development of cultural formations. However, Weber's concern with a particular ideal nexus within this historical process focusses his attention upon the configurational, causal, and consequential analysis of religious doctrines. It has already been suggested that there is no one general category of material factors constituting a dichotomously opposed material nexus. Weber is certainly concerned with the inter-relationships between religious doctrines on the one hand, and non-religious phenomena on the other, and he does see the former as ideal factors. However, given the conceptualisation of all institutional spheres as

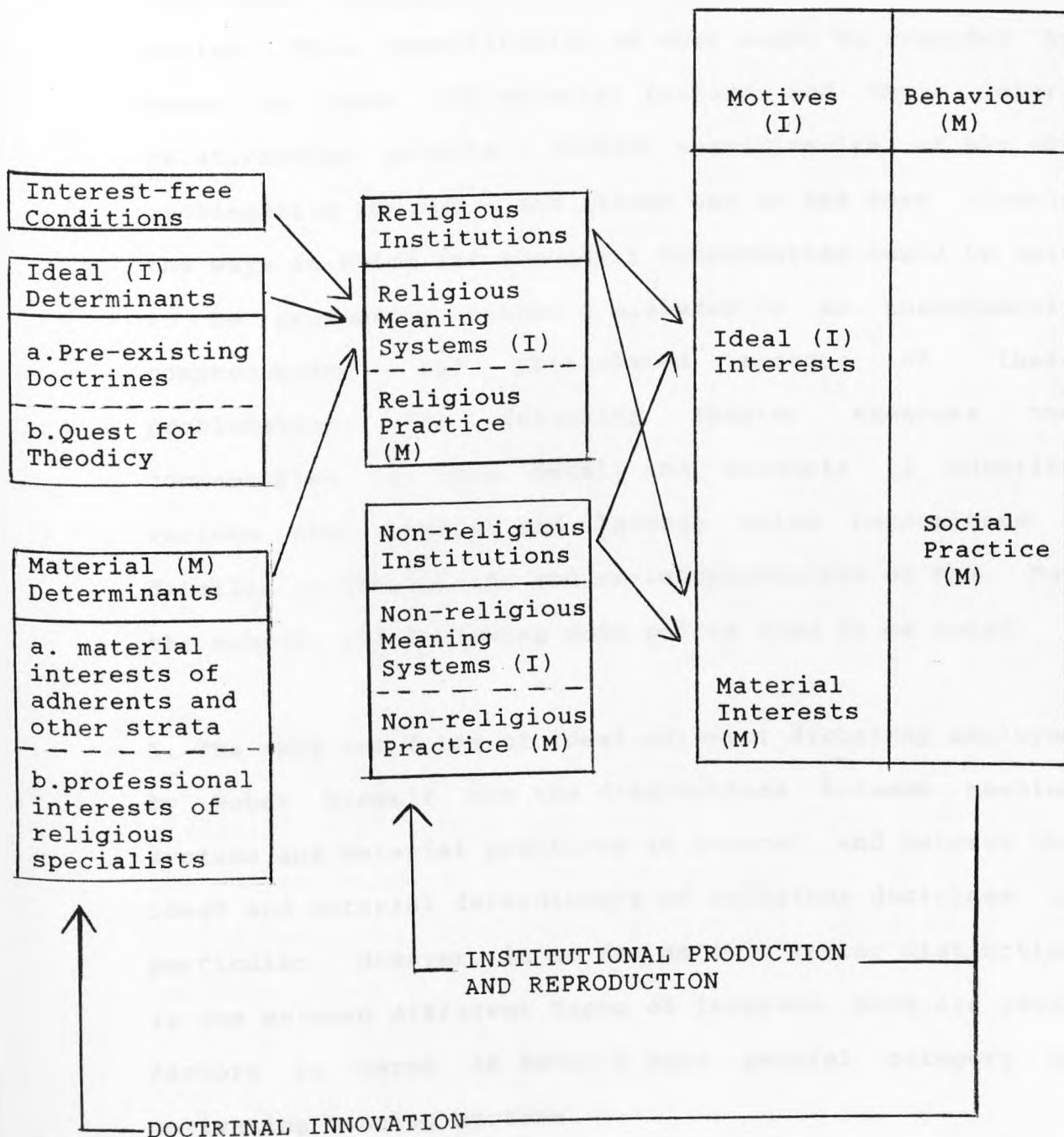
complexes of meaning systems and material practice, there is no necessity to regard non-religious phenomena as material factors.

Fig.3

(I = "Ideal" factors; M = "Material" factors.)

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEX OF THE CULTURAL FORMATION SOCIAL ACTION

DETERMINANTS OF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES



IV

SUMMARY

Fig.3 relates Weber's own distinctions between material and ideal factors to the conceptual field of the EE series. This specification of what might be regarded by Weber as ideal and material factors and their inter-relationships permits a further specification of his own problematics for KuT, and allows one to see more clearly the ways in which the secondary commentaries could be said to be presenting either a mistaken or an inadequately comprehensive and articulated account of these problematics. The following chapter examines the commentaries in more detail and attempts to identify various shortcomings and lacunae which necessitate a detailed re-examination and re-interpretation of KuT. For the moment, the following main points need to be noted.

1. The only two forms of ideal:material dichotomy employed by Weber himself are the distinctions between meaning systems and material practices in general, and between the ideal and material determinants of religious doctrines in particular. However, in so far as this latter distinction is one between different types of interest, both are ideal factors in terms of Weber's more general category of motivating meaning systems.

2. The distinction between religious and non-religious institutional spheres is not a form of material:ideal

dichotomy. Both are complexes of ideal and material factors in the sense of complexes of meaning systems and material practice. Both can generate ideal and material interests as the motives for courses of social action which can have the consequences ("intended" or "unintended") of producing or reproducing the religious and non-religious spheres which constitute the cultural formation. Similarly, a pre-existing institutional complex can generate both ideal and material interests which influence the introduction and institutionalisation of specifically religious doctrines.

3. In this sense, the institutional complex of the cultural formation provides institutionally structured influences upon ideal and material interests. However, ideal and material interests can be influenced by non-cultural conditions such as those of physical geography and by a whole variety of non-institutionalised, contingent, fortuitous, unpredictable and original happenings and phenomena. The cultural formation is the starting point and the mediating complex for Weber's analysis of historical process but he certainly does not see its structuring influence upon human action as fully determining the processes of cultural production and reproduction.

4. In terms of the causal problematic of the EE series, Weber is concerned with a dialectical process in which religious doctrines are continually undergoing a process

of innovation and institutionalisation. A pre-existing cultural formation, encompassing both religious and non-religious meaning systems and material practice generates ideal and material interests which influence the innovation and institutionalisation of religious doctrines. In turn, the new religious doctrines can influence the cultural formation more widely and generate further ideal and material interests which have further consequences for the production and reproduction of both religious and non-religious institutional spheres.

5. In terms of Weber's consequential problematic, religious meaning systems are ideal factors which, through the general mechanisms outlined above, can influence both meaning systems and material practice in the non-religious spheres, including the economic. However, both economic orientations and economic systems can also be influenced by non-religious institutions and by non-cultural conditions.

The following chapter examines the existing commentaries on KuT in the light of the relationships between these distinctions and dichotomies.

CHAPTER THREE
THE DIVERSITY OF INTERPRETATION

I

The Interpretive Field

This chapter has two main aims. Firstly, it attempts to identify the extent of persisting disagreement over the nature of the arguments advanced by Weber in KuT, and the conclusions he reached. Secondly, it attempts to identify the nature and sources of these disagreements with particular reference to the previous chapter's discussion of the analytical structure of the EE essays and the various forms of ideal:material dichotomy deployed or not deployed within them. It suggests that disagreements within the secondary commentaries on KuT are focussed upon two principal and closely related issues.

The first of these concerns the extent to which Weber makes out a case for the decisiveness of religious beliefs as opposed to non-religious phenomena for the problem of capitalism. The second area of disagreement concerns the extent to which this distinction between religious beliefs and non-religious phenomena is to be equated with a dichotomy between ideal and material factors in such a way as to constitute an "idealist" or "culturalist" explanation of the problem of capitalism. These two areas of disagreement need to be separated out, given the fact that it is possible for commentators to attribute the first position to Weber but not

necessarily the second. Moreover, there are considerable nuances and complexities discernable within the work of various commentators who appear at first to be offering similar interpretations. The second interpretive position typically rests upon an ideal:material dichotomy between culture and social structure which can take the form of a rather simplistic functionalist antinomy between social and value systems, or a looser distinction between "objective" and "subjective" factors.

In reviewing the commentaries on KuT reference back will be made to the previous chapter's argument that Weber himself employed two primary substantive distinctions in KuT. The first distinguishes between ideal and material determinants of the historical development of religious doctrines and the second involves a more general distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena which does not, however, take the form of a dichotomy between material and ideal factors.

The starting point for this discussion is provided by the idealist/culturalist interpretation represented by Yang's reading of KuT as examined above. Firstly, an attempt will be made to relate this interpretation to a period of Weberian scholarship and commentary influenced particularly by the work of Talcott Parsons. It is necessary to examine the extent to which readings such as Yang's do justice to Parsons's own interpretation of KuT and whether Yang or Parsons or both present readings of KuT which are more generally representative of this period. Secondly, an attempt will be made to examine the implications for the interpretation of KuT of more recent

re-appraisals of Weber's work and the extent to which they have been applied to the problems of interpretation posed by this particular essay.

A closer inspection of Parsons's own writings suggests that Yang does in fact lose sight of many of the complexities and nuances of Parsons's reading of Weber. Certainly, the tensions noted above within Yang's account (pp.14-16 above), between Weber's own programmatic conception of the relative autonomy of religious doctrines and his further claim that Weber saw religious doctrines as not just autonomously but decisively influential for the problem of capitalism, are further to the fore in Parsons's account of the "Religious Groups" chapter of E+S. However, it will be argued that for all the sophistication of Parsons's general interpretation of Weber's work, and the recent re-appraisals of his own, Parsons account of KuT itself still tends to come to much the same conclusions as Yang's.¹

"The Structure of Social Action" (SSA) remains the text within which Parsons addressed himself specifically to KuT at greatest length. It displays strengths and weaknesses which are sustained in his later introduction to Fischhoff's translation of the "Sociology of Religion" (SR) chapter of E+S.² In considering both SSA and SR, the problem is whether the paragraph from SSA quoted by Yang as the basis of his reading of KuT, does justice to Parsons's more elaborated analysis. Parsons's

general interpretation of the EE series in SSA, and his introduction to the SR chapter of E+S, are both more nuanced than the paragraph quoted by Yang but they reveal a clear paradox. Whilst defending Weber vigorously against a charge of idealism on one count, Parsons opens Weber up to a charge of idealism on a different count. This paradox stems from Parsons's failure to differentiate consistently and systematically between different forms of ideal:material dichotomy in discussing KuT itself.

Following his insistence that the EE series is addressed primarily to the problem of capitalism, Parsons offers one formulation of its problematic which, like certain aspects of Yang's interpretation, is couched initially in a language of prima facie cases.

"In the cases which will be discussed Weber succeeds in demonstrating that the economic ethic associated with the religion in question is fundamentally different from that of ascetic Protestantism in its implications for economic activities. This fact is correlated with the further one that in the areas in which the ethic in question has been predominant, no development has taken place which is at all comparable with that of Western rational bourgeois capitalism. Thus there is established a prima facie connection between the lack of capitalistic development and the character of the religious ethics in question since, as compared with that of Ascetic Protestantism, they must, so far as they influence action at all, be held to constitute directly inhibitory forces." (SSA,p.540)

This language of prima-facie cases asserts simply that if religious conceptions can be regarded as having exerted an autonomous influence upon the development of modern capitalism in China, they exerted an inhibiting influence. However, Parsons transposes this language of prima-facie cases into the language of a proven case for the decisiveness of religious influences. This

transposition is effected through his account of two "methodological" difficulties which he suggests that Weber had to overcome in specifying and demonstrating his prima-facie case.

"The principal, methodological difficulties in approximating an accurate estimate of the concrete importance of the religious ethic in the development of types of economic system, arise at two points."
(Parsons, SSA, p.540)

For Parsons, the first of these problems involves the express acknowledgement by Weber of the fact that the economic ethics of the world religions were themselves influenced by non-religious factors, especially the material interests of their historical bearers. Thus, a proven case for the decisive influence of religious ethics upon economic development would necessitate an assessment of the influence of these material factors upon the nature of religious doctrines as compared with the ideal factors which give religious conceptions their own internal dynamic.

Similarly, more precise analysis was needed to overcome the second methodological difficulty of assessing the extent to which the non-religious, as opposed to the religious elements of what Parsons calls the "concrete social system" were themselves favourable or unfavourable to capitalistic development in any particular case. Parsons was, of course, well aware of the cross-cultural difficulties posed by this second obstacle to a proven case:

"Secondly, the elements in the concrete social system other than the religious ethic which may be conceptualised as favourable or unfavourable to capitalistic development do not, in any two cases which

can be compared, directly correspond. China lacked some of the most important hindrances present in the West while, on the other hand, the West had certain non-religious favourable elements not present in China" (SSA, p.541)

However, Parsons's discussion of what he sees as Weber's attempted resolution of these problems through more precise analysis reveals the paradox within his own interpretation of KuT.

In relation to the first methodological problem, Parsons sees Weber's acknowledgement of the non-religious determinants of religious doctrines as the basis of a defence of Weber against any charge of idealist emanationism. In explicitly advancing such a defence, Parsons does rather more justice to Weber than Yang does, in principle at least, by emphasising Weber's insistence upon the fact that the economic ethics of the world religions, and religious doctrines themselves, were profoundly influenced by non-religious factors.

However, although Parson's general discussion of these non-religious determinants of religious doctrines is more elaborated in SR than it is in SSA, in neither study does he follow this through with an account of how Weber pursued this programmatic orientation in KuT itself. If Parsons's account of the essay in both SSA and the introduction to SR was the only available guide to its interpretation, one might well assume that Weber had not actually undertaken an analysis of precisely these non-religious influences upon the historical development of Chinese religions. It will be shown below, especially in chapters nine and ten, that Weber did develop such analysis at considerable length and to

considerable effect. However, Parsons's incorporation of Weber's analysis of the historical influence of material factors upon Chinese religious doctrines into his own presentation of KuT is so insubstantial that, in effect, it all but negates his programmatic defence of Weber against idealist emanationism.³

Parsons's neglect of Weber's attempts to pursue this first "methodological" problem in KuT itself is compounded by his analysis of the second: the more precise assessment of the relative favourability for capitalistic development of the religious and non-religious elements of the "concrete social system" at the appropriate historical conjunctures. This is the point at which Parsons introduces a culture:structure version of the material:ideal dichotomies (M/I 4) discussed in chapter two above. He does this in much the same way as Yang, by equating non-religious phenomena in general with material/structural conditions. His interpretive emphasis upon this particular non-Weberian dichotomy, together with his substantive neglect of Weber's own distinction between material and ideal interests (M/I 2) in their combined influence upon the historical development of Chinese religious doctrines, means that Parsons's reading of KuT remains close to the position attributed to him by Yang.

The nub of this interpretation is Parsons's subsumption of Weber's distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena (M/I 5) within the non-Weberian material:ideal dichotomy between religious and non-

religious elements of a conjunctureally concrete social system. The result is a form of culture:structure dichotomy (M/I 4) in which all the non-religious phenomena considered by Weber in the EE series are interpreted as material/structural conjunctureal conditions, in dichotomous opposition to religious conceptions and ethics as the ideal/cultural conjunctureal conditions of a concrete value system. Thus, Parsons's own interpretation of KuT over-emphasises an ideal:material dichotomy which Weber did not employ himself, at the expense of Weber's own concern with the influence of material interests over the historical development of religious doctrines in China. This can be seen particularly clearly in the discussion of KuT in SSA, which remains Parsons's lengthiest specific discussion of the essay itself.

Parsons's account of the second part of the essay is admirably lucid and relatively uncontentious (SSA, pp.546-552). It adopts the same interpretation as Yang, and indeed the same interpretation as that offered by virtually all commentators on this section of the essay. Parsons summarises Weber's own configurational characterisation of the negative implications for the development of capitalism associated with Chinese religions generally and Confucianism in particular. Like Yang, he follows Weber very closely in distinguishing between Confucianism and Puritanism in terms of the rational adjustment to the world associated with the practical ethics of the former as contrasted with the rational transformation of the world associated with

those of the latter.

However, Weber's configurational characterisation of Chinese religions is not the major issue in interpreting and re-interpreting KuT. The crucial point at issue is whether Weber resolved the problem of capitalism by asserting the decisiveness of these religious differences through a demonstration of the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena, and whether these latter are to be regarded as material factors.

On both of these points, Parsons's discussion of KuT itself is entirely consistent with the position attributed to him by Yang and illustrated with the lengthy quotation from SSA (SSA, pp. 512-3, cf. p.12 above). The principal reason for this lies in Parsons's treatment of the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT.

In a way which does not reflect the original essay, Parsons's discussion of the Chinese non-religious phenomena discussed by Weber in the "Sociological Foundations" part of KuT is significantly shorter than his discussion of religious factors and is highly selective. This high degree of selectivity is very frequent in the commentaries of course and reflects the virtual impenetrability of this particular section of the essay. The prevalent strategy for all of the secondary commentaries, when faced with the difficulties of the Sociological Foundations to KuT, is to pluck out selected themes in Weber's discussion of the Chinese cities, state, etc., and, by and large, to do so quite accurately. In this respect, Parsons presents no

exception. The problem is that almost all of the commentators are in a situation similar to that of attempting to complete a jigsaw puzzle in which there is no clear indication of the completed picture and for which they have been able to assemble only a small number of imperfectly fitting pieces. In this vein, Parsons picks out certain non-religious phenomena which Weber takes to be favourable to the development of capitalism and some unfavourable. He sees the kinship system and the state as the axial features of Weber's account of the "classical Chinese social system" and finds mention of favourable and unfavourable features of both in terms of their propensity for capitalistic development. On this basis, he suggests that Weber came to a "net neutrality" conclusion about the significance of non-religious phenomena for capitalistic development in China and the West.

However, it is difficult not to feel that Parsons's assessment of the net balance of these favourabilities and unfavourabilities as neutral is an inference on the basis of an understandably limited penetration of the obscurities of the Sociological Foundations. Like other commentators, such as Giddens, for example, the picture of KuT which emerges tends to be one which best fits in with the author's general interpretation of Weber. (see pp. 102-5 below) Thus, for all the complexities and subtleties of Parsons's discussion of Weber's programmatic orientation to the EE series, and despite his sensitive account of Weber's systematic sociology of religion in SR, his presentation of KuT itself does not

apply this programmatic orientation and he produces the sort of interpretation attributed to him by Yang.

Parsons's general position on the EE series is in fact sustained quite consistently into the later introductory essay to SR, as indicated in the following quotation. To facilitate commentary, it has been divided into three main sections, although of course these run consecutively and undivided in the original.

a. "In embarking upon comparative studies, Weber attempted to hold the factor of "economic organization" constant and to treat religious orientation as his independent variable. He sought to equate the "degrees of favourableness" of material factors to the development of capitalism. On the basis of a careful survey he judged this favourableness to be approximately equal in the European, in the Chinese, and in the Indian cases, taking account of the considerable changes within each main civilization over the long periods involved.

b. Given the very critical differences in outcome in the three great civilizations, he then had a prima facie case for the importance of the religious movements as differentiating factors, not of course as total explanations of social developments.

c. Weber repeatedly repudiated any imputation of an intent to "explain" all social developments as emanations and consequences of "idealistic" elements. His general position was as far removed from idealistic "emanationism" as it could possibly be." (SR, p.xxii)

With the exception of having dropped "Judaea" as a place in which, according to Parsons in SSA, Weber expected modern capitalism to have developed were it not for religious orientations, this passage reproduces all the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments advanced in SSA, and in the paragraph quoted by Yang (from SSA., pp.512-3).

Broadly speaking, it is argued here that Parsons was completely right on points b. and c. above but distinctly

misleading on point a. This first part of the quoted passage from SR reproduces the claim that Weber demonstrated the decisiveness of ideal/religious factors through a demonstration of the net neutrality of material/non-religious factors. Thus, whilst it defends Weber from the charge of idealist emanationism on programmatic grounds it still applies a form of the culture/structure dichotomy to the conclusions which Parsons claims resulted from an application of this heuristic orientation.

In this way, Parsons's account of the "Weber thesis" as applied to KuT amounts to a qualified version of idealism. The historical development of Chinese religious doctrines may well have been influenced by material factors but, once established, the ideal factors of their economic ethics were decisive for the non-emergence of modern capitalism in China. In turn, this is based on his assumptions about ideal:material dichotomies employed by Weber, and in particular the general incorporation of material interests, non-religious phenomena, and "structural" conditions into a general category of material factors whose almost infinite elasticity allows them also to be regarded as generally equivalent, in this case, to "economic organisation" (section a. in the parargaph quoted above).

II

Contemporary Interpretations

Until quite recently, the only substantial discussions of KuT to set alongside the pioneering work of Parsons were those of van der Sprenkel and Bendix. In 1963, van der Sprenkel^{3a} noted that of 466 books and articles listed in the Gerths' "Bibliography on Max Weber", only one was directly concerned with Weber's work on China. In this earlier exegetical tradition the commentaries of Yang and van der Sprenkel are the most sinologically sophisticated, although the latter has been rather neglected by English sociologists. One of the problems is that van der Sprenkel limits himself to a discussion of the non-religious aspects of Chinese society. He concentrates upon Weber's analysis of the stabilising balance of forces between the "centre" (the Emperor's court and the metropolitan officials) and the "periphery" (the district officials, rural lineages, and urban guilds). He emphasises the mediating role of the provincial officials and devotes much of his article to a discussion of Weber's account of Chinese bureaucratic behaviour in the light of subsequent historical research. However, although van der Sprenkel concludes that Weber's discussion of Chinese society is insightful and enduringly valuable, for all its errors of detail, he does not consider Weber's analysis of religious doctrines and their implications for economic development. Van der Sprenkel also imputes to Weber a methodological position which circumscribes his own reading of the

essay. According to van der Sprenkel, Weber set out to produce some sort of timeless construct of Chinese society, in accordance with what he sees as the logic of Weber's construction of ideal types.

"His (Weber's) preferred analytical tool is the ideal type. This is not a description of reality but a normative and classificatory construct built up by aggregating concrete individual phenomena which may or may not be present in greater or lesser degree, in any given example of historical reality."⁴

In fact, van der Sprenkel's account of Weber's typificatory procedure is rather questionable. He sees Weber as attempting to produce an essentially timeless construct of Chinese society, and hence tends to locate the essay within an inappropriate methodological context. This interpretation does less than justice to Weber's sensitivity to historical process and fails to acknowledge his use of ideal types specifically to avoid reifying the flux of Chinese history in a static model of the Chinese social system. At first sight, Bendix also appears to associate Weber with this particular strategy and, moreover, to defend it more readily than is permitted by the sinological sensibilities of van der Sprenkel:

"....certain aspects of the Chinese social structure had remained relatively unchanged - at any rate up to the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 - and the various possibilities inherent in that structure could be elucidated by reference to events from different periods."^{4a}

To van der Sprenkel, such a claim succeeds only in bringing out the nature of the offence and in making explicit the unstated assumptions upon which it rests. In other words, Weber accepts the old myth of an "unchanging

China" and Bendix condones this.

In its detail, however, Bendix's account of KuT faithfully reflects a great deal of Weber's concern with historical emergence and developing historical process and his paraphrase of the essay seems rather at odds with his brief introductory comments. There emerges, almost by stealth, a dialectically sensitive analytical structure which rests uneasily alongside the assumption of an ahistorical construct of Chinese society and which contrasts strongly with the analytical structure assumed by Yang in his introduction to the 1964 edition of RoC. Moreover, the analysis of KuT offered by Bendix is far less dichotomised into "ideal" and "material" factors.

Where Yang takes Weber's "Sociological Foundations" to be concerned with "material conditions" of Chinese social structure, Bendix divides this section into two: the first subsection dealing with China's early history and a number of enduring characteristic features of Chinese civilisation (including basic religious conceptions) and the second with certain aspects of Chinese society and the Chinese state. Bendix makes no claim that, in either of these sub-sections, Weber was concerned exclusively with non-religious phenomena and his account reflects the considerable attention paid by Weber to religious as well as non-religious phenomena in the Sociological Foundations to KuT. Again, Bendix makes no claim that the two are conceptualised dichotomously as ideal and material factors.

In general, Bendix also attaches far less significance than Parsons or Yang to Weber's purported anti-Marxism

and his account of KuT seems to indicate that the language of Parsons's "Weber thesis" is less authentically Weberian than it might seem. Bendix does not see a Marxian dichotomy of material and ideal factors applied by Weber to China at the relevant stage of development although he certainly discusses Weber's attempts to compare religious and non-religious phenomena in terms of their general propensity for modern capitalistic development. Rather, Bendix reflects Weber's more historically complex concerns with the rationalisation of culture over a lengthy period of China's history, a process within which Confucianism, as the dominant religion, and the Literati, as the dominant status group, exerted an influence upon one another and upon the development of Chinese culture. Similarly, Bendix attempts to clarify Weber's exploration of the complex interactions between religious ideas, practical ethics, and material interests rather than present KuT as some sort of decisive refutation of Marxian materialism or as an attempt to set forth an alternative philosophy of history with the relative weight of "material" and "ideal" factors clearly reversed.

The lack of a clearly articulated analytical structure integral to the text of KuT is again at the root of these different interpretive strategies and the conclusions they produce. In general, commentaries on KuT have reacted to the problems of interpretation in one of two ways, attempting either to derive an analytical structure from an account of the essay's general context or to

concentrate on alleviating the difficulties posed by Weber's style, leaving the overall structure of the essay to reveal itself "en passant".

The first of these interpretive strategies is adopted by van der Sprenkel, Parsons, and Yang. The former grounds his analysis in a particular reading of Weber's use of ideal types, whilst the latter draw upon a richer, substantive account of the essay's general context. Bendix adopts the second interpretive strategy, trying to allow the text's analytical structure to reveal itself in the telling. Unfortunately, for all his fidelity to those parts of the essay which he does encompass, the configurational, causal, and consequential problematics making up the analytical structure of KuT are not sufficiently articulated and disentangled by Bendix. Bendix assembles more of the separate pieces of the puzzle than any other commentator but the overall picture of KuT which he produces can seem rather less than clear overall. Moreover, although the rest of his book contains invaluable discussions of Weber's substantive and methodological work, these are not used as extensively as they might have been as a contextual resource for interpretation of KuT.

Nonetheless, cautious though Bendix may be in attempting to pin down Weber's conclusions, he diverges markedly from Parsons in his account of the consequential problematics of KuT. Bendix concludes his summary of the Sociological Foundations to KuT with the claim that:

"With this survey of the social structure before us, it is readily apparent why a capitalist economy did not develop in China. (Bendix, 1966, p.114)

Thus, for Bendix, the complex of non-religious institutions in China was clearly unfavourable to the development of modern rational capitalism. He notes that:

"Weber also listed a number of conditions that favoured the development of a capitalist economy in China.....In China, however, the factors inherently favourable to a capitalist development did not outweigh the obstacles created by the patrimonial structure of the state and the unbroken tradition of the extended family."
(Bendix,1966,p.116)

According to Bendix, therefore, Weber concluded that the balance of non-religious phenomena in China was clearly unfavourable to the development of modern capitalism. Correspondingly, his summary of Weber's analysis of Chinese religious doctrines, and the contrasts Weber draws between the economic ethics of Confucianism and Puritanism in particular, does not suggest that Weber identified religious factors as the decisive factors for the problem of capitalism. Rather, Bendix suggests that Weber considered Chinese religious doctrines and their economic ethics to have "reinforced" the non-capitalistic propensities of non-religious phenomena.

"These obstacles (those created by non-religious factors, particularly the political and kinship systems - SM) were strongly reinforced by a particular mentality, the Chinese "ethos", which Weber characterised as the status ethic of the literati"
(Bendix,1966,p.116)

Bendix sees the Chinese religions, and Confucianism in particular, as having exerted a profound influence over the development and persistence of this mentality and his presentation of the characteristics features of this mentality and its religious underpinnings is not significantly different from that of Parsons, Yang, or

any other of the commentaries. However, he interprets Weber as seeing the influence of this mentality as a further factor which "contributed" to the non-emergence of modern capitalism without being seen by Weber as decisive.

"It was this difference in the prevailing mentality that contributed to an autonomous capitalist development in the West and the absence of a similar capitalist development in China." (Bendix,1966,p.141)

Other contributors to this earlier tradition of Weberian exegesis, Antoni (1959), for example, or Freund (1968), Hughes (1958), Aron (1967) and Giddens (1971), all make contributions with a bearing upon the interpretation of KuT. In their different ways they presage the more thoroughgoing re-appraisal of the EE series to be found in the more recent studies to be discussed in the next section, by emphasising Weber's concern with the combined influence of religious and non-religious determinants of religious doctrines. However, their discussions vary in the extent to which they apply their general interpretations of Weber to KuT in particular.

Thus, in their general comments on the EE series, Antoni (op.cit. pp.161-168), Hughes (op.cit. pp. 314-23), and Freund (op. cit. pp. 209-218) emphasise that Weber was at least as much concerned with the historical development of the world religions as with their consequences for socio-economic development. More precisely, they emphasise Weber's original analytical structure for the EE series by insisting upon the centrality of the causal problematic for a full understanding of his consequential inferences. In this way, they depart from Parsons , for

example, in seeing Weber's analysis of the non-religious determinants of religious doctrines not so much as a qualification to Weber's effectively idealist thesis on the emergence of capitalism but as a dialectical approach to the development of world history in which non-religious phenomena are given at least equal priority in explaining the longer term rationalisation of cultures. Antoni makes this point with particular force by suggesting that:

" the real problem of these studies is not the way in which the economic ethic determines a given socio-economic order but the way in which the socio-economic order determines the ethic." (Antoni, op.cit. p.165)

At the same time, these writers emphasise Weber's insistence on not substituting a reductionist form of materialism for a reductionist form of idealism. Again, Antoni makes the general point very clearly:

"However, Weber hastens to protest that he does not intend at all to consider religiosity as an ideology or a mere reflection of the material and ideal interests of a class." (Antoni, op.cit. p.166)

Nonetheless, neither Hughes, Freund, nor Antoni make any sustained attempt to apply their general interpretations of Weber to a precise account of KuT in particular. Freund and Hughes mention Weber's claim that Confucianism can be said to have had an inhibiting effect on the development of capitalism, but, whether from reasons of caution or space, or because they simply feel that such a perspective would not reflect Weber's own work, they offer no account of Weber's conclusions on the relative economic influence of religious and non-religious phenomena in KuT itself.

Giddens's general account of Weber, and his relationships to Marx in particular, places a similar emphasis upon Weber's central concern with both religious and non-religious determinants of religious doctrines and the corresponding inappropriateness of assuming that Weber saw one set of phenomena rather than another as decisive for the problem of capitalism. Moreover, he goes a little further than the authors just discussed in offering a relatively precise summary of KuT itself in accordance with his general reading of Weber. His main point is that the essay should not be seen as a demonstration of the decisiveness of religious doctrines, and the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena, for the problem of capitalism:

"...it is misleading to regard Weber's studies of India and China as constituting, in any simple sense, an *ex post facto* "experiment" in which the relevant material factors (i.e. those economic and political conditions conducive to capitalism) are held constant, and the "independent" influence of the content of ideas is analysed. While it is the case that in China, for example, there existed, at particular periods, a number of "material" factors which can be designated as necessary or favourable to the emergence of capitalism, these were connected in a specific combination, different from that pertaining in Europe. There were important differences, then, in both the "material" and "ideal" circumstances characterising the West as compared with the Orient." (Giddens, *op.cit.*, p.178)

However, whilst Giddens interprets the consequential problematics of KuT very differently from Parsons, his exegetical strategy is the same and ultimately creates the same interpretive lacunae. Like Parsons, Giddens ultimately is unable to do little more than identify, accurately enough, some of the pieces of the puzzle posed by KuT and fit them into what he sees as the most appropriate analytical structure. His account

acknowledges Weber's broader concerns with the long-term rationalisation of Chinese culture. However, he gives no clear account of Weber's own analysis of the historical interaction between religious and non-religious phenomena in China, and their combined influence upon the development of both the religious doctrines and the broader non-religious context which together constituted an unfavourable institutional complex for the development of capitalism. As with Hughes, Freund, and Antoni, it is difficult to judge whether this due to considerations of space, or to the complexity and difficulty of KuT itself.

III

Current Interpretations

Since about the end of the 1970's, a considerable amount of Weberian scholarship has been directed towards a general re-appraisal of Weber's sociology in which the original unity of the EE series as a whole, and particularly the SPWR's function as a general introduction, has been assigned a central role. Several authors have argued strongly for a reconstruction of the analytical structure of the EE essays as a basis for a re-interpretation of the Weberian oeuvre as a whole. (Tenbruck, 1980 - see also Molloy, 1980; Marshall, 1980; Fulbrook, 1978) A similar re-interpretation and re-appraisal of Weber has proceeded apace in such work, for example, as that of Collins (1980, 1986, 1986a); Marshall (1982); Turner (1981); Roth and Schluchter (1979); and Schluchter (1981). These writers have emphasised the complex interweaving of religious and non-religious factors in Weber's sociological and historical perspectives and his insistence upon their dialectical influence, wrought over long historical periods, upon the rationalisation of Western and other cultures.

A critique of idealist reductions of the "Weber thesis" has been used by Marshall (1982) as the basis for a fruitful re-examination of even such an apparently familiar text as the PESC. However, there has been no substantial and comprehensively elaborated attempt to extend these exegetical concerns to a re-interpretation of the less familiar and accessible KuT. This is still

the case, despite the appearance of an admirable series of more recent articles on Weber's perspectives on China. These include work by Elvin(1984); Feuerwerker(1984); Hamilton(1984,1985); Hamilton and Cheng(1987); Bergere(1984); Buss(1985); Eisenstadt(1985); and Subramaniam(1987). A major burden of the present thesis, and a justification for the method it adopts, stems from a claim that even this more recent phase in Weberian scholarship reinforces rather than resolves the need for an analysis and re-interpretation of KuT itself. Thus, Mark Elvin (1984) attempts to take a fresh look at KuT from the perspective of a sinological economic historian, a task for which he is singularly well-equipped. Moreover, he makes an attempt to re-examine the text itself even though at times, as with Weber's discussion of the Chinese monetary system which somewhat perplexingly begins the essay, he finds its apparent lack of a clear chronological framework and Weber's confusion on historical data and sources extremely difficult to surmount. (ibid., p.385)

Chapter four of this thesis attempts to resolve some of the confusion surrounding this particularly arcane section of the essay. In the present context, it is more important to note that Elvin still subscribes to a "culturalist" interpretation of KuT, and accuses Weber of failing to appreciate that an explanation of the absence of capitalism from late imperial China must be sought pre-eminently in the "economic conjunctural context." (ibid., p.384). He suggests that:

"late pre-modern China is one of the most interesting tests of Weber's comparative approach to economic history on the basis of systems of values and motivations....In summary, I maintain here that an economic and ecological explanation of China's failure to create her own industrial capitalism is possible, and that it is simpler in its assumptions, more internally consistent, and more amenable to empirical verification than the cultural and ideological analysis offered by Weber." (Elvin, 1984, p.379)

It is not the purpose of this thesis to rebut Elvin's criticisms of Weber's analysis of specific social and economic institutions in China, still less to claim that Weber's attempts to understand the absence of capitalism, or his general vision of Chinese history, is demonstrably more valid than Elvin's. (cf. Elvin, 1973). Rather, it is to try to demonstrate that Elvin is still deploying his sinological expertise against something of a straw man, and that a re-appraisal of the sinological interest of KuT must wait upon a re-interpretation of the essay as a whole.

Two of Elvin's comments are particularly important here. Firstly, the present analysis and re-interpretation of KuT will attempt to demonstrate that, in so far as the "Sociological Foundations" part of KuT does indeed address the "economic conjunctural context" of late pre-modern China, it actually comes to the conclusion, as Elvin does, that it was distinctly unfavourable to the development of capitalism. Secondly, Elvin's frequent comments to the effect that Weber ignores the distinctive pattern of evolution over time of China's social and economic institutions, does Weber a considerable injustice. The historicity of Weber's analytical structure in KuT is certainly very difficult, but not

impossible, to extract and articulate. It may be the case, as Elvin's analysis might imply, that such a labour would be disproportionate to the rewards produced for sinological economic history. However, as an exercise in sociological exegesis, an aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that Elvin's criticisms on these two general points at least are less well-founded than he suggests. From an essentially sociological perspective, albeit one that has a more substantial sinological basis than the earlier sociological exegesis related to KuT, Gary Hamilton has advanced an interesting re-interpretation of certain aspects of Weber's vision of Chinese history (Hamilton: 1984, 1985, 1987). He takes his sociological point of departure from the more general re-appraisal of Weber's work noted above:

"My effort to renew a Weberian perspective is based upon a critical evaluation of Weber's work, following the lead of Roth, Schluchter, and Turner."
(Hamilton, 1984, p. 393)

Hamilton's emphasis nonetheless differs from that of the present thesis in certain crucial respects. All three of his articles referred to above adopt the same basic premiss that the crucial strengths and weaknesses in Weber's discussions of China stem from his analysis of Chinese patrimonialism. The strengths of Hamilton's perspective lie in its refusal to accept any "idealist" or "culturalist" reduction of Weber; in his emphasis upon Weber's analysis of non-religious institutions in general and the Chinese state in particular; and in the rigour with which he examines the relationship between Weber's general concept of patrimonialism and its

application to China in "Economy and Society".

However, one is not entirely convinced by Hamilton's associated claim that:

"...in a short, tightly argued section (of E+S), Weber presented what amounts to a condensed version of his lengthy essay on China." (Hamilton,1984,p.404)

Comments by Weber on the nature of the traditional Chinese state, and its significance for economic development, can indeed be found at many points in his work, including E+S. However, none of these, including the discussions of domination, legitimacy, bureaucracy, and patrimonialism in Economy and Society (Weber,1968.(E+S)) do full justice to Weber's discussion of the relationships between religion and state formation in China. The problem with Hamilton's reliance upon E+S is that this text does not examine as fully as KuT the developmental inter-relationships between Chinese religion and other social institutions, including the patrimonial state. Weber's comments on Chinese patrimonialism in E+S actually constitute something less than what Hamilton calls a "condensed version" of KuT. Chinese patrimonialism is certainly of enormous significance to the analysis undertaken by Weber in KuT but the attention he gives to the historical inter-relationships between religious conceptions and political organisation in the pre-patrimonial period, one outcome of which was the formation of the patrimonial state itself, is not reflected to any great extent in E+S. Similarly, Weber's analysis of Chinese patrimonialism in E+S does not reflect adequately his attempt to analyse the historical development of Chinese religions

themselves. This constitutes a major problematic of the EE series as a whole and hence of KuT. Stimulating though Hamilton's perspective is, it does not amount to a comprehensive analysis of the major analytical problematics addressed by Weber in KuT, and indeed makes no claim to do so. This point will be re-considered in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Eisenstadt's main interest (1985) in KuT lies in the insertion of what he sees as a necessary and fundamental correction into Weber's analysis, in the light of subsequent sinological research. He accepts and acknowledges the present author's own view that KuT should not be seen simply as an essay on the problem of capitalism, but as a study of the long-term rationalisation of Chinese culture. He takes this view one stage further by treating China's economic development as a lower level instance of China's "lack or weakness of transformative capacities". (1985, p.47) but his own interpretation of KuT operates on such a high level of abstraction that the problem of capitalism, and the actual course of China's social and economic history, are virtually lost from view.

Eisenstadt's central point is that Weber made a mistake in attributing this lack of transformative capacity to an absence of transcendental tension within the Confucian tradition. He points out that sinologists such as Metzger (1977) and Schwartz (1975) claim that transcendental tension did exist within Confucianism, through the tendency to judge, and hence even reject, the

existing social order against that of a past golden age. Thus, to explain the lack of transformative capacities in Chinese history, Weber should not concentrate upon Confucianism as he depicts it, but on the political and ideological structures which allowed the Confucian ruling elite to prevent the mobilisation of transformative capacities by oppositional groupings focussed upon heterodox religions, popular rebellions, and secret societies, all of whom had their own blueprints for social change. In fact, for Eisenstadt, Weber's own analysis lays considerable emphasis upon the mechanisms of social control available to the Confucian elite, but Eisenstadt does not elaborate upon the nature of Weber's own perspectives on these particular issues, in the necessary depth attempted in chapters nine and ten below. In general, Eisenstadt, Hamilton, and the other sinologically informed writers noted above, have all contributed towards a partial re-interpretation of KuT from their own particular perspectives. Subramaniam (1987), for example, discusses Weber's analysis of the selective reworking of Confucianism by the intellectual stratum of the Han dynasty in a way which is similar to that suggested in chapter nine below. However, these contributions re-examine and "polish" specific facets of the essay without offering a comprehensive re-interpretation. From their different perspectives of attempting to re-present the unity of Weber's work as a whole, the discussions of KuT to be found in the studies of Turner (1981), Marshall (1982), and Parkin (1982), re-focusses exegetical debate upon the overall analytical

structure of the essay. A closer consideration of their work in particular suggests once again that KuT itself still occupies unresolved and contentious exegetical territory in the more recent re-appraisals of Weber's work.

In "For Weber" (1981), Turner is critical of what he terms:

"the standard interpretation of Weber's comparative sociology... originally developed in the various exegetical works of Talcott Parsons." (Turner, 1981, p.271)

Moreover, he diverges from Parsons particularly clearly in the case of KuT. For Turner, Weber's essay on China was far from demonstrating the decisiveness of religious beliefs for the problem of capitalism. He suggests that, on the contrary, it locates the decisive contrasts with the West in the realm of "military and political questions" (ibid., p.280), and in the structure of the patrimonial state in particular.

"The paradox of patrimonialism is that its success (in terms of its own reproduction) depends on preventing officials from converting their benefices into hereditary rights, but these preventive measures are also the origins of the ineffectiveness and immobility of the administrative apparatus. It was the administrative weakness, not despotic power, of the patrimonial state that stood in the way of capitalist rationality" (ibid., p.283)

This reference to despotic power is made in the context of Turner's discussion of Orientalism. He suggests that Weber, like Marx and many other Western scholars up to the present day, was influenced by an Orientalist discourse originally developed in the eighteenth century. In these terms, all Eastern societies were characterised by contrast with the West as displaying:

"a set of absences, of critical gaps which prevented or moderated the process of modernisation." (ibid.,p.264)

Typically, Orientalism characterises these societies primarily in terms of a political despotism, associated with the absence of private property in land, which inhibited the individual freedom necessary to the development of economic and scientific progressivism. Turner suggests that Weber imported Orientalist assumptions into his own analyses but that the Parsonian interpretation over-emphasises both the idealism and the Orientalism in Weber's own work. According to Turner, this misattribution stems largely from the fact that Parsons:

"exaggerated the importance of religion in general in Weber's comparative sociology" (ibid.,p.280)

Thus, Turner suggests that Parsons offers an idealist interpretation of Weber by seeing differences in religious beliefs as the decisive contrast between East and West and hence decisive for the problem of capitalism. For Turner, this misses the point. Not only was the bulk of each of the EE essays actually concerned with non-religious phenomena, but also:

"politics not religious beliefs provide the major division between East and West in Weber's sociology." (ibid.,p.281)

In addition to this general critique, there are two specific criticisms levelled by Turner at the Parsonian interpretation. Firstly, he suggests that Parsons has a tendency to reify Weber's analysis of the role of religious beliefs in social development by an over-emphasis upon concrete cultural values as central to the Hobbesian problem of order. This leads to what Turner

calls "a gross exaggeration of the importance of religious work ethics in Weber's sociology" (ibid., p.279). He suggests that Weber was less concerned with religious beliefs as such, as a source of concrete cultural values, than with their historical interaction with the interests of their social carriers and their combined influence for the development of both religious and non-religious phenomena.

Secondly, Turner is particularly critical of Parsons's account of the quasi-experimental procedure through which Weber purportedly demonstrated the decisiveness of religious beliefs for the problem of capitalism. Turner notes that this is a position which Parsons maintained in both SSA and SR but that his assumption that Weber held constant the factor of "economic organisation" (Parsons, SR, 1966, p.xxii) is particularly misleading.

"Weber could not hold all other variables constant to examine the role of religious beliefs because the economic and social structures of these various societies differed from each other in a number of important ways." (Turner, op.cit., p.279)

According to Turner, the crucial non-comparability between the socio-economic "structures" is ultimately to be found in the organisation of the patrimonial state in Eastern societies generally, and in China in particular.

"There were a variety of causes - "mostly related to the structure of the state" (Weber, 1951, p.100) - which prevented capitalistic development in China. These causes - the absence of systematic law, autonomous cities, free burghers and free labour markets - are ultimately located in the organisation of a patrimonial state" (Turner, ibid., p.283)

For Turner, therefore, the Parsonian interpretation of Weber overemphasies both the idealism and the Orientalism

of Weber's analysis. Turner sees Weber's work as heavily tinged with Orientalism, but one which locates the "critical gaps" (ibid., p.264) of the East in the sphere of political and state organisation rather than religion. Moreover, Weber is less Orientalist than might be assumed, given that he does not associate feudalism and prebendalism exclusively with the West and the East respectively, but suggests that they can be arranged on a continuum, with both forms of political organisation being present in East and West to varying degrees at different times.

Comparing Turner with Parsons presents us therefore with a marked contrast. Most notably, Turner rejects the net neutrality interpretation of non-religious phenomena in favour of a claim that Weber identified political differences between China and the West as the decisive factor. However, there are similarities between the two in terms of their use of material:ideal dichotomies. Turner identifies "economic and social structures" as the "other variables" to be assessed in comparison with religious beliefs. He does not explicitly employ a clear form of dichotomy between ideal/cultural and material/structural factors though this seems to be implicit, not least in his assumption that if Weber had demonstrated the decisiveness of religious beliefs, this would have been an idealist explanation. In this sense, perhaps, there is more common ground between Turner's interpretation of Weber and that of Parsons than might be supposed, underlying what appears to be virtually a mirror image of the Parsonian interpretation. Some sort

of culture/structure dichotomy seems to be implicit in Turner's account. His underlying equations between non-religious phenomena, social structure, and material factors are not dissimilar to Parsons's.

One further point might be noted from Turner's critique of Parsons. He suggests that Parsons reifies Weber's analysis by assuming that, in so far as religious beliefs influenced the course of economic development in China, they did so directly as it were, by providing concrete value orientations at a particular stage of historical development. Without elaborating the point in sufficient detail, Turner emphasises Weber's own rather different concern to investigate the historical interaction between religious beliefs and non-religious phenomena, especially the material interests of their adherents, and the consequences of this interaction for the historical development of both religious and non-religious phenomena.

Here, as in other parts of his account, Turner accepts the force of Weber's programmatic concern with a dichotomy (M/I 2) between the ideal and material determinants of religious doctrines. If therefore, as Turner suggests, the structure of the Chinese state was the decisive unfavourable factor for the non-development of capitalism in China, the counteractive influence of Chinese religion is likely to have been wrought as much through its influence upon the process of state formation in China as through the provision of a particular "concrete" orientation to economic activity at a later

stage of historical development. Turner himself does not carry through such a reading of KuT to any significant extent, but this point is particularly important for the re-interpretation of KuT.

Marshall's references to KuT in his essay on the Protestant Ethic study, are brief and somewhat curiously at odds with his general comments on Parsons's interpretation of Weber. Although he is quite severely dismissive about what he calls the "Parsonian legacy" (Marshall, 1982, p.157) to subsequent interpretations of Weber, on both methodological and substantive grounds, his own characterisation of KuT is very similar to that of Parsons.

Initially, Marshall follows the sorts of arguments advanced for example by Sahay, Butts, and Cohen⁶ to the effect that Parsons takes Weber's work to conclusions contrary to the latter's own intentions in transforming the "rules of experience" which provided the basis for his sociological and historical generalisations into a general analytical theory which, in effect, closely resembles the laws of the natural sciences.

"It is widely acknowledged that Talcott Parsons's claims to have identified in Weber's work an underlying trend towards developing a systematic theory of social action...cannot be substantiated. Parsons's "convergence thesis", and in particular his "completion" of Weber's "fragmentary ideal-types" into a unified theoretical whole, rests upon his reading into Weber's methodology certain tendencies and an overall direction which simply are not there. Parsons's resultant "General Theory of Action" represents a type of universalistic and organological approach to the study of social reality of which Weber was, in fact, explicitly critical in his methodological essays." (ibid., p.158)

Moreover, in a similar way to the arguments advanced in the first section of the present chapter and those of

Turner. Marshall claims that Parsons's account of the comparative essays leaves open, at the very least, the possibility of the sorts of idealist emanationist readings against which Parsons himself argued. For all Parson's emphatic insistence upon the avoidance of this form of idealism in his programmatic discussion of Weber's sociology of religion, his account of the substantive themes and conclusions of the essays does not carry this programmatic orientation through.

For Marshall, as for Turner, the Parsonian interpretation is one in which Weber's programmatic emphasis upon the "external" determinants of religious doctrines is substantively neglected at the expense of their internal dynamic. When Weber's analysis of the autonomous consequences of religious doctrines is conjoined with an effective neglect of the extent to which the religious doctrines themselves were influenced by non-religious factors in each particular case, the result is a somewhat one-sided rendering of Weber's sociology of religion similar to that noted by Turner. The internal dynamic of religious conceptions becomes, almost by default, the decisive determinant of the processes of rationalisation determining the socio-economic development of the major civilisations. This Parsonian legacy of a religiously determined rationalisation process is, according to Marshall, responsible for the persistence of idealist interpretations of Weber, even in the work of such sophisticated Weberian scholars as Tenbruck and Schluchter.

However, perhaps because of the time and attention which Marshall devotes to the Protestant Ethic study, his reservations about the dangers of constructing an idealist interpretation of Weber are not so carefully or thoroughly applied to his discussion of the later comparative essays. As can be seen from the following quotation, his description of KuT is remarkably similar to that of Parsons:

"In the Religion of China...., Weber discusses the diverse political, technical, material, and social-structural conditions that favoured the development of the Occidental type of capitalism in the Chinese Empire. His conclusion is that, at different points in Chinese history, the country has been better placed with respect to the objective preconditions for modern capitalism than was seventeenth century Europe. Nevertheless it is clear that modern capitalism developed in Europe but not in China, so the question must be posed as to why. Weber's answer is that the major belief-systems in China - Confucianism and Taoism- fostered orientations towards everyday life that were opposed to that represented by the ideal-type of the spirit of modern capitalism." (ibid.,pp. 59-60)

Here, Marshall appears to concur with the view that Weber explained the non-emergence of capitalism in China by reference to the decisive influence exerted by religious beliefs. He also accepts the view that this was demonstrated through a survey of non-religious phenomena which established that China was in fact "better placed" than the West in terms of their favourability for capitalistic development.

Moreover, Marshall's account of KuT also appears to amount to a reversion towards an idealist interpretation based upon in the way that non-religious phenomena are conceptualised. A culture:structure dichotomy enters into his interpretation, here and at other points in the essay. For example, in discussing the relationship between

Marx and Weber Marshall locates their fundamental and persisting differences in their different views on the relative influence of "ideological and infrastructural elements in specific social formations" (ibid., p.143). This retention of a superstructure-infrastructure metaphor reflects his tendency to adopt a vocabulary of objective and subjective conditions as appropriate to discussions of both Marx and Weber when attempting to categorise religious and non-religious phenomena in more general terms.

In this sense Marshall, like other commentators, seems to imply that Weber's rejection of the materialist reduction of religious beliefs to epiphenomenal status also commits him to the retention of a material:ideal dichotomy between religious and non-religious phenomena in general. In fact, as was suggested above, Weber's own distinctions and dichotomies make a case for the relative autonomy of religious from non-religious phenomena without embracing any claim that the two can be dichotomised as ideal and material factors.

The precise sense in which religious doctrines can be regarded as "ideal", or "subjective" or "ideological" factors, in dichotomous opposition to other factors which can be regarded as "material" or "infrastructural" or "objective" is not explicitly addressed by Marshall. As indicated in the characterisation of KuT quoted above, when he refers to "diverse political, technical, material, and social-structural conditions" he uses non-religious phenomena, "material" factors and "social

structure" more or less as equivalents. As has been argued, however, although there is a definite sense in which Weber regarded religious doctrines and economic orientations as ideal factors this does not imply that all non-religious phenomena are to be dichotomously opposed to them as "objective" or "structural" conditions.

A further problem with such a perspective, deriving perhaps from paying insufficient attention to the fact that the EE essays were concerned with much longer periods of time than the PESC, is that it tends to neglect the long-term historical interaction between religious and non-religious phenomena as a result of which both religious and non-religious phenomena came to be favourable to capitalistic development at a particular conjuncture in Western history. An important aspect of Weber's own analysis is concerned with why such an apparently fortuitous combination of religious and non-religious factors should have emerged as a result of long-term processes of social development.

Parkin's account of the "Weber thesis" suggests the ways in which it is possible to be critical of "culturalist" interpretations of Weber whilst still retaining the misleading vocabularies of culture:structure dichotomies and "fortuitous" conjunctural conditions. His account rests squarely upon a form of ideal-culture:material-structure dichotomy which distinguishes between the "normative" and "institutional" preconditions of capitalism. Parkin suggests that at first Weber's comparative essays on religion appear to establish the

thesis that modern rational capitalism emerged only when there appeared a "fortuitous combination" of these two sets of preconditions. (Parkin,1982,p.42). Parkin's distinction between normative/ideal and institutional/material spheres is based primarily upon the sorts of distinctions made by Weber between the spirit and form of modern capitalism. However, where Weber used this distinction to identify discrete elements within a particular institutional sphere, suggesting that economic systems are a complex of both meaning systems and material practices, Parkin tends to apply it to the level of the societal totality and then refer to all non-religious phenomena as structural or institutional or material factors.

In this respect, Parkin does not significantly differ from Parsons, Marshall, or even Turner. However, unlike them, he identifies more inconsistencies and ambiguities in Weber's own discussion of the significance of non-religious phenomena for capitalistic development. He claims that, on the one hand, the EE essays seem to suggest that:

"The material infrastructure of these societies was well suited to capitalistic exploitation, but it was never galvanised into motion by the necessary motivational torch." (ibid.,p.42)

Similarly:

"Weber did not of course suggest that everything on the institutional side was favourable to the emergence of capitalism in the Orient. Some things were not. But the overall balance between positive and negative conditions was weighted towards the positive side. This was precisely similar to the situation in the West." (ibid.,p.66)

Parkin goes on to suggest, however, that despite the ways

in which Weber's comparative procedures have been held up by others as an exemplary demonstration of this thesis, it is not sustained consistently by Weber in the rest of his work

"Parsons, among others, regards Weber's procedure here as an exemplary use of the comparative method. By holding structural factors constant, it was possible to test the independent effect of the religious variable. Naturally, the validity of this procedure depends very much upon the claim that structural factors can be treated as constants. And it is on this crucial point that Weber is at his most maddeningly inconsistent." (ibid., p.66)

Parkin suggests that in other parts of his work, most notably in E+S and GEH, Weber "sets about demolishing this case with a vengeance." (ibid., p.67)

"Many sections of "Economy and Society" and his "General Economic History" are devoted to drawing the sharpest possible contrast between the institutional arrangements of Occident and Orient." (ibid., p.67)

Thus, the Eastern cities never won the legal and political autonomy of those in the West, and this provided no opportunity for the rise of an independent burgher class. Urban land in the East was rarely if ever treated as an alienable commodity. Law and justice were rational only in the West with enforceable guarantees of the rights of contract and exchange and individual liberties protected against arbitrary despotism.

According to Parkin:

"Virtually every institution which falls under Weber's scrutiny is shown to have an entirely different form and function in the East as compared with the West." (ibid., p.67)

This leads Parkin to conclude that, if Weber's assertions on all these matters are correct:

"...it is obviously not possible to test for the separate effect of the religious variable. Structural factors are anything but constants...the only safe conclusion that emerges from all this is that the retardation of capitalism in the Orient was due to a combination of normative and structural impediments. Maybe some of the tortured convolutions of Weber's argument could be put down to an understandable reluctance to accept that such a mountain of labour could produce such a mouse of a conclusion." (ibid., p.68)

In this way, Parkin seems to offer an interpretation opposed to that of both Parsons and Marshall, and similar to that of Turner's. In fact, Turner is less equivocal in his rejection of the "net neutrality" thesis and less inclined to attribute equivocation to Weber himself. The main difference between Parkin and Turner however is that, for the latter, Weber did not espouse this thesis even in the EE essays themselves and, in KuT, explicitly identified political factors as the decisive contrasts between China and the West.

Persisting Controversies and Problems

Two general conclusions can be drawn from these differences in interpretations of the same text. Firstly, and most generally, the diversity testifies to the difficulties posed by the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT in particular. So far as the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena is concerned it is certainly difficult to ascertain the precise nature of Weber's own conclusions. There are abundant references to their unfavourability for capitalistic development just as there are occasional references to favourable non-religious phenomena. However, the next part of this thesis in particular will attempt to demonstrate that "non-idealist" interpretations, such as those offered by Bendix, Turner and Parkin have the weight of textual evidence on their side in so far as Weber's scattered comments about the existence of non-religious factors favourable to capitalistic development do not make up a neutral balance when Weber compares China to the West, still less a favourable balance.

Having said that, it must be mentioned, in fairness to Parsons, for example, that he was fully aware that what all these writers term the "structural" conditions were quite different in China and the West and that, in this sense, they could not be directly equated. However, Parsons still subscribes to the view that, as a general category, non-religious/"structural" factors were

adjudged by Weber to be at least equally favourable to capitalist development in China as they were in the West. The second general conclusion is that these accounts of KuT reinforce the need for a re-interpretation of KuT which separates out Weber's own distinctions between religious and non-religious phenomena from a material:ideal dichotomy between "cultural" and "structural" factors. However, if such problems were temporarily laid aside, the commentaries on KuT would still produce a great deal of disagreement and hence persisting doubt about the precise nature of the conclusions reached by Weber in KuT. For Turner, Weber showed that political factors were the decisive phenomena for the problem of capitalism. Bendix suggests that Weber made no claim for the decisiveness of either religious or non-religious phenomena but that the former reinforced the latter's lack of propensity for modern capitalistic development. For Parkin, Weber may have attempted to establish the decisiveness of religious factors and the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena in the comparative essays themselves, but in much the rest of his work examined and emphasised the unfavourability for capitalism of non-religious phenomena in Eastern societies. For Parsons and Yang, and even in the final analysis Marshall, in KuT itself Weber both essayed and consummated a demonstration of the decisiveness of religious conceptions and the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena.

However, with the possible exceptions of Bendix and Turner, all of these writers have a tendency, in

varying ways and to varying extents, still to assume that Weber regarded all non-religious phenomena as a general category of structural or material conditions dichotomously opposed to the ideal factors of religious doctrines and economic orientations. It has been argued that this adoption of an inappropriate material:ideal dichotomy is a further, extra-textual source of confusion in interpreting KuT. To dichotomise religious and non-religious phenomena in this way tends to obscure one of Weber's own principal concerns: the combined, rather than the relative influence of both sets of phenomena over the long-term course of socio-economic development in different civilizations. The need to retrieve this kind of perspective and analysis from KuT necessitates in itself a comprehensively detailed examination and re-interpretation of the essay.

This point has particular pertinence in the light of Parkin's characteristically waspish comments on Weber's "mouse" of a conclusion that the non-emergence of capitalism in the East was due to a combination of what Parkin calls normative and structural impediments. One problem with this sort of comment is the oversimplification which it introduces into Weber's analysis of institutional inter-relationships over long periods of time and his attempts to discover which particular phenomena influenced which other phenomena at particular historical conjunctures.

This is an interpretive infelicity which can easily be introduced through any attempt to force Weber's

distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena into a culture:structure form of ideal:material dichotomy. Like Parsons's, Parkin's general work on Weber often possesses great strengths in its separate parts, and Parkin has contributed significantly to sociologists' belated recognition of the many similarities between Marx and Weber. However, there are persisting "blind-spots" in the "Weberianism" of both writers.

In the present context, one limitation of Parkin's work can be seen in his interpretation of Weber's explanation of the emergence of capitalism in the West as the product of a "fortuitous combination of spirit and substance" (Parkin, *ibid.*, p.42). In fact, for Weber, the crucial point is not whether the emergence of capitalism can be attributed to the decisive influence of either "ideal" or "material" conditions. Weber is primarily concerned with the reciprocal historical influences between religious and non-religious phenomena rather than the relative influence of two dubiously dichotomised ontological spheres. In these terms, he wants to suggest that religious phenomena cannot simply be regarded as epiphenomenally irrelevant to the problem of capitalism and that religious doctrines were an integral element of the institutional complex which gave rise to a modern capitalist economy.

Even more importantly for Weber, the combination of religious and non-religious institutions which favoured the emergence of modern capitalism in the West was not fortuitous. It might well have been the case that the

unique concatenation of religious and non-religious factors in early modern Europe was a crucial historical contingency leading to the emergence of modern capitalism. However, for Weber, a unique historical concatenation does not have to be the purely fortuitous product of historical accident or chance.

For Weber, the historical situation of early modern Europe was a product of the earlier historical development of Western civilization although this does not imply that the latter had its own inevitably unfolding "eigengestzlichkeit" of a materially or idealistically determined nature. Weber was interested in which particular combinations of religious and non-religious factors had constituted historically adequate causes for the development of both Eastern and Western civilizations up to the point by which, in the middle of the nineteenth century, a modern capitalist economic system had emerged only in the West.

In their tendency to encapsulate Weber's discussion of the historical interaction of religious and non-religious phenomena within an ideal:material dichotomy at a specific historical conjuncture, both Parkin and Parsons, like virtually all of the commentators on KuT, tend to lose sight of Weber's more fundamentally dialectical perspective on institutional inter-relationships over long periods of time. Partly because Weber's studies of the influence of religious traditions over long periods of civilizational development was not completed, as he originally intended, with an account of Catholic and

Orthodox Christianity, his long-term dialectical perspective is more apparent in the studies of Ancient Judaism, Confucianism and Taoism, and Hinduism and Buddhism. These studies, unlike the historically truncated PESC are specifically focussed on the long-term developmental dynamics of different civilizational complexes.

For all these reasons, a detailed re-examination of KuT is long overdue. One might even claim that it has yet to be done! Moreover, this must inevitably involve a closely detailed "deconstruction" of the text if it is to be re-interpreted with sufficient conviction to resolve some of the disagreement and diversity of current interpretation and, much more importantly, illuminate the more precise workings of Weber's sociological analysis of the historical problem of capitalism. The next two parts of this thesis attempt this necessarily rather detailed deconstruction of KuT itself, examining each chapter in detail and adopting what seems to be the most appropriate interpretive strategy for each, in terms of the problems posed by its sociological or sinological context. The final part of the thesis then attempts to re-construct the detailed substance of KuT in relation to the analytical structure and the associated problematics identified in chapters two and three.

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CHAPTER FOUR

MONEY ECONOMY AND THE MONETARY SYSTEM

I

Introduction

"The Religion of China" begins with a section entitled "On Chinese Money" (KuT " Geldwesen " p.276) This deceptively simple heading belies both the wealth of detail Weber crams into it and the significance of the major analytical points it raises. Its labyrinthine complexity means that much of the secondary literature skates over it very lightly. Yang, goes a little further and points out, firstly, some of the reasons why Weber placed this section right at the beginning of the analysis.

"Weber began the study with the subject of money, as he fully recognised the vital role of money in his economic sociology: money extends the area of economic exchange, facilitates the acquisition and accumulation of wealth, and provides a common denominator of economic value to measure the relative economic significance of hetero-geneous goods and services thus making it possible to determine profit or loss in budget operations."¹ (Yang,p.xx)

Yang also attempts to identify the main analytical points made in this section. Weber felt that China had failed to establish any effective monetary system and had therefore been unable to benefit from the advantages noted above. According to Yang, Weber saw this both as a sign of China's lack of capitalistic development and an obstacle to any further such development. Moreover, although the silver supply had increased since the seventeenth century and might

have stimulated capitalistic development this did not in fact happen.

Yang's comments are helpful but need to be supplemented fully if one is to appreciate the significance of this section for the rest of Weber's analysis, particularly its bearing upon the analytical structure of KuT as a whole. As will eventually be seen, the Chinese monetary system was really the only one of the major non-religious institutions which Weber concluded was relatively neutral in its implications for capitalist development, but Yang seems to miss this point. However, as occurs over and over again in the Sociological foundations to KuT, Weber's detailed analysis of a particular institutional sphere contributes far more to his discussion of the problem of capitalism than a comparative "inventory" of the capitalistic propensities of each particular sphere.

The neglect of this section of KuT in the commentaries stems of course from the amount of time needed to unravel Weber's analysis. It has no real semblance of a clear structure, references to source material are vague, the correspondence between text and footnotes is less than perfect, and Weber assumes a knowledge on the reader's part of both economic theory and minutiae of economic history in China and elsewhere. Moreover, Weber places his reader in a characteristic double bind. Without a previous background knowledge of Chinese economic history it is difficult to discern the analytical points he wants to make. At the same time, without an appreciation of the overall structure, it is difficult to understand the significance of the detailed historical allusions and references with which Weber attempts

to substantiate and clarify his analysis. However the efforts required to decipher this section of the text bring a rich reward.

A significant testimony to the opacity of this particular section, undoubtedly the best contender for sheer unintelligibility in the very strong field provided by the rest of the text, is provided by Elvin's most recent attempt to reconsider Weber's analysis of China. Despite bringing his own resources as an economic historian and sinologist to bear upon this particular part of the text, he refers to it as:

"the most confusing aspect of his treatment of our subject" (Elvin, 1984, p.385)

Elvin suggests that Weber was unable to make his mind up about the extent to which the pre-modern Chinese economy was monetized, and he takes Weber to task for creating the erroneous impression that for the last thousand years or so China was the scene of extensive barter exchange with frequent reversion to a natural economy and the use of money substitutes. Elvin claims that the level of monetization was relatively low only before this period, and that Weber's account is particularly confusing because he seems to be aware of an increasing drift towards money economy in the later imperial period, the use of paper money and bills of exchange, in the mediaeval period, and the influx of New World silver after the late sixteenth century. Elvin concludes that:

"A basic source of confusion here is the absence of a

"A basic source of confusion here is the absence of a chronological framework for Chinese economic history in which these observations (all of them true for some part of China at some time) can find their proper place". (ibid., p.385).

One can but sympathise with Elvin. Hence, the following discussion attempts to organise Weber's analysis as clearly as possible, and to provide the chronological framework for which he asks. In the course of this attempt it should become clear that Weber does aspire to introduce a sense of historicity into his comments and that he was indeed aware of a strengthening of China's monetary system and modern economy into modern times.

Thus, this section of this chapter presents a general summary of the main analytical points emerging from Weber's discussion of monetary history. Section II re-organises and articulates as clearly as possible Weber's analysis of the fundamental obstacles to monetary stability which he felt persisted throughout virtually the whole of China's history. Section III attempts to validate and substantiate this reorganisation by following through Weber's own chronological and narrative account as closely as possible, although a considerable amount of interpretation, restructuring, and interpolation of extra-textual material is essential if this account is to be made fully accessible.

Initially, it is possible to identify five main points around which Weber's account of China's monetary history is organised and which contribute most to the analytical structure running through the essay. Firstly, Weber claims that, despite a number of factors favourable to it, a money economy remained relatively under-developed in China into modern times.² He is concerned here with the more general

concept of "money economy" rather than the more specific "monetary system". That is to say, productive activity was not organised and co-ordinated through national markets integrated by pricing mechanisms. Goods and services were not exclusively, or even primarily obtained and exchanged through an interlocking series of monetary transactions. Weber suggests that this under-development of money economy was associated with the preponderance of agrarian production. In so far as productive activity was geared towards direct local consumption, economic exchange was not sufficiently widespread to have constituted a money economy.

Weber claims that certain factors had in fact been favourable to the development of a money economy: the early establishment of large walled cities as the focal points for an inland trade indispensable for providing the needs of large areas; and a taxation policy which favoured urban residents (RoC.p.3). These are factors which might have stimulated the division of labour and the institutions of exchange necessary for increased production for wider markets. However, according to Weber, despite these factors the money economy was:

"until modern times, scarcely as well developed

as it was in Ptolemaic Egypt" (Roc.p.3.)

Weber's second main point is the claim that China's monetary system provides a clear indication of the under-developed state of the money economy. It is clear from the footnotes here, and from the positions taken elsewhere in the section on money, that Weber has in mind a more modern monetary system which developed from about the 16th century. Its distinguishing feature was the vital monetary role played

by private bankers.⁴ They issued and exchanged currency which was far more reliable and acceptable, particularly in wholesale trade, than any issued by central governments. However it was modern only by contrast with what had gone before and must clearly be regarded as still less developed than that of pre-industrial Europe.

Apart from the absence of strong, regulating, central government, Weber takes the under-developed state of the monetary system to be essentially a matter of deficiencies in the means of exchange. Chinese currency, according to Weber, retained many "primitive" features. In the modern period there were two main forms of currency, each operating at rather different levels of the economy. There was the copper coinage, minted by the state, which operated as the currency of everyday trade. This provided the means for small-scale transactions and part-payments of taxes. Alongside this, wholesale trade operated on the basis of silver bullion and issued its own bills of exchange and paper certificates against deposits of silver. Each form of currency had its own particular deficiencies, and unstable exchange rates between copper coinage and silver bullion added to these. The deficiencies of Chinese currency are elaborated upon later in this chapter, but one can note, for example, that the copper coinage was cumbersome for large transactions; manipulated by the state for its own profit; subject to large variations in its intrinsic metallic content; and liable to severe short-term fluctuations in supply. Silver bullion facilitated trade more effectively but was subject to time-consuming tests for weight and fineness, and to regional variations in the unit of account.

Thirdly, Weber suggests that, for all its deficiencies, the monetary system that began to develop in the sixteenth century did "allow both a stronger development of the money economy and a more stable system of state finance. However, it did not appear to stimulate modern capitalistic development to any tangible extent. This is even more puzzling because, in this period, China experienced a rapid population increase which also appears neither to have stimulated, nor been stimulated by, capitalist development.

Weber implies that even in its modern phase the monetary system remained more an arena for the speculative profiteering of officials and merchants than a vital contribution towards a developing, rational money economy. It afforded considerable opportunities for personal enrichment but did not in itself stimulate modern, rational, capitalistic enterprise. In suggesting that the modern strengthening of the money economy and the monetary system accompanied an increase in economic traditionalism rather than its "shattering" (p.12), Weber suggests that the relatively more sophisticated monetary system provided yet more scope for the traditional, non-rational types of capitalistic acquisition.

Weber's fourth main point is that the under-developed state of the monetary system, particularly the weakness of central government as a provider and regulator of reliable currency, was a "product of disintegration" (p.3). Up to the 16th century, China had experienced a virtually endemic shortage of currency. The copper currency had been the only metallic coinage to achieve relatively lasting and widespread

acceptability but had almost always been deficient in terms of quantity and quality. Supplies of precious metals had never been large enough to supplement the copper coinage with one based on gold and silver. From about the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, central governments had drawn upon relatively advanced techniques of paper-making and printing in attempts to augment the metallic coinage with paper money. However, continued over-issue had produced inflation and devaluation and the state's characteristic reaction had been to repudiate its own paper money. This, together with other policies such as debasing the coinage and failing to prevent counterfeiting, had persistently undermined general confidence in governments' monetary operations.

These were the conditions of disintegration which Weber suggests prevailed when, in the 16th century, the currency shortage was alleviated somewhat for reasons only loosely connected with governmental monetary policies. Increased trade with the West brought an influx of precious metals, especially silver, from the newly discovered and exploited regions of Central and South America. This allowed for a considerable strengthening of the monetary system. Increased supplies of silver and demand for means of exchange, particularly in wholesale trade, stimulated the private banking system. Bankers' guilds not only issued bills of exchange, but also enforced payment of commercial debts in bank money. Moreover, the lack of confidence in governmental provision and regulation of currency helped to ensure that control of this more sophisticated monetary system remained in private rather than public hands.

Weber's fifth point is closely related to the fourth but

is concerned more with the long term historical dimension of his analysis. He suggests that, throughout the imperial period, the underlying weaknesses of the Chinese monetary system were produced by a combination of natural, technological, and social factors. China had only limited natural resources of currency metals, especially precious metals, and techniques of mining and minting remained at a primitive level. This combination of natural and technological factors kept the output of currency metals and metallic coinage very low.

However, technology cannot be considered independently of social factors. According to Weber, one of the reasons why techniques remained at the primitive level was a sort of general traditionalism inherent in the political, economic and ideological structure of China. This general traditionalism was also at the root of a series of monetary policies, concerned with more general matters than the mining and minting industries. The failure of these policies was yet another factor contributing to the underdevelopment of the monetary system. Thus, traditionalism not only helped to create a permanent currency shortage through its influence on mining and minting, it also thwarted the various policies which sought to eradicate this shortage. In relation to China's monetary history, Weber uses concepts of traditionalism to refer primarily to the state's pursuit of short-term financial gain at the cost of monetary stability; the typical aspirations of a patrimonial state to exert political dominance in excess of administrative capacities; and the forced reliance upon a stratum of officials able to

pursue its own interests in defiance of, and sometimes in collusion with, the agencies of central government.

Fundamental and Persisting Problems

Fundamental to Weber's analysis is his attempt to lay bare the roots of the perennial currency shortage and currency crises which undermined China's monetary system throughout the Imperial period. This elaborates upon the final point made in the preceding section and may be summarised thus. Natural, technological and social factors combined to produce a low-quantity, low-quality output of both currency metals and metallic currency. These deficiencies were closely related to the social organisation of mining and minting. Supplies of metallic currency were not only low but also subject to severe short term fluctuations. In turn, this produced severe fluctuations in general price levels, generated and sustained economic uncertainty, and seriously inhibited attempts to assess and collect taxes in metallic currency. Examples are culled from various periods but the analysis is not ahistorical. There is a clear chronological dimension within which Weber aims to identify recurring aspects of Chinese history.

A fundamental, and persistent, weakness of the monetary system was the inadequate supply of currency metal. This could be explained partly by the mining techniques employed, which "remained on a completely primitive level" (RoC, p.6). However, Weber suggests that even with existing techniques output could have been higher:

"As late as the seventeenth century the mines were reported as poorly exploited from a technical standpoint". (RoC,p.6)

The main reason for this was the "general traditionalism inherent in the political, economic, and ideological structure", (Roc, p.6.). The suppression or closure of the mines for geomantic reasons was one example of "ideological traditionalism" but Weber attaches more significance to the traditionalistic social organisation of the mining industry.⁵

Apart from occasional periods of total state control, the mines were operated partly by public management, partly by private operators, and there was always a close association between mining, central government, and the free-booting activities of local officials. This produced a discrepancy between prices and costs which Weber saw as sufficient explanation for the mines' low output. Labour costs, related to primitive techniques, were very high, and this affected private operators as well as the state's corvées.⁶ However, Weber pays particular attention to the costs incurred by the royalties which private owners had to pay to local officials. The Kwantung silver mines paid a royalty of from 20 to 33 and a third percent in the mid-nineteenth century. The gold mines of Yunnan, allocated in small fields to master craftsmen, "each paid up to 40% royalties according to output" (Roc,p.6). These high costs were offset only by a low price paid by the state. It monopolised the purchase of output from the mines and sold anything surplus to requirements at a profit. Weber also seems to suggest that low profitability and general uncertainty removed incentives to develop more sophisticated

mining techniques.

Low output from the mines had two underlying consequences for Chinese currency. It was the main factor underlying China's inability to produce precious metals in sufficient quantity for them to be a viable basis for coinage; and it meant that supplies of copper, which came to play this role, were generally inadequate. Following Weber's account, the supply of precious metals may be considered first. Some gold coins had been produced in the early Han period (c. 100 B.C.) because China's natural resources of gold could be exploited through the relatively simple technical operation of panning. Silver, by contrast, could only be obtained through full-scale mining and this explains why it only became significant as a currency metal at a later period.⁷

However, both gold and silver remained very scarce until about the 16th century A.D. as neither trade nor conquest provided a permanent compensation for the deficiencies of the mines. "Tartar booty gold" (p.4) augmented supplies from time to time but was rapidly dissipated, and conquest made a really significant contribution only during the period when China controlled silver deposits in parts of South East Asia.⁸ Trade with Rome increased supplies during the Han period, and the Mongol period saw an influx of silver in return for silk, especially during the thirteenth century.⁹ It was only from about the sixteenth century onwards that trade with the West produced enough silver to stimulate a really significant improvement in the Chinese monetary system. It allowed the development of the modern monetary system.

This long enduring shortage of precious metals necessitated reliance upon the semi-precious copper as the basis of metallic coinage. Some of the early Chinese emperors experimented with gold and silver coins but for mostly the Chinese mints produced only copper coins.¹⁰ However, the effects of low output from the mines were also felt here and supplies of copper regularly failed to satisfy demand from the mints.

The consequent shortage of copper coins was further exacerbated by minting conditions which were also influenced by the traditionalistic social organisation apparent in the mining industry. The inherent traditionalism of the Chinese mints produced the same unfavourable combination of high costs and low output, and Weber identifies three specific factors responsible for raising the costs of minting. There were the high costs of transporting copper to the mints; the high production costs associated with primitive manufacturing techniques; and the large profits claimed by the state-owned mints.¹¹

Weber dwells a little on this last factor which relates to an interesting and significant difference between mining and minting. The state pursued a monopolistic policy much more consistently in minting than in mining and only relinquished direct control over minting operations in conditions of the direst extremity. Its minting profit, which Weber claims to be "nominally 25%" (p.5) was presumably the difference between the intrinsic value of its coins i.e. the market value of the metals contained within them, and the face value at which they were issued by the government. This

"exorbitant minting profit" explains why the mines were characterised by high costs together with high prices paid, albeit indirectly, to the state. Such opportunities for profit encouraged successive debasements of the coinage, contributing further to the weakening of Chinese currency. Together with the more technical aspects of minting, it ensured that Chinese coins were deficient in quality as well as quantity. Weber tells us that Chinese coins were "allegedly made as early as the twelfth century B.C. (but probably acutally only in the ninth)" and that they were first inscribed about 200 B.C. (RoC,p.4).

However, despite these impressively early beginnings Chinese coining techniques never developed beyond the most rudimentary levels. Because they were cast rather than stamped, the coins could easily be imitated, melted down and diluted with baser metals.¹² The high profits gleaned by the monopolised mints made such counterfeiting highly lucrative. The net result was wide variation in the intrinsic content of the coins. Weber suggests that this variation was greater than that of European coins "up to the seventeenth century". English crowns, for example, varied in weight up to 10% whilst the copper content of samples of Chinese coins from the seventh to the eleventh centuries varied up to 100%.¹³

Weber goes on to suggest that the relationship between minting and mining was a crucial factor underlying the persistent underdevelopment of the monetary system. Supplies of copper were not only low but constantly fluctuating. When copper was particularly scarce, as happened for example when political unrest or invasion casued the mines to be closed or lost altogether, its price would rise. The costs of minting

coins would rise, fewer coins would be produced and the currency shortage would become even more acute. At the same time, the increased price of copper, and the state's insistence on maintaining minting profits, together would ensure an increase in the mint price of copper coins. This meant that when copper coinage was in short supply its intrinsic metal content, and hence its "real value", was likely to have been decreased. The inevitable result was a rise in general price levels as fewer coins, of diminished intrinsic value, were available for the purchase of roughly the same amount of goods. Conversely, an increase in the quantity of coins, which might happen for example when a resumption of peace allowed copper armaments and the like to be reconverted to monetary use, could produce equally rapid falls in general price levels.¹⁴

There was thus a vital nexus linking supplies of currency metal, the quantity of coinage in the economy, and general price levels. It was at the heart of a monetary crisis which persisted throughout most of China's history. Although it was more critical in the north than in the south, the former being more liable to the disruptive consequences of warfare, political unrest, and enemy invasion, it pervaded the whole of the Chinese economy. Fluctuations in general prices reacted back upon the copper coinage, causing variations and instability in its purchasing power and detracting from its utility as a standard of value in trade and exchange. In addition to these generally destabilising consequences, it inhibited the development of a rational system of state finance and budgeting. According to Weber,

price fluctuations "regularly doomed to failure" attempts made by the state to assess and collect taxes in money rather than kind. The repeated need to fall back on taxation in kind had "natural stereotyping ramifications for the economy" (RoC, p.9)

Thus, China's pre-modern monetary system was marked by persistent deficiencies in the means of exchange. In contrast to Europe, there was no gold or silver coinage integrated through a bi-metallic standard. Precious metals were used, but only to a limited extent, for trade, payment of taxes, official salaries and other government expenses. Apart from early and isolated experiments with gold and silver coins, the copper coinage was the only one to achieve lasting and widespread acceptability. What coins there were, were inadequate in both quantity and quality. At the root of all this was a chronic shortage of currency metals exacerbated by traditionalism in the mining and minting industries.

Even this combination of factors need not have proved quite so ruinous had it not been for the state's other monetary policies. The invention of paper money well in advance of the West, for example, might have alleviated the currency shortage and currency crises. Unfortunately, most of the state's monetary policies, including its paper issues, simply made things worse.

The remainder of Weber's account is directed, in part at least, to illustrating the ineffectiveness of these policies. It attempts to fill out this broad analytical framework with a series of illustrations and examples. This can be organised, without too much contrivance, into a fairly conventional chronological framework.

III

Historical Development

The Early Imperial Period (220 B.C. - 220 A.D.).

In conventional dynastic terms, this covers the period of China's first unifier and Emperor, Shih Huang Ti, (221 - 206 B.C.); the Former Han dynasty, (206 B.C. - 8 A.D.); Wang Mang's usurpation, (Hsin dynasty, 8 - 23 A.D.); and the Later Han dynasty (25 - 220 A.D.). Weber's references seem designed simultaneously to illustrate salient features of this period and general aspects of the monetary system which persisted into modern times. According to Weber, Shih Huang Ti himself made a vain attempt to rationalise China's currency by minting only gold and copper coins ("ch'ien and i", p.4) and proscribing all other means of exchange.

Shortly after these unavailing attempts, Wen Ti ("175 B.C.", p.7) was the first Emperor to tackle the currency problem through the opposite strategy of decontrol, allowing private citizens to mint money according to set standards. His attempts resulted, "naturally" (p.7), in complete monetary muddle. Wen Ti's successor, Wu Ti, reverted to the more conventional policy and sought to restore the minting monopoly. He succeeded in this and, at the end of the second century B.C., introduced a silver coinage for the first time in China's history. He was also able to make some improvements in minting techniques and produce a more durable, hard-rimmed coin. This raised the prestige of state coins but Wu Ti's reforms were eventually undermined. Not

only could his coins still be imitated with little difficulty but he was also forced to finance warfare against the Hsiung Nu through issuing credit currency of white deer skin.

50 or 60 years later, the basic currency shortage was still unsolved. Under the reign of Yuan Ti (about 40 B.C.), the scarcity of minting metal was as marked as ever, due this time, Weber suggests, to political unrest. Copper was extremely expensive and the coinage stock of the entire country, from 48 to 30 B.C., is estimated to have been as low as 730,000 Yuan, almost half of which was not in circulation but was held by the state.¹⁵ Shortly afterwards, the usurper Wang Mang experimented with a scale using 28 different coins of gold, silver and copper. In order to solve the shortage of minting metal he tried to integrate these coins with non-metallic currency such as tortoise shells and sea shells but his experiments failed. Weber suggests that coins of gold and silver had been used only occasionally up to the time of Wang Mang and that, since then, there had been no recorded governmental restoration of a gold and silver coinage.

Weber's comments on this period seem to demonstrate the chronic shortage of currency metals, the consequent shortage of metallic currency and the desperate, vacillating strategies pioneered by the early emperors. In this context, too, belong Weber's remarks on the continued survival of "primitive" non-metallic currencies. He suggests that not only shells, both tortoise and sea, but also pearls, precious stones, tin, and silk functioned in many periods as bearers of monetary function. He also claims that:

"as late as 1578, tributes in shell money still issued from Yunnan (a mining province!)"¹⁶

However, a further problem illustrated mainly with reference to this period, though taken to be persisting into modern times, was the state's ineffectiveness in the face of widespread counterfeiting. The general conditions stimulating and facilitating counterfeiting have already been identified, but Weber's comments on the actions of Wen Ti and Wu Ti illustrate the traditionalistic social forces causing reforms in this area to miscarry. A crucial role was played by the local officials who were likely either to tolerate the activities of private coiners (for a percentage) or to defy the state monopoly with minting operations of their own. The state persistently found itself unable either to provide adequate supplies of coins itself or, because of the entrenched resistance of its own provincial officials, to enforce the minting monopoly.

As a result, central governments vacillated between the two policies pioneered by the early emperors. They tended either, like Wen Ti, to allow private coining under license, or, like, Wu Ti, to pursue an often ineffective minting monopoly. Both strategies were fatally impeded, because the traditional patrimonial state was unable either to control its own officials or to convert its low supplies of metal into adequate, reasonably priced supplies of coins.

The Middle Ages of the Monetary System (3rd. to 9th. Centuries A.D.)

This period overlaps with what is sometimes referred to as the middle age of Chinese history. In Weber's account, it encompasses the period of fragmentation and disunity from the end of the Han dynasty until the sixth century and the "renaissance" of Chinese culture during the Sui (581 - 618) and the T'ang dynasties (618 - 907). Weber's account assumes that the problems of the earlier period all continued into this one and he turns his attention to a series of policies which affected, and were affected by, the currency shortage and currency crises. He notes, too, the implications of historical events specific to this period, such as the expansion of Buddhism and popular Taoism.

Weber attaches considerable importance to what he refers to as price policy. This was directed to the problems caused by alternating cycles of rise and fall in general price levels caused by fluctuations in the supply of coinage. On the one hand, governments sought to stimulate the economy by increasing production from the mints or even allowing private concerns to mint coins. Alternately, and sometimes as a direct reaction to the inflationary consequences of overproduction, the state tried to curb inflation through periodic closure of the mints. Weber claimed that this happened, for example, in 689, "according to Ma Tuan-Lin" (RoC, p.255,f.15)*

Trading policy, too, was intimately connected with currency considerations. It was feared that the absence of restrictions on imports would drain the economy of vital means of exchange and that a deluge of foreign money would

result if exports were free from restraint. These sorts of fears led, for example, to restrictions being placed on the export of grain to Japan in 683 and to a long tradition of prohibitions and restrictions on foreign trade. Trade with Japan, which also used copper money, was felt to be particularly dangerous.

A further range of policies sought to prevent the diversion of copper from monetary into other artistic, religious and industrial uses. Weber felt that such non-monetary use of copper was particularly significant because it meant that even in periods of relative peace and prosperity supplies of copper would continue to fluctuate and be generally unreliable. In this period, the rise and consolidation of Buddhism and popular Taoism saw a diversion of copper into the manufacture of statues, vases, and other religious artefacts. Weber goes so far as to suggest that a co-determining factor in the periodic religious persecutions and looting of the monasteries was the need to check such diversionary uses of copper. The state also tried to impose tariffs on copper goods and to monopolize the manufacture, first of goods made from bronze and copper, and then of all metal goods. The tariffs were first imposed in 780 and all the dates of Weber's references to the attempted monopolies on metal goods come from around the eighth and ninth centuries.

Further complications came from the reactions of the Chinese people to the vagaries of the copper currency. As a defence against the short-term fluctuations and the longer-term devaluation of the copper coins, they resorted in

considerable numbers to the melting down of coinage and the hoarding of copper.¹⁹ Similarly, officials and others able to accumulate wealth in cash were likely to hoard stocks of copper coin and goods rather than releasing them for circulation.²⁰ These activities led the state to pursue even more vigorously its restriction on copper holdings; to define maximal money holdings; and to levy high taxes on money wealth during periods of money shortage.²¹

However, none of these policies provided a satisfactory solution to the currency problem and again Weber relates this to the state's traditionalistic commitment to exacting exorbitant profits from monopolies and its need to rely upon self-interested, relatively autonomous officials. Remedies were suggested that might have proved effective but these tended to be ignored. Such was the fate of an official memorandum from Schitong (sic) province recommending that the state renounced its profits from minting and from the metal goods upon which it was able to impose a high, monopolistic price.²² The latter course, it was argued, would allow metal goods to be bought at a reasonable price and so prevent the need for people to use copper for the private, illegal manufacture of household and religious goods.

All these policies aimed to increase, or at least maintain and stabilise, the supplies of currency metal and coinage, but all were unsuccessful in the long run. During these "middle ages", and indeed throughout China's history, the quantity and quality of copper coinage continued to be inadequate and to be punctuated by inflationary periods of over-supply. However, two other policies were available for tackling the currency problem; the use of other non-precious

metals as a basis for coinage and the use of paper money.

Weber mentions the spasmodic monetary use of iron but does not elaborate upon it beyond his remark that,

"The situation was not improved by recurrent attempts to change to iron money which was used for a time along with copper." (RoC, p.9)

However, he does comment at some length on the ultimately unsuccessful attempts to stabilise the means of circulation through the issue of paper money and this takes him into the next period of China's monetary history. Unfortunately, Weber's comments on paper money are particularly opaque even by the standards established in the rest of the text. The analytical aspects are again interwoven with the chronological narrative; there are a number of factually misleading footnotes which appear to be out of phase with the text; the structure is wildly disorganised; and Weber's dates tend to be vague, inaccurate and internally inconsistent. Moreover, even more than is usually the case, Weber's account assumes a background knowledge of the history of paper money in China, including the paper-making and printing industries. Thus, the following section is prefaced with a brief outline of the historical background without which Weber's comments are barely intelligible. This preface is based upon the work of modern historians and sinologists and attempts only to present a non-controversial synopsis. It could be developed into a point by point critique of Weber's account but, in general, he is wrong on matters of detail rather than overall perspective. The main purpose of the following section is to make Weber's own analysis easier to appreciate.

The Age of Paper Money (907 - c. 1550)

This period perhaps should be referred to as the period of government paper money, as various bills of exchange and other credit instruments continued to be issued and widely used within the private commercial sector. Weber's dates are a little uncertain but, in so far as he aims to deal with the period between the first and the final issues of state paper money, the dates suggested here are as close as they can be to what seems to be the spirit of Weber's account. They encompass the period of fragmentation and disunity usually known as the period of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907 - - c.960); the reunification under the Sung dynasty (960 - - 1126); the loss of North China to the Jurchen "barbarians" who established the Chin dynasty (Chin, c.1120 - 1234; Southern Sung, (1127 - 1279)²³; and the further reunification under the Yuan dynasty established by the Mongols (1279 - - 1368). It also includes part of the Ming period, from the establishment of the dynasty in 1368 to about the beginning of the sixteenth century.²⁴

The technical prerequisites of paper money were the invention of paper and the development of printing, in both of which China was well in advance of the West.²⁵ Chinese historians take 105 A.D. as the traditional date for the invention of paper, though archaeological evidence suggests it may have been in use before that date.²⁶ The origins of printing can be traced back even earlier, in a sense, to the seals of the early emperors and rulers. These were cut in relief and mirror fashion, so producing an image in wax which could be read directly, the correct way round. In the later Han period, around 175 A.D., the Confucian classics were

engraved on some 50 stone tablets kept in the capital, from which scholars were encouraged to take copies on silk or paper through a sort of brass-rubbing process. However, these tablets were not cut in relief and so produced only an inverted image when transferred to another medium. Printing proper developed only when the earlier principle associated with the Imperial seals, of cutting a mirror image in relief, was extended to wood - cut blocks as a basis for printing large numbers of directly readable copies.

Subsequent developments in printing went hand in hand with general cultural progress, especially during the Han and T'ang dynasties when there was increasing demand for printed copies of state documents, philosophical texts, and religious prayers, chants, and charms. Although it is impossible to date developments precisely, printing had undoubtedly been used fairly widely shortly before paper money began to appear in the eighth and ninth centuries.²⁷

Paper money, in a sort of embryonically modern form, was first issued by a Chinese government in 1022.²⁸ However, such precision is rather dubious, as various quasi - or proto - paper currencies had been used for several purposes before that date. The immediate precursors of government - issued paper money were the various forms of certification issued privately and by governments against cash deposits. Although "Food tickets" were issued by the T'ang government to its divisional militia, the first certificates issued by the state against cash deposits were probably the picturesquely named "flying cash" issued under the T'ang in the eighth century. In order to avoid the transfer of inconveniently

large sums, merchants were invited to deposit cash with the treasury at the capital. They were given, in return, a certificate entitling them to draw an equivalent sum when the certificate was later presented at a provincial treasury. This system persisted for some time but was subject to abuse by the ever - predatory treasury officials who would illegally deduct 20 cash from every string of a thousand. The "flying cash" was eventually modified into "money of convenience" in 970 under the Sung. It was ordered that certificates should be issued against cash the same day and that payment at the provincial treasuries should be equally prompt.²⁹

At about the same time as the flying cash originated, similar initiatives were being taken by private enterprise. In a way which found later parallels in Western history, gold - smiths, silver - smiths, and the more eclectic "deposit - shops," issued notes against deposits of gold, silver, and copper cash. A small fee was charged and the issuing institution would redeem the notes on demand from the original depositor. In the course of time, such paper instruments came to be used much like money, i.e. they would be acceptable, and transferable, in the markets frequented by merchants and wholesalers. As Weber suggests:

"The bank issues at first were obviously of the quality of those certificates by means of which wholesale trade usually guards itself against currency muddles. Later they became essentially a means of exchange for facilitating interlocal remittances." (RoC, p.9)

Paper money proper developed out of this ninth and tenth century background as a response to specific circumstances in the modern province of Szechwan.³⁰ The state of Shu had been one of the Ten kingdoms in the period of

disunity from 907 to 960 and had developed a system of iron coinage. After the Sung reunification, the government failed in its attempts to incorporate Shu within a uniform system of copper coinage and its inhabitants were left with their unwieldy and low - value iron coins. During the later part of the tenth century, an enterprising group of sixteen merchant houses in Shu sought to alleviate the problems this caused, especially for wholesale trade, by issuing notes against cash deposits. For the usual considerations, their activities were given official recognition, and the costs of production and payola were borne by a profit of 3% deducted from the value of the notes when they were redeemed for cash.

However, this "gang of sixteen" was quick to spot better opportunities for gain than those offered by its modest charge of 3%. They printed notes in excess of cash deposits and used these to buy up stocks of agricultural produce and to engage in other speculative ventures. Their incaution produced spasmodic runs on their reserves and ultimately riots, which were only quelled when, under official pressure, the notes were redeemed, albeit at less than face value. Although the merchants had been discredited, the Sung government was quick to see the potential of paper money and to adopt a similar system. It issued paper notes in denominations of one to ten strings, at a charge going to the treasury when the notes were issued. Initially, the notes were issued for a period of three years, after which time they tended to wear out and were exchanged, in full, for cash or new notes.

Subsequently, Chinese paper money had a very chequered career and on balance its inflationary tendencies outweighed

its potential for economic growth and budgetary stability. The original 1022 issue quite quickly came to take on the features of modern paper money. Fixed periods of circulation were abandoned; notes were issued when the government judged it expedient rather than on demand against specific cash deposits; and a cash reserve was set up representing a proportion rather than the full total of the value of the note issue.³¹ However, in so far as the notes continued to be redeemed in hard coin, at their face value, the modern notion of inconvertibility had yet to be introduced. It followed the other changes a little more slowly and came about more as an unintended consequence of over - issue than as a deliberate policy. The first serious inflation of paper money occurred when, in the middle of the tenth century, the Sung government financed its border wars in the north - west with 1.2 million strings worth of unbacked notes. Their ill-effects flowed back into Szechwan and by the 1070s notes with a face value of 10,000 cash were only worth between 940 and 960 cash.

Such conditions recurred frequently in the unsettled military situation which prevailed until the relative quiescence produced by the Mongol conquest and re-unification of China in 1279. Thus, for 250 years after the adoption of paper money, there were almost constant hostilities between the Sung dynasty and the "barbarians" on its borders; between the Southern Sung and the Mongol conquerors of the Chin. During this period, successive governments issued paper money sometimes with reasonable success but more often with disastrously inflationary consequences. Distrust of paper money was increased when governments repudiated their own

issues as they became illegible through over- use, or levied charges for printing new money in return for old.

Such is the historical background which Weber takes for granted and refers to rather vaguely and often inaccurately. His own account becomes considerably more accessible, however, when seen against this background. It begins in a way that can most charitably be described as "economical". "Paper money", Weber says, "was dealt with similarly" (p.9). This rather gnomic utterance seems to mean that central governments adopted towards paper money the same traditionalistic policies that had proved unsuccessful in their attempts to stabilise metallic currency.

As with metallic coinage, governments sought to monopolise or otherwise control the production of paper money for a number of reasons. On the one hand were the rational motives deriving from general economic and budgetary considerations. The state saw the potential of paper money as a means towards adequate supplies of currency and a supplement to metallic coinage. More specifically, it was realised that a state which controlled the money supply in this sense could adopt particular "price policies", increasing or decreasing supplies of metal and one assumes that this was one of the modern elements which Weber recognised in Chinese currency. Similarly, budgetary considerations meant that adequate supplies of paper money made it easier to assess the state's income and expenditure, and collect taxes, in money as opposed to commodities.

On the other hand were the more traditionalistic motives: the attempts to profit from printing paper money as much as from minting coins; the over - production of paper

money to finance wars despite an inability or unwillingness to prevent the associated inflation; and the traditional budgetary incentive to pay governments' expenses by printing money in such large amounts that its eventual devaluation was virtually guaranteed.

This complex of motives consistently undermined efforts to stabilise the monetary system with paper money. The state's commitment to profit meant that it took over not only the general principle of paper money from private enterprise but also the profitable opportunities. When notes became illegible through use, partly as a result of their being printed on poor quality paper, and partly as a result of the shortage of coinage metal in war, the state levied a charge for replacing them with new ones, and was wont to repudiate the old notes entirely. Whilst the early paper money issued by private enterprise was liable for redemption or replacement after only three years, the state later extended the period of circulation "from 22 to 25 years" (p.9) and redeemed the now devalued notes with notes of a lower denomination. Warfare, particularly during the Sung and Mongol periods was financed by an over - production of paper money, or assignats which were subsequently repudiated altogether, or redeemed at a lower value.

Inflation was fuelled still further when wars and invasion led to a loss of the mining districts. This depressed supplies of the currency metal needed both as a reserve against paper issues and as an alternative means of exchange. Moreover, the continued diversion of metal into industrial, religious, and artistic uses ensured that even in

peacetime supplies of metallic reserves for paper money were liable to severe depletion and further prevented governments from maintaining full transferability between paper and hard coin.

Budgetary consideration, too, played their part in discrediting paper money. On the one hand, the government attempted periodically to extend the monetary system by insisting that all large payments to it be made in "defined quotas of paper money" (p. 10), occasionally going so far as to prohibit payments in metallic currency.³⁴ On the other hand, the state reacted against the devaluation produced by its own policies, refusing repeatedly to accept older issues of paper money in payment of taxes. The ultimate result of all these actions was the discrediting of paper money and the collapse of the state's credibility in this sphere. Eventually paper money became once more the prerogative of the private sector.

Weber's analysis of paper money is illustrated mainly with reference to the Sung period, but his general analysis shades almost imperceptibly into a more narrative account of the monetary system through the Mongol period and into the Ming. The Mongol rulers continued to look for some sort of alternative to the dangerous reliance upon metallic currency. They introduced graded metal certificates but this led to inflation as early as 1288, only eight years after the consolidation of Mongol rule. However, the Mongol period saw a distinct increase in trade with the West and there occurred the first phase of a longer term injection of silver into the Chinese monetary system. The increased reserves of precious metals were used as the basis of a more carefully controlled

issue of paper money and a parallel system of stable exchange rates between gold, silver and copper. Precious metals were to be accumulated only by the state and used only as a reserve against its certificates. The state took direct control of the copper and precious metals industries and prohibited the private possession of gold and silver bullion. It minted no coins at all and thus produced a pure paper currency.

This system was abolished when the Ming rulers, on their founding of an imperial dynasty in 1368, resumed orderly minting. However, changes in the exchange rates of gold and silver suggest that not only were the price ratios of precious metals still unstable but also that the influx of silver in the earlier periods of the Mongol dynasty had since tailed off, and this might explain why paper money was re-introduced alongside the Ming copper coinage. However, unlike the Mongols, the Ming government used paper and metallic money simultaneously resulting in a devaluation of the former. Thus, in 1375, only 7 years after the establishment of the dynasty, the monetary use of gold and silver was prohibited. Paper money was given further protection in 1450 when copper currency was similarly proscribed, but even this measure failed to strengthen paper money sufficiently to allow it to be the cornerstone of Chinese currency. Weber seems to suggest that paper money had eventually to be abandoned altogether and that, "1489 is the last year for which the annalists mention paper money". (RoC, p.11)

The Modern Monetary System (16th. - 20th. centuries)

Putting precise dates to what Weber refers to as modern times is a hazardous exercise. The concept of a modern monetary system is itself something which must be extrapolated rather delicately from Weber's account despite its being always implicit and sometimes explicit. The first date is not too difficult as Weber takes the inception of this monetary phase to coincide with a second, and much more lastingly significant influx of silver through trade with the West from the middle of the sixteenth century. However, the impression one gains from Weber is that this system persisted right into modern times, perhaps even into the second decade of the twentieth century when Weber was writing on China. It would not be surprising if, in common with many of his contemporaries, Weber felt that the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1912, and the proclamation of a republic was yet one more period of interregnum and local overlordship, a political coup leaving the economy essentially unchanged. For these reasons this final period is perhaps best left open-ended, but it does seem to include the period from the middle of the 16th century to the end of the Ming (1662), and the whole of the Ch'ing dynasty (1662 - 1912).

The watershed dividing this period from the preceding one was, as has been suggested, the increased silver supplies which allowed a significant improvement in stocks of precious metal and hence the general currency situation. From its high bench - mark of 4:1 in relation to gold in 1368, the value of silver decreased in relation to gold to a ratio of 8:1 in 1574 and from that date onwards the ratio steadily increased

as silver supplies continued to grow. The modern monetary system was characterised by a sort of two - tier arrangement of currency. By the end of the 16th century, wholesale trade had adopted a silver standard and had become even more differentiated from the normal round of petty transaction which continued to rely mainly upon the copper currency for means of exchange. At the same time, wholesale trade and commercial interests exercised effective control over the issue and circulation of paper money. The latter was useful partly because silver bullion, though not as cumbersome as the copper coinage, still presented technical difficulties as a circulating medium. It had to have its weight and fineness checked at virtually every transaction. The government insisted that silver bars should each bear a certificate stating their place of origin and "examining board"; and the standard unit of account in silver, the tael, varied from place to place and from time to time. These difficulties together with the general lack of confidence in the state's paper issues, led the bankers' guilds to use the new reserves of silver as backing for their own means of exchange, enforcing payment of all commercial debts in bank money and sponsoring guild organisations as a basic controlling agency for the currency system used in wholesale trade.

Weber concludes his narrative account at this point by attempting to identify the complex of interests preventing any further rationalisation of the monetary system. The officials and merchants, the two most powerful interest groups, were united in opposing monetary reform. Some officials wanted the state to resume control of paper money,

partly because they still saw this as a means to circumvent the shortage of currency metal, and partly because bank money was felt to surrender financial controls to the traders. However, such reservations seem to have been overborne by the interests most officials had in trading profits to be gained from currency dealings free from state interference. In addition, the provincial officials tended always to be opposed to any strengthening of the financial controls operated by central governments. Alongside these powerful interests, Weber claims that:

" The mass of the petty bourgeoisie and smallholders was little or not at all interested in changing existing conditions. This was so despite, and partly because of, the great decline in the purchasing power of copper, a decline which had been gradual throughout the centuries." (p.12)

Summary and Conclusions

The analytical import of this particular section can best be summarised by identifying its configurational, causal, and consequential levels of analysis and noting their broader contextual context.

The Configurational Level of Analysis

The section on Chinese money is a tortuously structured, highly selective and technical account of the development of China's monetary system over a period of over 2,000 years! Weber's first aim in embarking on such a project is to substantiate his claim that China's money economy was, until "modern times" at least, very underdeveloped. He tries to do this by demonstrating that the monetary system in China - the use of metallic and paper currencies as means of exchange - was badly deficient in both quality and quantity. In this sense, China's under-developed monetary system was taken as sufficient indication of its under-developed money economy.

The Causal Level of Analysis

At this stage of the essay, Weber's causal analysis is directed mainly towards an explanation of this under-developed state of the monetary system. Overall, he suggests that it can be attributed to political, economic, and ideological traditionalism (RoC. p.6). He attaches most significance here to political traditionalism in the sense of the actions of successive central governments and their

officials, and the relationships between them. He elaborates upon this claim more generally in GEH, when he claims that, in contrast with the actions of the rulers of modern states, Chinese rulers had no continuous and consistent economic policy (GEH p.253). A state economic policy in this sense is an exclusively modern phenomenon. It originated only with the mercantilist system initiated by the rulers of 15th. century England and was brought to its full development only during the 16th. and 17th. centuries. (GEH pp. 256-7). In the absence of continuous and consistent economic policy, the economic role of the traditional states was determined by:

" two widespread commercial policies, namely, the dominance of fiscal interests and of welfare interests, the last in the sense of the customary standard of living. "(GEH p. 253)

In China, in accordance with these interests, economic policy was determined by attempts to meet the state's economic needs through short-term vacillation between provision through taxation and provision through compulsory labour services. A more detailed elaboration of these pre-modern economic policies is given in chapter 3 of KuT, when Weber attempts to examine their consequences for the structure of rural society. Here, he is more concerned to identify this political traditionalism as a cause of China's chaotic monetary system and to demonstrate the specific impact of the former upon the latter.

The precise character of the relationship between central government and local officials is outlined more fully in later sections of KUT, especially in chapter 2, where Weber emphasises the intractable problems of bringing local

officials under centralised control, and the material interests of the officials in opposing this and other aspects of administrative rationalisation. In the section on Chinese money, Weber is more concerned with the specific implications of this relationship for the monetary system. In particular, he comments on the persisting failure of central governments to stamp out counterfeiting, given the considerable independence of local officials and their vested interests in its profits.

However, in addition to political traditionalism in the sense of pre-modern economic policy and a traditional administrative system, Weber identifies other aspects of a more general traditionalism which he sees as "inherent in the Chinese social structure" (RoC p. 6). One such example is the ideological traditionalism which he claims can be seen in the geomantic opposition to mining and which contributed to the endemic shortage in the supply of monetary metals.

The Consequential Level of Analysis

This is the point at which Weber's discussion of the monetary system presents some of its strongest and its weakest features. It is weak in so far as Weber has little to say about the precise implications of an underdeveloped monetary system for the problem of capitalism. He does point out certain implications, such as the "natural stereotyping ramifications for the economy" (p.8) of the recurrent need to fall back on taxation in kind when there was insufficient currency available to permit the collection of money taxes.

He seems to imply that this prevented rational forward planning and the effective deployment of resources to growth sectors of the economy.

However, although one might assume that the absence of a reliable monetary system inhibited the development of a money economy, and in turn this inhibited the development of modern capitalism, Weber does not in fact draw these apparently inviting consequential conclusions. In fact, he draws almost precisely the opposite conclusions, suggesting that the monetary system, chaotic though it was, should not be seen as a crucial obstacle to the development of modern capitalism.

This brings Weber to what might be termed the dominant melodic theme of his distinctly symphonic (and frequently cacophonous) treatment of the problem of capitalism in these "Sociological Foundations". At the end of his discussion of Chinese money, Weber identifies the period from about the 17th century onwards as China's "modern times", and he makes two claims about this period.

Firstly, there had been a strong increase in wealth in precious metals from the 16th century onwards. Its beneficial effects upon the monetary system had led to a stronger development of the money economy generally and the monetarisation of government finances in particular. However, this had been associated with an increase in economic traditionalism rather a development of capitalistic phenomena. Secondly, and more or less simultaneously, there had been an enormous growth of population but this too had been associated with no developments towards modern capitalism.

This dominant melodic theme is much clearer analytically when related to Weber's comments in GEH. Here, Weber notes contemporary theories of capitalism which attributed crucial causal significance to the influx of precious metals into early modern Europe, or to rapid population growth, or to the combination of the two. However, he insists that neither of these features should be seen as primary causes of capitalism in the West.

" the growth of population in the West made most rapid progress from the beginning of the 18th. century to the end of the 19th. In the same period China experienced a population growth of at least equal extent - from 60 or 70 to 400 millions, allowing for the inevitable exaggerations; this corresponds approximately with the increase in the West. In spite of this fact, capitalism went backward in China and not forward. The increase in the population took place there in different strata than with us. It made China the seat of a swarming mass of small peasants; the increase of a class corresponding to our proletariat was involved only to the extent that a foreign market made possible the employment of coolies.... the growth of population in Europe did indeed favour the development of capitalism, to the extent that in a small population the system would have been unable to secure the necessary labour force, but in itself it never called forth that development." (GEH p.259)

Similarly, Weber cites the example of India to support his claim that although an increase in the supply of precious metals can give rise to price revolutions, these are likely to stimulate capitalism only when other favourable conditions are present, such as:

" when a certain form of labour organisation is in process of development " (GEH p. 259)

Thus, in China, as in India and in the West, the crucial factor for the problem of capitalistic development is the broader societal context in which such changes occur. The

main point from this section of KuT is that causes for the non-development of capitalism in China must be sought in the broader institutional context. Weber's comparisons between China, India, and the West lead him to claim that, in the early modern period, increases in population and the supply of precious metals stimulated capitalism only where other conditions were favourable. More specifically, such innovations only stimulated modern capitalistic development in a society where one could already see the emergence of capitalist forms of economic enterprise, labour organisation, and social relations of production between bourgeois and proletarian strata.

In this first section of KuT, therefore, Weber identifies the problem of Chinese capitalism as precisely as anywhere else in the text: what was the social context of these modern changes which prevented them from providing a stimulus to capitalism? In relation to this specific question, his discussion of the monetary system and money economy eventually makes it clear that Weber did not regard the underdevelopment of the money economy as a crucial obstacle to the development of capitalism. However he identifies a crucial non-religious contrast between China and the West through his emphasis on the failure of successive central governments' monetary policies. This contrasts directly with the West where the political leaders of the mediaeval cities and the rulers of the early modern patrimonial states (and indeed the Catholic Church) acted as agents of monetary rationalisation. Thus, the nature of the state in China and the West emerges from the very beginning of KuT as a major non-religious contrast with clear implications for economic

economic rationalisation.

Moreover, this provides an immediate focus for the analysis Weber wants to undertake in the Sociological Foundations to KuT. If political leaders in the West acted as agents of economic rationalisation in ways that had no parallel in China, it becomes necessary to examine the nature of political communities in China, particularly the cities and the state. These are precisely the non-religious phenomena to which Weber directs his attention after his discussion of the monetary system.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHINESE CITIES AND THE THEORY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

I

Introduction

In KuT, Weber's discussion of Chinese cities occupies only a few pages (KuT, pp. 290-8; RoC, pp.13-20). In the German text, almost one third of his comments are contained in footnotes which Gerth sometimes incorporates in the actual text of RoC. The continuity of the original German text with the immediately preceding discussion of Chinese money is also lost just a little by Gerth's insertion of a separate subheading for the discussion of cities and guilds which is not contained in the original. However, this sectionalising of the original is less disturbing than Gerth's omission of the sentence, "This needs to be explained", ("Das bedarf der Erkl aerung", KuT,p.290) from the English text.

What needs to be explained is the problem which Weber has just identified: in the modern period of Chinese history, there was an enormous increase in population and a strengthening of the monetary system and money economy which were not, however, associated with modern capitalist economic innovations. Gerth's omission of this telling little phrase does more than simply obscure Weber's specification of a fundamental issue in China's economic history, and hence a fundamental element of his orientation towards the problem of capitalism in KuT. It also helps to obscure Weber's introductory comments on the Chinese cities and the role of these comments in the analytical structure of the essay.

Thus, Weber's discussion of Chinese cities and guilds in KuT is first of all an attempt to examine the institutional context of those factors which had stimulated capitalistic development in the West but not in China. At the same time, he goes on immediately to suggest that a crucial dimension in the explanation of this contrast is the different significance of Chinese and Western cities for economic development, and that the root of this significance lies in the fact that Western cities played a crucial role as "vehicles of financial rationalisation, of money economy, and of politically oriented capitalism" (RoC, p.13) whereas:

"In China, there were no cities like Florence which could have created a standard coin and guided the state in its monetary policies." (RoC, p.13)

Just a few pages later, Weber concludes his discussion of cities and guilds in China with the observation that the ways in which they differed from their Western counterparts were enormously significant in accounting for:

"...the absence (in China) of fixed, publicly recognised, formal and reliable legal foundations for a free and co-operatively regulated organisation of industry and commerce, such as is known in the Occident. These were the legal foundations beneficial to the development of petty capitalism in occidental mediaeval artisan crafts but in China they were absent because the cities and guilds had no politico-military power of their own." (RoC, p. 20)

However, the path which Weber follows to this eventual conclusion is not an easy one and he tends to lose his own sense of direction in his attempts simultaneously to characterise Chinese cities and guilds, differentiate them from the West, explain these differences, and point out their economic significance.

The main problem stems from the fact that the only way in which to make sense of Weber's discussion is to relate it

to his more general developmental analysis of Oriental and Occidental civilisation, in which a comparative theory of urban development plays a central role. Only in this way can one disentangle the inextricably interwoven configurational, causal, and consequential dimensions of his analysis of the Chinese city. Moreover, this particular contextual setting is crucial to Weber's discussion of the problem of capitalism throughout KuT. Weber's discussion of Chinese money was dealt with at such length partly because its technical impenetrability has hitherto precluded any extensive discussion of its significance for the analytical structure of KuT. The section on the Chinese city requires an equal elaboration but this time one which focusses upon its implicit comparative and developmental framework.

In a series of publications, Randall Collins has made a plausible case for his claim that Weber only really articulates a fully matured version of his theory of the emergence of modern capitalism in the posthumous collection of his last series of lectures. (Collins, 1980; 1986a; 1986b; - referring to Weber's "General Economic History", GEH, 1961). For the purposes of examining and reinterpreting KuT, GEH is particularly useful for two other reasons. Firstly, it offers a condensed version of the theory of urban development which Weber elaborated earlier in "Economy and Society" (E+S, 1968, ch. XVI, "The City") and it relates this theory, as Collins suggests, to a general developmental theory of modern capitalism in a more precisely focussed way than is permitted by the encyclopaedic structure of E+S. Secondly, its structure is virtually identical with whatever can be regarded as the structure of Weber's discussion of

cities and guilds in KuT.

Thus, the present chapter adopts the following structure. Firstly, it outlines Weber's comparative theory of urban development, referring to GEH and E+S where appropriate. Secondly, it attempts to clarify Weber's discussion of Chinese cities and guilds in the light of this general context. Thirdly, it attempts to summarise Weber's conclusions with particular reference to his assessment of the significance of Chinese urban development for the problem of capitalism. This latter issue is one which Weber deals with only very cursorily and elliptically in KuT.

II

The Theory of Urban Development

In GEH, in his chapter on "Citizenship", Weber addresses himself to three main issues:

1. The distinguishing features of the Western city, as opposed to all other pre-industrial "large places".
2. The causes of this uniquely Western course of urban development.
3. The differences between the major sub-types of the Western city, i.e. the differences between the cities of classical and mediaeval Europe on the one hand, and between the mediaeval cities of Northern and Southern Europe on the other.

Weber's point of departure is his claim that although large, fortified, urbanised market centres have existed universally, only the cities of the pre-modern West were politically independent communities.

"It is true that outside the Western world there were cities in the sense of a fortified point and the seat of political and hierarchical administration. But outside the Occident there were not cities in the sense of a unitary community." (p.235, GEH).

In E+S, the same point is formulated more precisely:

"Not every city in the economic sense, nor every garrison whose inhabitants had a special status in the political-administrative sense, has in the past constituted a "commune" (Gemeinde). The city-commune in the full meaning of the word appeared as a mass phenomenon only in the Occident... To develop into a city-commune, a settlement had to be of the non agricultural-commercial type, at least to a relative extent, and to be equipped with the following features:

1. a fortification; 2. a market; 3 its own court of law and, at least in part, autonomous law; 4. an associational structure (Verbandscharakter) and, connected therewith, 5. at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, which includes administration by authorities in whose appointment the burghers could in some form participate." (E+S, p. 1226).

Weber's insistence upon the communal nature of Western cities is closely bound up with his account of their origins. The existence of the oath-bound association of urbanites is seen as a crucial causal factor in the development of Western cities, and not just as a further distinguishing feature. Weber claims that the Western cities developed through a process of political usurpation in which the prime movers were the urban fraternities. However, two features of "Oriental" society operated as "obstacles" to a similar course of urban development: the monopolisation of military power by the central administration; and the persistence of religious barriers to associational groupings not based on kinship.

"We cannot explain the phenomena on the basis of the feudal or political grants of the middle ages or in terms of the founding of the cities by Alexander the Great on his march to India. The earliest references to cities as political units designate rather their revolutionary character. The occidental city arose through the establishment of a fraternity, the synoecism in antiquity, the coniuratio in the middle ages." (GEH, p236,). (cf. E+S p.1250)

Weber clearly sees the mediaeval urban coniuratio, as the typical prime mover in this usurpation of political power. However, in GEH he tends to use this concept as a general term to refer to almost any urban fraternity. The terminology is a little clearer in E&S where he restricts his use of the term "coniuratio" more exclusively to a specific time and

place: the mediaeval Italian cities (E&S, pp. 1251-56) Alongside this, he also uses the concept of "city union" to refer more generally to usurpatory urban fraternities in both the mediaeval and classical periods, and in both Northern and Southern Europe. Nonetheless, when he wants to illustrate, in GEH, this process of usurpation by the city union/sworn fraternity, he turns towards the Italian experience again.

"The first example in the Middle Ages is the revolutionary movement in 726 which led to the secession of Italy from the Byzantine rule and which centred in Venice...Previous to that time the dux (later doge) of Venice had been appointed by the Emperor although, on the other hand, there were certain families whose members were constantly to a predominant extent, appointed military tribunes or district commanders. From then on the choice of the tribunes and of the dux was in the hands of persons liable to military service, that is, those who were in a position to serve as knight. Thus was the movement started. It requires 400 years longer before in 1143 the name Commune Venetarium turns up." (GEH, p.236).

Venetian history is drawn upon here only to illustrate the typical role of the oath-bound association in initiating the movement towards urban autonomy in the West. One might suggest, however, that Weber relies too heavily at this point on the history of the Italian city states of the mediaeval period, and that he extrapolates backwards to the classical cities with too little caution. He assigns a similar role to the urban associations of Western antiquity but his notion of revolutionary usurpation tends not to re-appear. Instead, the typical process is claimed to have been one of synoecism i.e. the settling of peoples into a city by some sort of overlord, and their formation, at his instigation, into an oath-bound fraternity. Here, Weber takes the example of the procedure adopted by Nehemiah in Jerusalem as typical of the origins of the cities of Western antiquity. (cf E&S, p.1245, and p.1263)

"Quite similar (to the Venetian example just cited -SM) was the "synoecism" of antiquity, as for example, the procedure of Nehemiah in Jerusalem. This leader caused the leading families and a selected portion of the people on the land to band themselves together under oath for the purposes of administration and defense (sic) of the city. We must assume the same background for the origin of every ancient city. The polis is always the product of such a confraternity or synoecism, not always an actual settlement in proximity but a definite oath of brotherhood which signified that a common ritualistic meal is established and a ritualistic union formed and that only those had a part in this ritualistic group who buried their dead on the acropolis and had their dwellings in the city" (GEH, p.236)

It is not clear from this just how closely Weber wants to draw the parallel between an act of "synoecism" and an act of "revolutionary usurpation". Perhaps the best way to interpret him at this point is to assume that the classical cities diverge further from the type than the mediaeval, especially Italian, cities. In this sense, the formation of urban fraternities is taken to be of equal significance in both periods, although the mediaeval fraternities more closely approximate the type in their revolutionary establishment of urban autonomy.

This interpretation accords with Weber's analysis of the historical reasons for the East-West differences in the development of urban autonomy, and suggests that they were obstacles in so far as they inhibited the formation of Western-type urban fraternities. Thus, the crucial difference between East and West was the relative ease with which urban fraternities could form, and develop into agents of urban autonomy.

The first of these obstacles was the monopolisation of military force by a territorial "prince" and his centralised administration. In an obviously self-conscious echo of

economic determinism, Weber claims that the ownership and control of military organisation was as significant for the course of history as the ownership and control of the means of production.

"Whether the military organisation is based on the the principle of self-equipment or on that of equipment by a military overlord who furnishes horses, arms, and provisions, is a distinction quite as fundamental for social history as is the question whether the means of economic production are the property of the worker or a capitalist entrepreneur. Everywhere outside the West the development of the city was prevented by the fact that the army of the prince is older than the city." (GEH, p.237)

Thus, for Weber, the potency and efficacy of the Western urbanites depended upon their capacity to form themselves into, or hire, or ally themselves with, an independent military force. This was possible in the West because of the principle of military self-equipment, most easily recognised in the feudal conditions of medieval Europe. Here, a member of the knightly stratum could equip his personal dependents or semi-dependents as his own private "army", the larger feudal army being assembled by an overlord calling upon his knightly vassals to present themselves, and their retainers, ready equipped for battle in his service. In fact, Weber suggests that similar principles of self-equipment prevailed throughout the West, in both classical and mediaeval times, thus permitting the formation of the city army of the polis, and the mediaeval guild army.

"In the West the army equipped by the warlord, and the separation of soldier from the paraphernalia of war, in a way analogous to the separation of the worker from the means of production, is a product of the modern (my emphasis - SM) era, while in Asia it stands at the apex of the historical development. " (GEH, p.237)

Thus, the argument runs, except in the West armies were

equipped and controlled by the "Prince". Under conditions such as these, there was no possibility for urban residents to develop independent military forces. Weber goes on to trace the Eastern monopoly of military power to a yet more fundamental contrast: the significance of water-control for the history of Eastern cultures.

"The distinction is based on the fact that in the cultural evolution of Egypt, western Asia, India, and China the question of irrigation was crucial. The water question conditioned the existence of the bureaucracy, the compulsory service of the dependent classes, and the dependence of the subject classes upon the functioning of the bureaucracy of the king. That the king also expressed his power in the form of a military monopoly is the basis of the distinction between the military organisation of Asia and that of the West. In the first case the royal official and army officer is from the beginning the central figure of the process while in the West both were originally absent." (GEH, p.237)

Again, Weber presents us with a theme which, however debatable historically, is central to his analysis of Chinese cities in KuT. As will be shown in the next section, Weber amends his argument slightly by suggesting that, in China, water-works were directed as much towards flood control as irrigation. Nonetheless, there are the same assumptions of water-control dictating the need for centralised regulation by a ruler and his administrative staff; the dependence of urban residents upon this centralised power; the concomitant monopoly of military power; and hence the erection of an insuperable obstacle to the military independence of the urban residents.

Weber's case is that the principles of military organisation in the East made impossible the military independence of any association of urban residents. The second obstacle to urban autonomy was the persistence of

religiously sanctioned kinship ties which prevented the urban residents from forming themselves into an urban fraternity.

Thus:

"The second obstacle which prevented the development of the city in the Orient was formed by the ideas and institutions connected with magic." (GEH, p.238)

Weber claims that Western religious conceptions, in both the classical and mediaeval periods, allowed and even encouraged people from different kinship groupings to belong to the same religious brotherhood. In the East, by contrast, kinship affiliations were accorded a "magical" precedence over all other forms of association. Thus, magico-religious conceptions sub-divided urban residents into kinship groupings or, as in India, into castes. The lineages and castes were ritualistic communities within the city and hence were ceremonially alien from each other. In such circumstances, it was highly improbable that the magical barriers to non-kin association could have been broken down in the formation of a broader urban community.

Moreover, Weber feels that the contrasts between East and West are greater for the mediaeval period in Europe, and he relates this in turn to the influence of Christianity. Its openness to all individuals qua individuals, and its ethos of Christian fellowship amongst all its adherents, had removed any kin-based barriers to urban communal association. More directly, its doctrines and organisational forms provided a model for the urban communities. The urban residents were able to bind themselves together with a whole panoply of oath and ceremonial, sanctioned by the Christian tradition. He attaches particular significance to St. Paul's espousal of

"fellowship with the uncircumcised " and sees this as part of the characteristic influence wrought by the Christian tradition.

"The magical barriers between clans, tribes, and peoples, which were still known in the ancient polis to a considerable degree, were thus set aside and the establishment of the occidental city was made possible." (GEH, p.238)

However, this reference to the magical barriers still existing in the polis of classical Europe signifies certain problems faced by Weber when he tries to suggest that even the classical city, before the advent of Christianity, differed significantly from the Orient in its relative absence of religiously sanctioned obstacles to urban community. He claims that:

"....the consideration which made it natural for cities to develop in the West was in antiquity the extensive freedom from² the priesthood, the absence of any monopoly in the hands of the priests over communion with the gods, such as obtained in Asia. In western antiquity the officials of the city performed the rites, and the resultant proprietorship of the polis over the things belonging to the gods and the priestly treasures was carried to the point of filling the priestly offices by auction, since no magical limitations stood in the way as in India." (GEH, p.238)

The problem is that this assertion seems somewhat at odds with some of Weber's comments in KuT. He is insistent that there was no priestly monopoly over religion in China, ritual being the responsibility mainly of the Emperor's officials and the heads of the lineages. However, in this case, Weber does not associate the absence of priestly monopoly with the absence of magico-religious barriers to urban community. Rather, the absence of priestly monopoly is seen to exist despite the two obstacles to urban community: religiously sanctioned kinship affiliations, and dependence

upon a centralised administrative and military power.

As the above quotation suggests, Weber felt that in classical antiquity there did still exist magical barriers between clans, tribes and peoples to a greater extent than in the mediaeval period. At the same time, he feels that, unlike China, the absence of a priestly monopoly was significant for the capacity of classical city-dwellers to form themselves into an urban fraternity. If one pursues Weber's argument to its logical conclusion, one is left with the proposition that the crucial difference between Oriental cities and those of Western antiquity was the latter's independence from centralised military and political control rather than the absence of religiously sanctioned kinship ties. Thus, the absence of priestly monopoly in the classical polis is most significant in that it reflects this political independence. This interpretation would also accord with Weber's observation that, in the absence of priestly monopoly in China the rites were performed by the Emperor's officials whilst, in the classical polis, they were performed by the city's representatives. It would seem that the urban fraternities of classical antiquity owed most to the absence of any clear external authority over the polis.³

The Major Sub-Types of the Western City

Within his ideal typical Western city, Weber makes further divisions into sub-types. Firstly he distinguishes between the classical and the mediaeval cities and secondly, between the mediaeval cities of Northern and Southern Europe. He makes these distinctions on the basis of what he calls the

"establishment of democracy". He suggests that although the Western cities were oligarchic rather than democratic in the modern sense, the rights and privileges of citizenship, and thus effective power in the city, were gradually extended to larger proportions of the urban residents. More specifically, he identifies this process as one of struggle between successive strata with conflicting class interests who sought to participate in, or better still to control, the administration of the city. In general, the knightly, patrician strata who had originally dominated the independent cities gradually succumbed to the plebeian strata upon whose military support they increasingly depended.

Weber suggests that the Italian city-states illustrate the typical Southern mediaeval city, whilst the English cities present an extreme case of the typical Northern city. One important factor to which he attaches particular importance was the much earlier development of urban autonomy in the South. He assumes that at the time of, for example, eighth century Italy, the knightly military technique was still at its height in Europe. Hence, the emerging Italian city-states were forced to take the rural patrician strata into their pay, or to ally with them, as a source of support against their original overlord, the Byzantine Emperor. The knightly families eventually became urban residents themselves, exploiting trade opportunities albeit at a gentlemanly remove, and they formed the basis of an urban patriciate which persisted in some form throughout the Middle Ages. This settlement of the knighthood in the cities, voluntary or enforced (inurbamento), was the first typical feature of the Southern mediaeval city.

The second was the formation of a city-state which dominated the surrounding countryside. As a city-state, the Italian city comes closer than others of mediaeval Europe to Weber's ideal type of a politically autonomous, militarily independent, urban community. Its laws and administration were in the hands of a city council, and this itself took one of two principal forms. Either it was a specifically merchant guild (*mercanzia*), a union of traders which separated out from the craft guilds, or it was a more general military union such as the "*compagna communis*" in Venice or Genoa. In either case, the citizens formed both a military force and a politically independent brotherhood. In both cases, the interests of the larger traders and merchants prevailed over those of the smaller traders and craftsmen.

For Northern Europe, in which Weber includes most of the German cities, he takes the English city to present an extreme contrast with the Italian city-state. He does not specify the extent to which the English city can be considered typical of Northern Europe, but his main aim is to point out the divergence of the latter from the ideal-typical independence of the city-state. Hence his emphasis upon the weaker military position of the English cities and their more tenuous political and economic control over surrounding rural areas. Similarly they were urban communities to some extent but not politically independent communes.

Weber explains this contrast in terms of the types of relationships between the urban residents, the rural aristocracy, and the princely power which are also central to his analysis of Chinese urban development in *KuT*. The

residents of the Italian cities had enlisted the support of the rural aristocracy against the Byzantine Emperor. The residents of the English cities, however, had gained their freedom from the feudal obligations to the rural aristocracy through rights granted peacefully, profitably, and voluntarily by the English Kings. Thus, although the English cities accepted numerous "landed gentlemen" into their citizenry in the later Middle Ages, there was no period of domination by an urban patriciate and the town burghers remained firmly in control of the city throughout the period.

More specifically, Weber claims that the city guild in England was not a military union like that of the Italian cities but was essentially a taxation unit. The characteristic English institution for defining citizenship and controlling the city was the "firma burgi", the arrangement through which the guild associations leased from the King the right to tax their own members, and furnish to the King the designated sum for the city as a whole. It was the basis of civic autonomy in England.

Before going on to examine Weber's comparisons between China and the West, the following conclusions should be noted from his more general comparative theory of urban development. Weber's sub-types of Western city approximate in varying degrees his ideal-typical complex of three main features: political autonomy, military independence, and unitary community. The city of antiquity and the mediaeval city of Southern Europe display all these features to a marked extent. However, there are differences in the nature of self-government which re-emerge in the discussion on China. When Weber writes of the city law of mediaeval Europe

he implies something more than the existence of laws made by the citizens to regulate city-life. It also refers to the existence of a city charter which stipulates certain rights and privileges of its citizens in relation to an external sovereign power. In this sense, the three types of Western city all enjoyed different forms and degrees of self-government. The ancient city did not typically have a city charter of this sort, granting or ceding formal autonomy. There was no external sovereign power to reckon with. The Italian towns of the Middle Ages were also city-states and effectively self-governing communes but they did have a formal city charter which had to be usurped. The English city, however, although far more autonomous than any in the East was never a fully independent city-state. Its city-charter proclaimed its freedom from feudal relationships and from subservience to the rural aristocracy and endowed its citizens with a considerable measure of political and economic autonomy. Nonetheless, it remained an integral part of a larger political entity: the Kingdom.

The Chinese City: Configurational Contrasts

As might be deduced from the previous section, Weber's use of the term "political autonomy", when referring to Chinese cities in KuT, is a shorthand device for a complex of inter-related features. There is no clear elaboration of the term within the text of KuT itself but the above discussion makes it clear that Weber's ideal-typical concept of the Western city incorporated three features connected by the concept of citizenship: political autonomy, military independence, and unitary community. It was also noted that Weber clearly differentiates between three major sub-types of the Western city, and these must be used as an interpretive resource in what follows.

The remainder of this section will deal with two issues. Firstly, Weber's general characterisation of the Chinese city's lack of political autonomy. This is an essentially negative characterisation replete with a tantalising mixture of explicit and implicit cross-reference to the Western city. Secondly, it will examine the extent to which the more positive aspects in Weber's characterisation of the Chinese city may be clarified by more specific comparison with the English type of mediaeval city. It will also be necessary to clarify briefly certain problems arising out of the structure of Weber's account. The interpretive task here is to disentangle the configurational levels of the analysis from the causal, and to relocate the latter more appropriately in the next section of this

chapter.

In this part of the analysis, the assumptions underlying Weber's use of particular terms, and his implicit analytical framework, closely reflect his general comparisons between Eastern and Western cities. Just as in GEH and E&S, he proceeds firstly by identifying those aspects of the Chinese city which justify its inclusion in the general category of "city", and then by locating it firmly to the Eastern side of his East/West typology of cities. Firstly, he claims that the Chinese city was indeed a fortified residence, initially the seat of princes and later of Imperial officials.

"The Chinese character for city means "fortress" as was also true for occidental Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In (Chinese) Antiquity, the Chinese City was a princely residence and until modern times primarily remained the residence of the viceroy and other dignitaries." (Roc, p.13)

Weber's substantiation of this claim is distinctly whimsical and it hardly seems important to know whether and when stone replaced wood in the construction of the city's fortifications. However, if such asides add little to the analysis, neither do they detract from its main thrust. As Weber frequently acknowledges, it was not uncommon for villages also to be fortified. More germane is his assertion that only the cities were ever the seat of Imperial officials.

The second feature attributed by Weber to the Chinese, as to all cities, was the economic concentration upon trade and industry. He does, however, suggest that craft-workers, as opposed to tradesmen and merchants, were more likely in China than in the West to conduct their industry outside the cities.

"Of course, the (Chinese) cities were the usual locus of trade and crafts, the latter to a noticeably lesser degree than in the occidental Middle Ages." (RoC, p.13)

Similarly he suggests that even in the realm of trade, the Chinese cities enjoyed less unchallenged supremacy than their Western counterparts of the Middle Ages. He claims that they did not have the same advantages over the villages in the opening and control of market-centres. In China, he suggests, the villages also had the right to open markets, and there was no legally guaranteed market monopoly granted to the urban areas. At this point in KuT, Weber does nothing to substantiate his claim, beyond the gnomic observation, in a footnote, that:

"L.Gaillard S.J.'s work on Nanking (Varietes Sinologiques. Vol.23, Shanghai, 1903), does not yield much knowledge of Chinese urbanism." (RoC p.256,f.33; KuT, p.291,f.2)

Thirdly, Weber suggests that the residents of the Chinese city derived their income mainly from rents. Here he raises the same issues as are found in GEH when he suggests that one way of distinguishing between cities in general - though not between the Western and other cities - is to note the different sources of income needed to finance their agricultural imports. He includes income from office-holding in the general category of rent and suggests that the income of Chinese urban residents was derived partly from ground rents, partly from official prebends, and partly from:

"other income that was either directly or indirectly politically determined." (RoC, p13; KuT, p.291)

In this connection he notes that the Chinese city resembled those of Western antiquity, and Moscow before the abolition of serfdom. This emphasis upon revenues derived from

politically determined income represents a persistent theme in Weber's account of the Chinese city and his analysis throughout KuT. Although he goes on to examine the strength of the craft and merchant guilds he makes a consistent claim that the avenue to real riches in the Chinese city lay through political office-holding, access to officials, and the manipulation of this political influence. This is certainly one conclusion of his analysis of the economic implication of the Chinese patrimonial state, to be examined more fully in chapter seven below. For the moment, it is sufficient to note Weber's later corollary to his account of the Chinese city: the officials, as opposed to the stratum of merchants and entrepreneurs, were the dominant force within it.

Having noted these initial similarities between the Chinese and all other types of city, Weber addresses himself to his main task of establishing principal configurational differences between them. He attempts to locate the former firmly within the non-western pattern of urban development, suggesting that, in common with the general Oriental pattern the Chinese city lacked "political autonomy". However, as was noted above, Weber's use of the concept "political autonomy" vacillates between a narrow sense which refers only to the presence or absence of specific city laws and city charters, and a more inclusive sense in which it is inseparably linked with military independence and urban communality. It is this latter, more inclusive sense which dominates this phase of the analysis in KuT. Weber offers a negative characterisation of the Chinese city, noting in none

too clear an order the absence of all three inter-related features of the Western city. Hence his claim that the Chinese city possessed none of those features which, in both the classical and mediaeval periods, made the Western city:

" a commune with political privileges of its own." (RoC, p.13)

Firstly, Weber deals with the problems of political autonomy and military independence. He claims that, in comparison with the cities of Western antiquity, the Chinese city could not be said to be a self-governing polis, and there was no citizenry in the sense of a self-equipped military estate. Similarly, he claims that the Chinese city lacked political autonomy in any of the senses associated with the cities of mediaeval Europe. It had no city laws or city charter, and:

"no military oath-bound communities like the Compagna Communis of Genoa or other coniurationes ever sprang up to fight or ally themselves with feudal lords of the city in order to attain political autonomy. No forces emerged like the consuls, councils or political associations of merchants and craft guilds such as the Mercanza, which were based upon the military independence of the city district."
(RoC, p.14)

When Weber's comments are directed towards the relative political and military independence of the Chinese and Western cities, they remain fairly straightforwardly on the configurational level of analysis. However, his comments on the extent to which the Chinese urban residents constituted an internally unified community introduces causal assertions whose precise significance is not readily apparent from KuT alone. This stems from the fact that, as demonstrated in the previous section of the present chapter, Weber saw the urban fraternities as not only a characterising feature of the Western cities but also as the crucial historical agents of

the distinctively Western course of urban development.

Bearing this in mind, it is possible to separate out the configurational and causal levels of Weber's analysis and to deal with the latter more fully and more appropriately in the next section of this chapter. The configurational level is concerned with Weber's claim that the Chinese city was not an urban community in either of the senses associated with the West. That is to say, it was not a religious association ("Kultverband" KuT, p.292) like the polis of classical antiquity, nor was it an oath-bound fraternity ("Schwurbruderschaft", KuT, p.292) like the cities of mediaeval Europe. Instead, Weber claims, the residents of the Chinese city typically owed primary allegiance to the lineage, and the geographical and ritual focus of the lineage was located outside the town, in a village felt to be the native place of the particular descent group:

" The new citizen, above all the newly rich one, retained his relations to the native place of his sib, its ancestral land and temple. Hence all ritually and personally important relations with the village were maintained." (RoC, p.14)

Weber goes on to qualify this assertion somewhat but not to offer any further substantiation at this stage. He suggests that, on the one hand, not all Chinese town-dwellers maintained the connection with the "native" rural shrine of their ancestors, and, on the other, that residues of similar conditions could be found in the West. However, he insists that, for China, one can detect only preliminary stages in the development of an urban community, and never its realisation. He makes an implicit cross-reference to the role played by religious conceptions in cementing the bonds of the Western urban fraternities, noting that, although all Chinese

cities had a city god, this was only a local tutelary deity and not the god of a specifically urban association. Moreover, the extent of official influence and domination over the urban residents was reflected in the fact that the city god was usually a deceased official of the city who had been subsequently canonised.

The configurational analysis is complicated, however, by Weber's interpolation of two causal assertions. Firstly, his claim that the absence of Chinese urban fraternities can be partly explained as a result of the strength of the lineages. Secondly, that the absence of urban fraternities helps explain in turn why the sporadic revolts of urban residents were never directed towards the goal of urban autonomy from the central authority. This is an appropriate point at which to disentangle the configurational and causal threads of Weber's analysis, and to systematise his account of the latter.

The Origins and Development of the Chinese Cities

Weber's discussion of an issue which is vitally important for the transposition of his configurational heuristics to a causal analysis of Chinese urban development is extremely brief. In KuT, it consists of barely one page, (KuT, pp.293-5; RoC, pp.15-17), and needs to be re-integrated with the comparative theory of urban development elaborated above.

Weber claims that Chinese cities, like those of the mediaeval West and unlike those of Western antiquity, were predominantly inland cities. Thus, their foundation was not connected with overseas trade, which he claims had never been particularly significant for China. Typically, they had been founded:

"... by princes and feudal lords in order to gain money rents and taxes. " (RoC, p.16)

However, the course of their subsequent development had differed profoundly from that typical for these sorts of city in the mediaeval West. One principal reason for this lay in the relevant strength of urban residents and their overlords. In the West, the overlords of cities had not been markedly superior to the residents of the cities in terms of their administrative and military techniques and resources. They possessed no centralised administrative staff capable of a systematic extension of their external political domination over the cities, and they had not monopolised military power to an extent which would have been capable of supporting such external domination or preventing the urban residents from

mobilising and maintaining a military power of their own, especially in the proto-typical cities of mediaeval Italy.

Thus:

" ...at an early date the European city turned into a highly privileged association with fixed rights. These could be and were extended in a planned manner because at the time the lord of the city lacked the technical means to administer the city. Moreover, the city represented a military association which could successfully close the city gates to an army of knights."
(RoC, p.16)

In China, by contrast, Weber claims that the overlords of cities had possessed far superior administrative and military resources and power from the very earliest period of the cities' foundation. This early existence of centralised political domination is a central theme in Weber's analysis of Chinese history and society, often amounting to a claim that it was associated with the early inception of the Chinese "empire". The difficulties with the this latter claim are examined below, especially in chapter seven. For the moment, one can note Weber's insistence that there was no period of China's history at which the cities were free, or were able to emancipate themselves, from the external domination of centralised territorial rulers.

Weber suggests that, in this respect, the Chinese cities conformed to a significant extent with a more general Oriental pattern of urban development represented particularly clearly by the cities of the ancient Middle East such as those of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Moreover, he attributes to China the same fundamental cause for this typically Eastern balance of power between urban residents and centralised territorial rulers: the dependence of the former upon centralised water-regulation supervised and

controlled by centralised rulers and their administrative staffs. Thus:

" In contrast (to the West - SM), the great Middle Eastern Cities, such as Babylon, at an early time were completely at the mercy of the royal bureaucracy because of canal construction and administration. The same held for the Chinese city despite the paucity of Chinese central administration. The prosperity of the Chinese city did not depend primarily upon the citizens' enterprising spirit in economic and political ventures but rather upon the imperial administration, especially the administration of the rivers. " (RoC,p.16)

Weber goes on to note a difference between China and the ancient Middle Eastern empires which introduces a second major factor into his developmental analysis. Although, as centralised rulers, the princely overlords of the early Chinese cities were far more powerful than their Western counterparts, their powers were more limited than those of early Middle Eastern monarchs. Again, the differences between China and the Middle East, and their implications for the development of both religious and non-religious phenomena, is a recurring motif of KuT. However, Weber's account of the historical significance of this factor for Chinese urban development has to be re-assembled from comments he makes in his configurational analysis of the Chinese cities and guilds.

When Weber applies his comparative perspective in KuT, he locates China once again within the Oriental ambit of his East-West contrasts. The persistence, and indeed pre-eminence, of religiously sanctioned kinship ties is identified as a major obstacle to the sort of historical process through which urban independence was created in the West:

"Revolts of the urban populace which forced the officials to flee into the citadel have always been the order of the day. But they always aimed at removing a concrete official or a concrete decree, especially a new tax, never at gaining a charter which might, at least in a relative way, guarantee the freedom of the city. This was hardly possible along occidental lines because the fetters of the sib were never shattered. The new citizen, above all the newly rich one, retained his relation to the native place of his sib, its ancestral land and temple. Hence all ritually and personally important relations with the native village were maintained." (RoC, p.14)

In China, according to Weber, this generally "Oriental" obstacle to the establishment of urban fraternities as creators of urban independence, was more specifically compounded by a distinctively Chinese combination of factors and circumstances. Not only were the bonds of kinship reinforced particularly strongly by Chinese religious conceptions and especially the cult of ancestors, but also the specifically Chinese form of centralised political domination contributed to the creation of a distinctive balance of powers between urban residents, urban associations, and their external rulers.

As already noted, Weber suggests that although China experienced a typically Oriental pattern of early centralised domination, this was weaker than it was in the empires of the early Middle East. Moreover, as he makes clear in his later discussion of the Chinese patrimonial empire from 220 B.C. onwards, (see chapter seven below) the effectiveness of centralised domination over the cities was circumscribed by the very small number of officials actually employed to administer such a vast area.

Thus, the combination of religiously-sanctioned kinship ties and centralised political domination over the whole course of Chinese history was sufficient to inhibit the

establishment of legally constituted urban independence. However, centralised domination was not sufficiently effective to prevent the urban residents exercising considerable de facto independence specifically in the area of economic activity. The weakness of central governments in this sense facilitated the emergence of powerful economic guilds and created a sort of power vacuum which was filled by kinship associations and the occupational associations modelled upon them.

" The paucity of imperial administration actually meant that the Chinese in town and country " governed themselves ". Like the sibs in rural areas, the occupational associations in the city held sovereign sway over the life of their members. This they did at the side of the sibs as well as over those who did not belong to any sib, or at least not to any old and strong one. " (RoC, p.17)

Thus, the relative ineffectiveness of Chinese centralised political domination, as compared with the Middle Eastern empires, was an important causal factor facilitating the emergence of the Chinese guilds as the wielders of enormous power over economic activity within the cities. However, they were still subject to centralised political control and the cities were still, in the patrimonial period, the base of the government officials. The historical persistence of centralised political domination, and cross-cutting kinship ties, both operating in China to a far greater extent than in the West, prevented the formation of inter-guild associations directed towards the establishment of political independence for the urban residents as a whole.

Weber's application of his comparative theory of urban development to the case of China is also, therefore, an account of conditions facilitating the emergence of the

Chinese guilds to a position of prominence which was not equalled elsewhere in the East, and even invites comparisons with those of the mediaeval West. However, he insists that their power and influence was not exercised through a formalised political independence and did not amount to effective movements for the creation of such independence:

"To be sure Chinese public authorities have repeatedly reverted to liturgical controls, but they failed to create a system of guild privileges comparable to that of the West during the Middle Ages. The very absence of these guarantees led the occupational associations of China to the road of relentless and incomparable self help. " (RoC, p.20)

This analysis of the general course of urban development in China leads Weber on to a more detailed characterisation of the Chinese guilds. He does this partly to substantiate further his causal analysis of urban development in China; partly as a further specification of his configurational analysis of Chinese cities and economic life in China more generally; and partly to gain further purchase on the consequential significance of the Chinese cities and guilds for the non-development of capitalism.

The Chinese Guilds

Weber's general discussion of urban development in China makes much of the ways in which the countervailing ties of lineage solidarity inhibited co-operation amongst the guilds in the cause of civic autonomy. However, his more detailed account of the Chinese guilds concentrates upon one particular strand of this analysis. He attempts to characterise the general features of the Chinese guilds per se and in particular, to substantiate his claims about their extensive de facto control over economic life in the cities. He goes so far as to suggest that the guild's control over individual members, and the individual's dependence upon his guild had no historical parallel except for the relationship between individuals and their caste organisations in Indian society. Indeed, his insistence upon the economic dominance of the Chinese guilds leads him to claim that in many respects it was even greater than that of the average occidental association.

Weber attempts to illustrate this economic dominance by identifying several features which he takes to be typical of the Chinese guilds. His examples of these typical features are drawn mainly from the guilds, and the Western literature describing them, of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, he claims that the Chinese guilds typically financed themselves through re-investment of funds derived initially from members' initiation fees and periodic subscriptions. These funds were, he suggests, often invested in joint landholdings. Typically, the Chinese guilds

provided a whole range of legal and social services for their members including, for example, defraying the costs of lawsuits, providing bail monies, and assuming responsibility for the burial of impoverished members. They also played a vital mediating role between their members and officialdom, sometimes in pursuance of individuals' interests, and sometimes acting to promote the interests of the guild membership as a whole.

Weber claims that these typical features were displayed particularly clearly in the case of the Hwei Kwan guilds. These were guilds of merchants and officials which had originally been established by "non-native" residents of the cities in which they operated. In this sense, they corresponded to the guilds of German merchants established in the Hanseatic cities of mediaeval Europe. Originally, the Hwei Kwan guilds had been established in order to protect the interests of the "alien traders" from the hostility of the local merchants, an aim which was clearly stated in their articles of association. They displayed the typical features of the Chinese guilds thus:

"The guilds owned clubhouses and levied taxes proportionate to the officials' salary or the merchant's turnover. They punished any member who appealed in court against another member. They provided tombs in a special cemetery as a substitute for native soil. They bore the trial costs of their members suing outsiders and, if there was conflict with local authorities, they managed the appeals to central authorities (of course they provided the requisite *douceurs*). In 1809, they protested the local prohibition of rice exports."
(RoC, p.17)

Weber is aware that not all the Chinese guilds originated in this way as a defence against "native" competition, though this is not always clear from the text of

KuT. However, he insists that the dominance exercised by the Hwei-Kwan guilds over their members was typical of all guilds, craftsmen as well as traders, and guilds with local as much as non-local origins. Warming to his theme, he claims that craft and trade guilds with "native" origins similarly held almost absolute sway over their members, and that expulsion, boycott, and even "lynch justice" were amongst the disciplinary means available.

He continues to draw upon nineteenth century examples when illustrating the comprehensive extent of the guilds' economic dominance. His account of these economic controls is best appreciated by following through a lengthy passage from the footnotes to the KuT text, a passage which Gerth incorporates into the main body of the RoC text. There is some justification for this, but the translation is less coherent than the original - (cf. RoC, pp.18-19 and KuT p.296, ffs. 1-10, and p. 297, ff. 1-2)

Weber uses these examples to illustrate the extensiveness of the guilds' economic controls, but they relate to what he terms traders' guilds. He notes that craft guilds of artisans exerted similar economic powers, albeit with a rather different emphasis. The prime concern of the craft guilds was the regulation and restriction of the number of apprentices admitted to guild membership (and thus allowed to practise their craft). In addition, some, if not all of the craft guilds sought to secure craft secrets by monopolising knowledge of craft techniques.

He claims that the most fundamental of the guilds' controls were those which regulated the economic

relationships between the guilds, their individual members, and the general economic life of the city. Thus, the guilds typically controlled weights and measures and, through the bankers' guilds, regulated monetary exchange rates. The guilds controlled those forms of currency produced by stamping silver bars. They regulated the credit affairs of their members and, over a whole range of financial transactions, operated as what we would now call cartels. Weber claims that this latter tendency was especially widespread amongst the Hwei Kwan guilds noted above.

However, Weber's illustrations of the economic dominance of the Chinese guilds prepares the ground for further discussion of what he sees as the crucial contrast with their counterparts in the mediaeval West. In both China and the West the guilds dominated economic activity in the cities, and in both areas guilds co-operated with each other in a variety of ways intended to further their shared interests and buttress their authority. However, only in the West were virtually all economic affairs of the city regulated directly by the urban guildsmen in their dual role as public authorities. Weber's point is that an urban monopolization of trade and industry only developed when this urban monopoly was sustained and regulated by the guildsmen themselves as politically autonomous agents within politically autonomous cities.

Thus, the Western guilds did more than simply co-operate with each other economically to a greater extent than did their Chinese counterparts. They also had the legal privileges and the political power necessary to co-ordinate and control economic life as part of a systematically pursued social and

economic policy for the city.

As Elvin points out, (1984, p.387) Weber's characterisation tends to obscure differences between the Chinese mediaeval guilds and later traditional guilds and to assume a continuity between them which is not in fact proven. However, this does not mean that Weber can simply be charged with lack of an historical perspective. In so far as his concern with the problem of capitalism leads him to be particularly interested in the later period his reliance upon examples of the later guilds is historically quite appropriate. Moreover, Weber does attempt an (admittedly very confused) account of the development of the Chinese guilds, which sees their origins in about the eighth century, as the product of attempts by central governments to co-ordinate a "liturgical" (forced contributions to the state) system of provision in which requirements for food and services were allocated to occupational groups compulsorily formed by the state (RoC, pp.18-19).

Summary

The main points about Chinese cities made by Weber in *KuT* itself can be summarised under the headings of configurational, causal, and consequential analysis. The crucial East-West configurational contrast lies in the fact that the Chinese city lacked political independence in any of the forms recognisable for the ancient or mediaeval cities of the West. It was neither the polis of antiquity, nor did it have the city-law of the mediaeval towns. It had no military independence in the form of the self-equipped citizenry of antiquity, or the citizens' militia of the mediaeval oath-bound fraternity. Nor did it have the independent political bodies (consuls and councils in Antiquity; political associations of merchant and craft guilds in the Middle Ages;) sustained through this military independence. In fact, according to Weber, Chinese urban residents enjoyed less formal independence than village dwellers. Unlike the Chinese village, the Chinese city had no formal status as a corporate body, and could not make contracts or file a law-suit.

For Weber, this contrast still held despite apparent similarities to Western phenomena in the guild organisations, the forms of city guild and city leagues that could be seen in China, and the considerable de facto influence exerted by the guilds over economic life. Although these features presented similarities to the English case in particular (the least politically independent of Weber's subtypes of Western city), even these latter differed from Chinese cities in possessing their own charters establishing clear de jure independence in many areas.

Weber's causal analysis is focussed upon this lack of political independence of the Chinese cities, and identifies the specifically Chinese forms of the factors most significant to his comparative theory of Occidentalism and Orientalism:

1. religiously sanctioned kinship ties inhibiting the development of communal solidarity amongst urban residents;
2. the prior existence of the royal bureaucracy and the subordination of the Chinese cities to it, despite its ceding considerable de facto independence to the kinship and guild organisations of the urban residents.

At the core of this account is Weber's conception of the determining balance of power between urban residents, central government, and the kinship associations. The combination of kinship ties and centralised political domination was sufficient to inhibit the development of urban independence but centralised domination was not strong or effective enough to prevent the urban residents exerting considerable independent control over economic life in the cities. In this sense, the weakness of central government created a sort of power vacuum which was filled by kinship associations and the Chinese guilds. According to Weber these two forms of association exercised effective de facto control over economic life in the cities.

Thus, Weber goes on to give an account of economic life in the Chinese cities which is essentially an account of the origins and development of the Chinese guilds and the nature and extensiveness of their control over their members. In this respect, the economic power of the Chinese guilds was at least as strong as their Western counterparts. However, the crucial contrast, for Weber, lies in the fact that these

powers were exercised de jure in the West but only de facto in China. In the West, the economic interests and policies of the guilds were pursued within an overarching legal framework provided by the concept and institutions of citizenship. In this respect, the guildsmen of the mediaeval West acted as agents of legal and economic rationalisation, and their Chinese counterparts did not.

In the mediaeval West, and in China from the eighth century onwards, economic life in the cities was closely controlled by guild regulations. However, it was only in the West that these economic regulations took the form of rational laws, i.e. a body of legislation enacted by, administered by, and binding upon, the citizens of what was in effect a form of local state. This gave a significant impetus to the development of rational capitalism, primarily through the impetus it gave to the process of legal rationalisation.

In general, the issues raised by the relationships between these seven or eight pages of KuT and its broader comparative and developmental context are central not just to this particular essay but to the whole Weberian enterprise. In particular they raise the issue of the relationships between political, legal and economic rationalisation which link together Weber's analysis of the Chinese cities with the Chinese state, and provide the core to his analysis of non-religious phenomena generally in China and ultimately to his understanding of the significance of religious beliefs for the problem of capitalism.

It has been argued above that Weber's discussion of Chinese cities and guilds must be related to his comparative

theory of urban development. However, this latter is itself a central component of Weber's comparative analysis of Eastern and Western civilizations and hence of his long-term developmental analysis of the emergence of modern capitalism. For these reasons, an adequate contextualisation of Weber's conclusions from his discussion of Chinese cities necessitates the anticipation of subsequent themes and issues at rather more length than would be appropriate for the final section of what has already had to be a lengthy chapter. Hence, as the title of this section suggests, what follows is a summary but no conclusions. Or rather, what follows this present summary is a chapter which attempts to offer both a conclusion from Weber's discussion of Chinese cities and an introduction to his analysis of the historical development of the Chinese state.

For Weber, the political contrasts between Chinese and Western cities are central to the problem of capitalism, not their apparent economic similarities. Given this perspective, the following short chapter will offer "intermediate reflections" focussed upon the political context of economic development as an issue which encapsulates and integrates Weber's approach to both the Chinese city and the Chinese state.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERMEDIATE REFLECTIONS

The previous chapter sought to demonstrate the extent to which Weber's analysis of Chinese cities and guilds is crucial to his analysis of non-religious phenomena in KuT. Firstly, it concludes unequivocally that this particular non-religious sphere of institutionalised social relations was conspicuously unfavourable to the development of modern capitalism. The whole tenor of the discussion demonstrates that despite the large number of apparent similarities between pre-modern cities in China and the West, only the latter enjoyed the de jure political independence which Weber sees as profoundly influential for the emergence of modern capitalism.

However, the analysis goes further than this in seeking to develop a longer-term, causal analysis of the contrasting patterns of urban development in China and the West and their significance for the inter-related rationalisation of the political, legal, and economic spheres. Moreover, this particular section of KuT, in exactly the same way as the immediately preceding discussion of monetary rationalisation, focusses upon the contrasting political contexts of economic development in China and the West.

This second aspect of Weber's discussion of Chinese cities is ultimately far more central to his analysis than a "simple" recognition of the contrast with the West. Weber constantly attempts to ascertain precisely why these different courses of urban development took place and

precisely what was their historical significance for specifically economic development. Whether Weber succeeds in this project is highly debatable but KuT takes him further in this direction than is generally recognised when interpretations go little further than a configurational inventory of "factors" favourable or unfavourable to capitalism.

However, both the causal and consequential levels of analysis in Weber's discussion of Chinese cities are brief and elliptical. The consequential analysis in particular occupies barely a few lines in the final paragraph of this discussion, and is characteristically engulfed by the endings, beginnings, and middles of a welter of inter-related themes.

"In China, this sort of systematic city policy has never fully matured. To be sure, Chinese public authorities have repeatedly reverted to liturgical controls, but they failed to create a system of guild privileges comparable to that of the west during the Middle Ages. The absence of these legal guarantees led the occupational associations of China to the road of relentless and incomparable self-help. In China, this also accounted for the absence of fixed, publicly recognised, formal and reliable legal foundations for free and cooperatively regulated organization of industry and commerce, such as is known in the Occident. These were the legal foundations beneficial to the development of petty capitalism in occidental mediaeval artisan crafts but in China they were absent because the cities and guilds had no politico-military power of their own (My emphasis - SM). This in turn is explained by the early development of bureaucratic organization in the army (officer corps) and civil administration." (RoC, p.20)

Apart once again from emphasising the clear unfavourability of Chinese cities for the emergence of modern capitalism, this passage demonstrates the extent to which Weber's analysis and conclusions can only be made intelligible through disentangling their causal, configurational and consequential levels in relation to the

broader comparative theory examined above. When located in this context, Weber's discussion of Chinese cities can be seen as part of his attempt to address the problem of capitalism at least as much through a long-term developmental analysis as through a conjunctural comparison of China and the West in the early modern period.

This long-term developmental perspective is itself addressed ultimately to Weber's attempts to understand the course of historical development unique to the West and which culminated in a uniquely "endogenous" emergence of modern capitalism. This poses three main questions:

1. What were the distinctive features of those uniquely Western social institutions (including religion as a social institution) responsible for the emergence of modern capitalism?
2. Why did they come to be so unique?
3. How exactly did they stimulate the emergence of modern capitalism?

Once again, one sees the adumbration of configurational, causal, and consequential levels of analysis respectively. However, a central problem, if not the problem in Weberian scholarship is posed by the fact that Weber himself never really integrated the answers he attempted to give to these three questions into a clear developmental theory of Western history itself, let alone that of the other world civilizations. An attempt to systematise this problematic more fully will be made in the final part of this thesis. For the present purposes of intermediate reflection, one can note the central configurational heuristics around which Weber articulated his questions, if not the answers.

For the reasons noted in the introduction to the previous chapter, Weber's GEH can be used, initially at least, to

specify this broader context. There are three consecutive elements to the final part of GEH, in which Weber addresses himself to "The Origin of Capitalism" (GEH, pp.207-71): firstly, a definition of modern capitalism and its institutional prerequisites; secondly, a broadly chronological synopsis of the economic development of the West from about the 16th. century to the middle of the 19th; and thirdly, an attempt to characterise and explain the unique long-term course of historical development in the West which culminated in the emergence of a rational capitalist economy:

"If this development took place only in the occident the reason is to be found in the special features of its general cultural evolution which are peculiar to it."
(GEH, p.232)

The institutional prerequisites in this formulation are those which are necessary if industrial provision for everyday needs is to be undertaken by private commercial enterprise on the basis of rational capital accounting.

They consist of (GEH, pp. 207-9):

1. The private appropriation of all physical means of production;
2. A formally free market for labour and commodities;
3. Technology which is rational, hence mechanised ;
4. A system of law which is rational and calculable;
5. A labour force which is formally free but substantively compelled to sell its labour power;
6. The commercialisation of economic life;

Moreover, the emergence of these institutional prerequisites only in the West has to be explained for Weber through identifying the uniqueness of Western history in terms of the emergence of its historically unique social institutions. In

GEH (p.232), Weber identifies these as:

1. the concept and institutions of political citizenship.
2. the modern rational state;
3. rational science and technology;
4. a rational ethic for the conduct of life;
5. the emergence of rational capitalism itself.

Collins constructs what he calls a Weberian causal chain out of the three distinct elements of Weber's analysis in the final part of GEH, and claims that he is simply articulating Weber's institutional theory of modern capitalism more clearly than Weber does himself. (Collins, 1980, 1986a). He does this by taking Weber's institutional prerequisites to be the components of a rationalised capitalism produced by the process of historical development which Weber analyses in his comparative account of the distinctiveness of Western history. The difficulty with Collins' reconstruction is that it postulates a much more precise connection between the comparative theory of Occidental and Oriental civilisation and the modern emergence of the institutional prerequisites than either his, or Weber's original discussion, is able to sustain. The specific source of the problem is the existence of a distinct hiatus between Weber's opening definition of capitalism and its institutional prerequisites (GEH, ch.22, pp.207-9), and the concluding comparative analysis of the distinctiveness of the West over a world-historical perspective of three millennia (GEH, chs.28-30, pp.233-70). This hiatus is not bridged adequately by the intervening synopsis of the historical emergence of the institutional prerequisites of

rational capitalism in the West itself, in the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, (GEH, chs. 23-27, pp. 209-32).

This interlinking section, which Collins rather neglects, fails to explain with any degree of precision when and why each of the specific institutional prerequisites emerged during this crucial transitional period. The consequence is that Weber, in GEH as elsewhere, never actually offers a fully worked out theory of the emergence of rational capitalism in the West, in the sense of a secular, developmental theory of Western history per se. What he does offer is a much broader characterisation and theory of the general uniqueness of the course of Western history as compared with other civilisations, without explaining fully why exactly its general distinctiveness should have led to the emergence of a particular economic system at a particular time.¹

This persisting lacuna in Weber's work is vitally important for the analysis and interpretation of KuT in general, and his account of the Chinese cities and guilds in particular. In their relationship to Weber's problem of capitalism, the essays of the Economic Ethics series form part of his attempt to substantiate his comparative theory of Occidental and Oriental civilisation in terms of broad civilisational contrasts, but they do not go as far as he might have intended in explaining the historical linkage between the distinctive elements of Western civilisation and the historical emergence of rational capitalism.

However, for purposes of interpretation, Weber's analysis of Chinese cities in KuT must be located within

his comparative theory of Oriental and Occidental civilisation. In these terms, Weber identifies the West as a distinctive cultural region, displaying a certain degree of cultural continuity from its origins in the Greek city-states to the emergence of modern capitalism in the nineteenth century. Underlying this broad cultural unity are two fundamental characteristics which were quite unique to the West. The first was the Judaeo-Christian tradition, even though its influence over the West as a whole was not widespread until its adoption as the official religion of the later Roman Empire. The second was the relative weakness of centralised political domination. With the exception of the Roman Empire, the West was not subject to centralised control by Imperial rulers and their administrative staffs to anything like the same extent as India, China, or the Middle East.

Weber claims that these two unique characteristics of Western civilisation were generally typical over the whole course of Western history and exerted a profound influence upon the development of social and economic institutions. In this way, he creates two fundamental civilisational contrasts which help to explain the distinctiveness of Western history: the nature of religious traditions and the nature of territorial political organisation. (cf. E+S., pp.901-41).

This comparative theory, seeking to identify and explain the distinctive development of Oriental and Occidental civilisation, accords a pivotal role to the typical Western city. It attempts to explain why there emerged, only in the West, cities which took the form of

politically independent communities with a unique concept of citizenship. Weber's answer is couched in terms of the existence throughout the Orient of two obstacles to this course of urban development. Firstly, the prior emergence of territorial rulers as external paramount authorities over the Eastern cities. These "princes" were able to monopolise administrative and military resources, at least to an extent sufficient to inhibit the development of independent urban communities within their jurisdiction. In turn, Weber sees the economic needs for centralized control and water-regulation as stimulating the early development of centralised administrative and military control.

Secondly, the persistence of kinship solidarity in the East to a much greater extent than the West provided a considerable obstacle to the development of broader communal fraternisation amongst the urban residents. Thus, the strength of kinship ties in the East was religiously sanctioned, and participation in a religious community was restricted to members of the same kinship group. In the mediaeval West, by contrast, Christianity had uniquely devalued the religious significance of kinship. The religious community was open to all believers, irrespective of kinship, and a religious brotherhood could take the place of a genuinely familial one.

In this way, Weber's discussion of the Chinese cities in *KuT* locates them firmly within the Oriental sector of his spectrum of fundamental civilisational contrasts.² His main claim is that the nature of centralised rulership in China and the nature of the Chinese religious system, mediated through its influence on the kinship system, influenced the

course of urban development in China in such a way that, despite many apparent similarities, Chinese cities were quite different from those of the West. This difference was crucial in explaining the different course of economic development in the two civilisations. In particular, the influence of these fundamental contrasts upon urban development helps to explain the lower degree of political, legal, and economic rationalisation in China.

In the West, the course of urban development was significant principally because of its influence upon the interwoven processes of legal rationalisation and state formation. Weber's focus for the consequential dimension of his analysis of the contrasts between Western and Chinese cities is correspondingly focussed upon two interconnected propositions.

Firstly, he claims that a rational legal system, as defined above, is one of the institutional prerequisites of a rational economic system. This is a point which Weber emphasises later in *KuT*, especially in the chapter entitled "Self-Government, Law and Capitalism" which concludes the *Sociological Foundations to KuT*. Secondly he defines the modern rational state precisely in terms of its implementation and administration of such a rational system of law.

Thus, the residents of the pre-industrial, pre-capitalist cities of the West created embryonic forms of the modern rational state. The Italian city states of early mediaeval Europe in particular were rational states in miniature, and even the English towns were islands of civic rationality in

the midst of a feudalistic kingdom and a feudalistic rural society. Economic activity within these cities was already conducted by rationally calculating businessmen, and economic enterprises were already oriented to some extent towards free-market operations.

Weber does not of course claim that all this constituted fully developed capitalistic activity, let alone a fully developed capitalist economic system. Even within the cities, the guildsmen themselves placed considerable restrictions upon markets in labour and commodities, through their elaborate system of guild privileges and restrictions. Moreover, the cities represented only one type of political community in the midst of less rational types of political community. Rational capitalism could not become the dominant mode of economic activity until a rational system of law and administration was extended across Western Europe as a whole, or at least across one of its emergent nation-states. Moreover, when the mediaeval cities lost their political independence, the states which initially absorbed them were still initially patrimonial rather than modern rational states.

However, as Weber discusses in more detail in his consideration of the Chinese patrimonial state in *KuT*, the latter was significantly different from the patrimonial states of early modern Europe. A particularly significant difference in the present context was that the European nation states were engaged in fierce international competition of a level not seen in China (according to Weber) since the Warring Kingdoms period of the first millenium B.C. This particular historical contingency, which looms very

large in Weber's own analysis is frequently neglected by his interpreters. International competition stimulated the transition of the mediaeval urban burghers into a national bourgeois class, partly through the making of loans to national rulers and governments. Even more importantly for Weber, it stimulated the process of political, legal, and administrative rationalisation which transformed the European nation-states from feudal-patrimonial to modern legal-rational states.

Weber's point is that the difference between these states and the patrimonial empires of the East, was due to a large extent to the influence of the mediaeval Western cities. The concepts and institutions of citizenship developed within them influenced the formation of the early nation-states and their subsequent transformation into modern rational states. This transformation was, in effect, a further and culminating phase of the development of citizenship through the creation of a fully developed and nationally extensive system of rational law and administration.

Such is the more general comparative context which has to be provided for an appreciation of the consequential dimensions of Weber's analysis of Chinese cities and guilds. It allows one to flesh out his extremely skeletal treatment of this problem in KuT. When placed in this context, it becomes more clear that Weber is trying to draw three main conclusions about the impact of urban development upon legal and economic rationalisation.

The first conclusion is that Chinese urban development did not stimulate legal rationalisation of the type that

occurred in the West, especially of the mediaeval period. Thus, the residents of the Chinese cities had not created the rational system of law and administration which Weber identified as one of the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism.

Secondly, the course of urban development in China had not stimulated economic rationalisation through the less direct but no less significant manner in which the Western cities had influenced the nature of political communities and the processes of state formation. These proto-types of the modern rational state had been created as an alternative form of political community initially opposed to the dominant external political communities. Ultimately, theirs became the dominant form of political community itself. In China, the economic associations and interests of the urban residents had been able to create only a de facto and not a de jure sphere of independence. They did not create an alternative form of political community, still less a type of state which ultimately replaced the dominant patrimonial state.

The third conclusion concerns the more direct consequences of Chinese urban development for specifically economic activities and institutions. In GEH, in Weber's discussion of the emergence of the institutional prerequisites of capitalism in sixteenth to nineteenth century Europe, there is an attempt to identify the ways in which the rational law and administration of the Western cities stimulated embryonic forms of rational capitalistic activity. In particular, Weber mentions the growth of embryonic capitalistic enterprises, joint-stock companies, and the

commercialisation of economic life. These were all forms of economic activity oriented towards market-oriented capitalism, and as such they stimulated the development of the other institutional prerequisites of capitalism. However, in the absence of a comparable framework of rational law and administration in the Chinese cities there could be no comparable stimulation to such embryonically rational forms of capitalist enterprise and activity. Weber elaborates upon this point more fully in chapter 4 of KuT (see chapter nine below).

In relation to Weber's discussion of the problem of capitalism in KuT, therefore, his analysis of Chinese cities and guilds is absolutely central and much more so than one can appreciate from the text itself or the commentaries upon it. The course of urban development, especially in its relationship to the development of citizenship, rational law and state formation is the dominant theme in Weber's discussion of specifically non-religious influences upon the uniquely Western course of historical development. The distinctively Western absence of long-term political domination by central, imperial rulers had influenced urban development and the development of citizenship in the Ancient, as well as the Mediaeval West. However, it was the latter period which was crucial for the emergence of the institutional prerequisites of capitalism, rational capitalist entrepreneurs, and a rational capitalist economy, as an inter-related complex. The urban residents of the mediaeval West created capitalism in embryo as an inter-related complex premised upon a rational system of law and

administration. Even more significantly, they created the bases of the modern rational states whose rulers and inhabitants consolidated and extended this inter-related complex in the process of state formation itself.

In this context, Weber's discussion of cities and guilds in *KuT* raises basic theoretical perspectives and issues through which he addresses the problem of capitalism throughout the essay. It has a great deal more to offer than a "checking off" of one of the items in a configurational inventory of non-religious conditions.

At the same time, Weber's analysis identifies causally significant religious factors in the forms of belief systems, or more specifically, religious meaning systems, which reinforced the bonds of kinship and provided no organisational model or legitimating ideology for the formation of communal solidarity on the grounds of common urban residence and common economic interest in the pursuit of a city and guild economy. However, the nature and significance of these religious factors does not equate easily with a narrow conception of the economic ethics of Confucianism constituting a concrete economic orientation which inhibited capitalist development at a time when non-religious conditions were neutral or favourable towards it.

What Weber offers is a profoundly more dialectical account of systems of ritual and belief, in which Confucianism certainly played a role, exerting a preservative effect upon kinship solidarity, and hence upon urban development, legal and economic rationalisation, and state-formation, over the whole course of Chinese history. This parallels his analysis of the impact of the Judaeo-Christian

tradition in the West over a long historical period, with different historical consequences ensuing from different institutional complexes of religious and non-religious spheres at different historical conjunctures.

Thus, in so far as these religious factors inhibited the development of capitalism in China, they did so not exclusively or even primarily by providing a concrete economic mentality at a particular stage of development, but by influencing the long-term course of urban development, and hence state formation and political rationalisation, in combination with other non-religious factors influencing the nature of the Chinese state and the balance of power between central governments, local officials, and kinship and occupational groupings within the cities.

These broader analytical perspectives are rarely explicitly articulated, still less systematized, within the text of KuT itself. As has been argued, however, they constitute not just a vital interpretive context for Weber's discussion of Chinese cities but also a mediating link to the discussion of the Chinese state examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FEUDALISM, PATRIMONIALISM, AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PREBENDALISM

I

The Transition from Feudalism to Patrimonialism

Weber takes recorded history in China to begin with the establishment of the Chou ruling dynasty in about the twelfth or eleventh century B.C.. He assumes that successive heads of the Chou dynasty exercised a real degree of Imperial domination over China, albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness, until the beginning of the Warring States¹ period in the ninth century B.C.

Weber sees the Warring States period as lasting from the ninth to the third century B.C. during which the Chou dynasty retained its honorific and ritual status, but not its political power. China had become fragmented into a number of "well-nigh independent states" (RoC, p.37) whose rulers owed nominal feudal allegiance to the Emperor but who engaged in continual warfare with each other to conquer and incorporate neighbouring states within their own territory. Moreover, the most powerful of these feudal princes frequently sought to occupy quasi-Imperial status as a "lord protector" who exercised his own domination over China in the name of the Emperor, rather like the Japanese institution of the Shogunate.

This process of continual warfare and gradual conquest eventually reduced the number of warring states to the point

where it became possible for one particularly vigorous ruler, Shih Huang Ti of the state of Ch'in, to incorporate them all within his own dominion. Setting aside his nominal allegiance to the Chou dynasty, he proclaimed himself Emperor of a re-unified Chinese Empire in 221 B.C. The Empire persisted in one form or another, over the long term, into the twentieth century.

For Weber, the reign of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti marks a fundamental watershed in Chinese history in so far as feudalism was replaced by patrimonialism as the dominant system of administration. Although the regime lasted for barely a dozen years, and was so personally despotic that Weber refers to it as a form of "purely oriental sultanism", (RoC. P.44), it delivered such a blow to the Chinese variant of political feudalism that all subsequent Imperial regimes were characterised by predominantly prebendal systems of domination and administration.

This is the broad historical framework within which Weber elaborates his sociological vision of Chinese history. In the following section this framework will be used as the basis for a more detailed examination of Weber's analysis of social, economic, and cultural development in the early period of Chinese history culminating in the overthrow of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti himself and the establishment of the Han Imperial dynasty in 209 B.C., a year after his death. However, there is some controversy amongst modern sinologists about the appropriateness of referring to China as an Empire at any time before the time of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, or to any of the Chinese rulers before then as Emperors. For this

reason, I shall refer to the period before 221 B.C. as the feudal "Empire" and the period thereafter as the patrimonial Empire.

A number of points must be noted at this stage. Firstly, Weber's concepts of feudalism, patrimonialism, and prebendalism, are not always used clearly or consistently in KuT. He uses prebendalism and patrimonialism to refer to the system of government typically adopted by all Chinese Emperors from Ch'in Shih Huang Ti onwards. That is to say, the Empire was divided into administrative districts rather than feudal fiefs, and administrative duties were exercised by members of a full-time staff of professional administrators rather than feudal vassals. Administrative officials were remunerated not through grants of land which they could regard as their own private property to be passed on to their heirs or leased out to sub-vasals but through a system of prebends.

Whereas in E+S (p.235) Weber uses the term "prebend" to refer to all non-hereditary sources of income and support provided for administrative officials, he uses it more narrowly in KuT. He uses it specifically to refer to the system in which members of the bureaucracy remunerated themselves by retaining a portion of the tax revenues due to the Emperor from their administrative district and levying fees, "gifts" and bribes from the population of their districts in payment for the administration of "justice", and the granting of licences, monopolies, tolls, etc.. Although, in E+S, prebendalism denotes simply one form of patrimonialism, in KuT the two are often used interchangeably as when Weber represents the Chinese Empire as a feudal state

before 221 B.C. and a prebendal state or patrimonial empire thereafter.

He also tends to vacillate between two senses of feudalism, both of which he feels can be applied to some extent to the whole of the Chou period. The first is a narrower concept of feudalism which is based upon the existence of institutions and beliefs analagous to those of European feudalism: fiefdom, vassalage, and a militaristic stratum of nobles and knights with a status ethic based on concepts of chivalry. The second is a broader concept in which feudalism is used to denote any political system in which the subordinate rulers of a political community are able to govern their territories independently of their nominal overlord, to regard the territory as effectively their own possession, to be secure from removal by the overlord, and to pass on the territory to their descendants. In fact, Weber frequently uses this broader sense of feudalism to refer to virtually any tendencies towards political de-centralisation within a predominantly, or officially, prebendal political system. Thus, he refers at times to the periodic resurgence of feudalism and feudalistic strata during the period of the patrimonial Empire.

The account is further complicated to some extent by Weber's reference to the Chou dynasty rulers as Emperors, and by his claim that Ch'in Shih Huang Ti restored a unified bureaucratic state. Both of these assumptions rest upon Weber's characterisation of the system of government during the High or Western Chou period (c.1100-771 B.C.) and this in turn rests upon assumptions that might have been made by

Weber's sinological contemporaries, but would probably be challenged in the light of subsequent research.

Weber assumes that the Chou "Empire" was formed by conquest, although he does not tell us who was conquered or how far the "Empire" extended. He does tell us, however, that a guide to its administrative structure is given in one of the sacred texts of Chinese tradition, the Chou Li, or Chou Rituals. The Chinese of the patrimonial period traditionally attributed this text to the Duke of Chou, the brother of the first Chou "Emperor", King Wu the Martial (Hucker, 1975, p.31). However, Weber and his sinological contemporaries were well aware that this book could not have been written until late in the Warring States period, probably some 800 years after the actual regency of the Duke of Chou, and that it presented an idealised reconstruction of a "golden age" (Hucker, *ibid.*, p.49). Thus, Weber refers to the social order it depicts as "semi-legendary" and "sacred" (RoC,p.32) and notes that its actual historical existence "seems problematical" (RoC,p.37).

Nevertheless, although Weber claims to be as sceptical as contemporary sinologists about the reliability of the Chou Li as a guide to the historical reality of the administrative organisation of the Chou state, he is unable to resist the inference that some degree of centralised bureaucratic administration did exist, at least in the High Chou period. Thus, he tells us that the Chou Li:

"portrays a very schematic state organisation under the rational leadership of officials. It was based upon bureaucratically controlled irrigation, special crop cultivation (silk), draft registers for the army, statistics, and magazines." (RoC,p.37)

The Chou Li also suggests that the bureaucratic organisation

of the Chou state was associated with an appropriate ideology in the form of the Mandate of Heaven, and that this was invoked by the Chou conquerors to justify their own usurpation of the previous (Shang) hegemony. Again, Weber is reluctant to rule out the possibility that the bureaucracy and its ideology, outlined in the Chou Li, reflects some sort of historical reality.

Thus in a series of footnotes (RoC, p.263) Weber notes that the Chou Li was traditionally attributed to the government of Ch'eng Wang (1115-1079 B.C.) and that it lists six major ministries. Although he claims that "only the nucleus of it is believed to be authentic" (f.9, p.263) he hedges slightly by casting doubts only on the actual designations of these ministries as the product of later literati. He seems to imply that a fairly elaborate system of state departments did exist during the High Chou and that only the nomenclature is a later, historically unreliable stylisation (f.10, p.263).

However, there is also an interesting comment to the effect that the administrative structure of the Ch'in and Han, as outlined by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, seems much more historically reliable than that described in the Chou Li because the former, which Weber outlines in detail (f.11, p.263):

"portrays all the irrationalism of a patrimonial officialdom emerging from the management of the household and the conduct of ritual".

Weber remarks that the Chou Li, by contrast, portrays such a perfectly rational system as to be "historically unreliable" (p.264). Nonetheless, his implication is that some sort of

bureaucratic centralisation did exist in the High Chou period, although its depiction in the later literature is artificially elaborate and systematic.

The Nature of Chinese Feudalism

Weber's characterisation of political organisation during the Chou period is closely interwoven with his attempts to specify the nature of feudalism in China, and the ways in which it differed from European feudalism. His main point is that the distinctiveness of Chinese feudalism lay in the influence exerted by two cross-cutting principles of social and political organisation: centralised bureaucratic administration and familial charisma. He tends to assume that centralised bureaucratic administration existed in two inter-related forms during the Chou period:

1. The rulers of the imperial provinces, which later became independent states, governed their own territories through a staff of administrative officials.

2. During the High Chou period at least, territorial rulers and their officials were subordinate to, and controlled by, the emperor and his central officials.

At the same time, Weber claims that throughout most of the Chou period the principles of what he terms "hereditary sib charisma" were central to the hierarchical organisation of the social order. The society was dominated by a traditional aristocracy of great families who were closely inter-related as members of common descent groups or clans. Charismatic qualities were attributed to the families themselves rather than particular individuals and were assumed to extend to, and be descended from, their ancestors. Thus, aristocratic status could only be inherited.

In trying to locate the nature and development of the pre-Ch'in feudal "Empire" within this matrix of cross-cutting principles and institutions, Weber makes the following main points.

1. He claims that the Warring States period was undoubtedly feudalistic ("political feudalism held sway for more than half a millennium" - p.37).

2. He remains ambivalent about the precise nature of the Chou state until the beginning of the Warring States period, characterising it very speculatively as a form of patriarchalism with some degree of centralised bureaucratic administration but with inherent tendencies towards political feudalisation. That is to say, decentralising tendencies through which vassals who were once politically dependent appointees become politically independent possessors and rulers of their own territory

3. The decentralising feudalistic tendencies are characterised by Weber as a series of "political problems" (RoC,p.34). He tends to see these feudalistic tendencies both as problems for the analyst to examine, in terms of the extent to which historical reality departed from traditional theory, and as problems posed for the Chou emperor in trying to maintain his centralised control.

Thus:-

i. Could the emperor actually remove the rulers of surrounding and especially outlying areas, as theory would seem to suggest; or were they, in practice, hereditary dynastic rulers ?

ii. Could the subjects of the tributary rulers make practical use of their theoretical right to appeal directly to the emperor and, if so, how often did this occur and did it lead to direct interference by the imperial administration ?

iii. In theory, the tributary rulers' officials were controlled by the Emperor's central officials and appointed and removed by them. Did this degree of bureaucratic subordination operate in practice? Similarly:

" could the central administration of the three great and three little councils (kung and ku) actually extend beyond the domestic authority " ? (RoC,p.34)

iv. What was the military relationship between the Emperor and the territorial rulers:

" were the armed forces of the outlying states actually at the disposition of the lord-paramount? " (RoC,p.34)

Weber is never entirely clear about the answers that might be given to these particular "political problems" but once more, notwithstanding his avowed scepticism about the Chou Li, he seems to be suggesting that some sort of centralised bureaucratic domination was being attempted during the Chou period; that it encountered the political problems of maintaining centralised control; and that the long-term tendency was for bureaucratic centralisation to give way to feudalistic decentralisation. However, in both the High Chou and Warring States periods, bureaucratic centralisation was sufficiently strong to temper some of the tendencies towards feudal decentralisation and, together with the influence of the clan structure and familial charisma, accounted for the principal differences between Chinese and Western feudalism.

Thus, Weber's characterisation of the Western Chou state and the succeeding period of the Warring States hinges upon the tensions between two forms of political and social organisation: patriarchalism, with its roots in familial charisma, and feudalism. Patriarchalism, as he defines it here and in E+S, is based upon a system of "hereditary sib charisma" (RoC. p.264,f.12) in which power is exercised by the traditional head of a kinship group over other members of the kinship group.

"They obey him and he commands them in the belief that his right and their duty are part of an inviolable order that has the sanctity of immemorial tradition." (Bendix, 1960, p.331).

However, charismatic legitimacy also enters into patriarchal domination in two main ways. Firstly, as Bendix puts it with rather more clarity than Weber, violations of

patriarchal authority are believed to invoke supernatural sanctions:

"Originally the efficacy of this belief depended on the fear of magical evils that would befall the innovator and community that condoned a breach of custom. This was gradually superseded by the idea that the deities had originated the traditional norms and acted as their guardians." (Bendix, 1960, p..331).

Secondly, and particularly important for Weber in the case of China, the cult of ancestors, and the concept of filial piety, which were a deeply embedded aspect of Chinese culture from well before the Chou period, gave a particular charismatic significance to the bonds of kinship.

Moreover, when Weber attributes a "primitive patriarchalism" to the Chou social order he is not simply emphasising the charismatic importance of kinship ties in general. He assumes that social and political organisation was based upon the hereditary familial charisma of the "sib", or the "clan". Weber implies that Chou society was divided into very large clans, the members of which bore the same surname and claimed descent from a common ancestor. The head of each clan, a position acquired by inheritance, together with his close relatives constituted a traditional aristocracy of "warrior chieftains" who led into battle an army based upon the less wealthy and lower status majority of clan members. Thus, membership of a clan, and the position one occupied within it, were basic to what Weber calls the "ancient status structure" of Chinese society.

As a conquering dynasty, Weber assumes that the first Chou "Emperor" had organised an alliance of conquering clans, and that the predominance of the Chou clan and its head within this alliance provided the basis for an assumption of

"Imperial" authority and a position of pre-eminence as the "royal family" within the traditional aristocratic stratum. This notion allows Weber then to refer to a "state organisation of the gentes" (p. 33) in so far as grants of land and political offices were distributed amongst the traditional aristocracy by the conquering Chou "Emperor". However, in so far as these grants of land were distributed through institutions that bear certain marked resemblances to the mediaeval European institutions of fiefdom and vassalage, Weber sees the superimposition of feudalistic upon patriarchal principles of social organisation.

Thus, for Weber, the Chou state consisted of a "middle realm", directly governed by the Emperor himself and the officials of the royal court, and a number of surrounding territories, ruled by noble vassals of the "Emperor".

"Outlying areas ruled by tributary princes were increasingly affiliated with the "middle realm", i.e. the "inner" territory surrounding the royal residence. This (inner) territory, as if under domestic authority, was directly administered by the victorious ruler and his officials, personal clients, and lower nobles." (RoC, p.33)

This initial fusion of patriarchal with feudalistic principles and institutions is what Weber means when he claims that the Chou social order:

"had already arrived at the point of primitive patriarchalism, initiating its transition to feudalism" (RoC, p.32),

However, the situation was further complicated, according to Weber, by the third set of organisational principles and institutions; those associated with bureaucratic administration. On this basis, and despite his avowed scepticism, Weber does not want to rule out the possibility

that the genuinely feudal period of the Warring States was preceded by an epoch in which patriarchal domination and bureaucratic administration combined to produce a form of state organisation resembling that of Ancient Egypt.

"Yet it is possible that a patriarchal epoch like that of the Old Kingdom of Egypt preceded the feudal period, for in both cases the irrigation and construction bureaucracy was undoubtedly ancient and grew out of the royal clientele." (RoC, p.37)

However, Weber feels that, whatever the precise extent of centralised administration, the early Chou rulers occupied and controlled their conquered domains by establishing a large number of larger and smaller territories under the local dominion of territorial rulers - greater and lesser "princes". He suggests that these territories could certainly be regarded as fiefs in so far as the political sovereignty ceded to these territorial rulers was originally exercised only at the "Emperor's" will and in return for the acknowledgement of personal fealty, tributary obligation, and military service. In this sense, institutions analagous to those of European feudalism existed to a significant extent even though he attempts to characterise a distinctively Chinese form of feudalism.

Weber goes on to suggest that a particularly crucial contrast stemmed from the fact that, in the West, aristocratic status was created by the grant of a fief and the status order of feudalism was created by the gradual transformation of fief-holders into hereditary estates of the nobility and knighthood. In China, an ancient hierarchical status order preceded the feudal organisation of the Chou "Empire". Thus, eligibility for the rulership of a particular territory, and even, Weber suggests,

administrative office within the central Chou or other territories, was dependent upon one's position in this traditional aristocracy. Members of non-aristocratic families were not eligible at all, and the position one occupied in the feudal hierarchy was largely dependent upon one's position in the traditional status hierarchy.

The Period of the Warring States

For Weber, this was a period when the feudal "Empire" of the Chou period succumbed to its inherently centrifugal tendencies and disintegrated into independent feudal states. The Chou "Emperor" was still "supreme pontifex" and continued to enjoy "ritual privileges which entitled him alone to offer the highest sacrifices" (RoC, p.39). He functioned as a highly important vehicle and symbol of cultural homogeneity and unity. However, territorial rulers conducted themselves as independent "princes" and recognised no obligation to furnish military service or other tribute to the "Emperor".

Weber suggests that the internal organisation of the independent states, especially in the first centuries of the period as he defines it, was particularly feudalistic. The system of subinfeudation was highly elaborated involving a clear hierarchy of vassalage and fiefdom all the way down to a stratum of knights. The latter were enfeoffed on relatively modest grants of land in return for precisely specified obligations to provide military service and other fees to their immediate overlord. A further similarity with

European feudalism as the chivalrous status ethic of the nobility and knighthood, a factor which Weber feels contributed strongly to cultural unity throughout the Chou period.

However, the distance between the ideology and practice of aristocratic chivalry was profound, and Weber describes the period as a whole as one of "unspeakably bloody wars" (RoC, p.40):

"In practice, princely politics appeared to be a relentless struggle between great and small vassals. The sub-vassals sought every opportunity to gain independence. With single-mindedness the great princes awaited the opportunity to fall upon their neighbours."
(p.40)

Weber suggests, nonetheless, that in addition to the chivalric status ethic, cultural unity was maintained by the pontifical role of the "Emperor" and by the non-feudal strata of proto-literati. He sees the Warring States period as a time when the latter, originally scribes, clerks, astronomers, astrologers, calendar makers, and experts in the calendrical ritual, enjoyed a marked rise to social prominence. Their services were in demand from the constantly embattled "kings", "princes", and "dukes", especially those with larger territories to control, defend or expand.

As well as retaining their original role as ritual proficient and guardians of the sacred texts, these literate administrators were sought as expert advisors and ministers in budgetary and taxation matters, military logistics and provision, and "international" diplomacy and intrigue. Many of their number, like Confucius himself of course, sought a Machiavellian role as leading counsellor to their

"prince". Cultural unity deriving from their influence was aided by their frequently peripatetic nature and their claims to specialist expertise and knowledge in a shared cultural tradition which transcended and was transferable to the many contending states.

" The princes sought to influence one another in the choice of literati, and to entice them from their rivals. The literati in turn corresponded amongst themselves, changed their employment, and often led a sort of migratory existence. They went from court to court just like the occidental clerics and secular intellectuals of the later Middle Ages and, like the latter, considered themselves homogeneous strata. "

(p.41)

Patrimonialism, Rationalisation and Ch'in Shih Huang Ti

Weber goes so far as to see the Warring States literati, at least in their alliances with the interests of the embattled princes, as prime movers in the gradual transition from feudalism to patrimonialism.

" Competition of the Warring States for political power caused the princes to initiate rational economic policies. The literati executed them. Shang Yang, a representative of the literati, is regarded as the creator of rational internal administration; another, Wei Yang, founded the rational state army system which was later to surpass all others. " (p.41)

Thus, the princes' interests in more predictable and manageable sources of revenue and military strength coincided with the literati's material interests in supplanting the traditional feudal strata of landed, aristocratic warriors.

"Princely cartels against subinfeudation were formed and the literati established principles according to which inheritance of office was ritually offensive and neglect of official duty incurred magical harm (early death). This characterizes the way in which bureaucratic administration displaced the administration of vassals, and hence the charismatically qualified great families." (p.42)

Weber claims that this general tendency towards increased reliance upon literati administrators at the expense of the feudal aristocracy was particularly marked in the state of Ch'in. The degree of administrative rationalisation always likely to be generated in a period of intense competition between nation-states was, he suggests, a main reason for the ultimate triumph of Ch'in and the re-unification of the Empire under Ch'in Shih Huang Ti.

On re-unification, this Emperor continued the process of administrative centralisation and extended it to the whole Empire with draconian severity. The Empire was rapidly re-organised into the administrative provinces which formed the skeleton of the Chinese state right down into modern times. The nominal Chou "Emperor" and, more significantly, all the feudal vassals, were displaced. Each province was provided with a military and a civil governor directly appointed by the Emperor, responsible to him, and removable by him.

For Weber, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti was more significant in the long term for the abolition of feudalism than for the immediate establishment of a patrimonial state. He suggests that the regime was a form of personally despotic, "purely oriental sultanism" (p.44), and that the literati were themselves subject to displacement and persecution in favour of administration by the Emperor's personal favourites, including eunuchs.

However, so despotic did the Ch'in regime become that it barely outlasted the life-time of its founder. Violent reaction against it came from all sectors of society, including both the traditional aristocracy and the literati.

Popular rebellion culminated in the establishment of the Han dynasty, which ruled China almost without interruption from 206 B.C. to 220 A.D.. During this period, the technical superiority of the literati as administrators, and of course their greater dependence upon the Emperor, facilitated their long term future as the administrative elite in opposition to traditional feudal strata. It also established the Chinese Empire as a patrimonial state.

The Patrimonial Centrifuge

Weber's discussion of the Chinese patrimonial empire emphasises the fact the crucial administrative dilemma faced by Chinese central governments from the Han dynasty onwards was similar to that found in all large patrimonial states. The great difficulties of internal communication over a very large territory encouraged centrifugal tendencies by creating considerable independence for local officials and the local rural gentry. Moreover, the various measures taken by central governments to counter these tendencies and to prevent the emergence of permanently entrenched regional power bases, or even feudalistic aristocracies, were themselves inimical to rational administration. Rationality, in this context, refers specifically to effective control of the administrative apparatus by central government, and effective centralised control of their administrative districts and provinces by local officials. Thus, the Chinese Emperors "ingenuously employed characteristically patrimonial means" (RoC, p.48) of maintaining their personal authority over a unified Empire.

These devices included the appointment of officials to a particular administrative district for only a short, fixed period, formally of three years, after which the official was transferred to another region. Towards the same end of limiting officials' capacities to construct independent regional power bases, no official was appointed to his home province, or allowed to employ his own relatives within his

administrative jurisdiction. Measures such as these, according to Weber, were non-rational in so far as they prevented the regional officials from gaining the familiarity with local conditions necessary for effective administration.

This typically patrimonial situation was compounded in China by the diversity of regional "dialects" which were, in effect, mutually unintelligible vernacular languages. This made local officials particularly dependent upon the services of local residents, even to the extent of having to employ them as interpreters. For Weber, these measures might well have prevented the long-term fragmentation of the Empire into small independent states, but only at the expense of rational administration.

" Thus the local and central government officials were not sufficiently informed about local conditions to facilitate consistent and rational intervention. "
(p.50)

Weber goes on to mention other features of the patrimonial state in China which can be seen as non-rational. These include:

"the thorough spy system in the form of so-called censors" (p.48),

and the subordination of the presidents of central and collegiate yamens to the presidents of other cross-cutting collegiate bodies. In this latter case, administrative precision was sacrificed without even a compensating gain for the political unity of the Empire.

A further non-rational factor stemmed from the essentially "pontifical and charismatic nature of Imperial authority" (p.49). This led to the decrees of central government taking the form of ritually appropriate criticisms of administrative procedures, and being received by

subordinate officials as ethical proposals or desires rather than administrative orders.

Yet another such feature, again typical of patrimonial regimes, was the small number of administrative officials actually employed. This, coupled with the problems of regional administration noted above, was another ineffective means towards the end of rational administration.

" Considering the all-encompassing duties of Chinese officials one must conclude that a district the size of a Prussian county, administered by one official, could not be adequately administered even by hundreds." (p.48)

All these features of the Chinese state combined to produce a system in which the formal unity of the Empire was protected in the long run against fragmentation by centrifugal tendencies, but at the cost of rational administration. The aspect of administrative inefficiency to which Weber gives most attention at this stage, however, is its consequences for tax collection and financial administration. Throughout the period of the patrimonial empire, the centrifugal forces noted above were generally strong enough to allow considerable control over tax-collection to be operated by regional officials rather than central government. Again, Weber sees the basic administrative mechanism producing this situation as one that is generally characteristic of all patrimonial regimes.

The salaries of officials were actually insufficient to meet the real costs of tax collection and other administrative functions. Thus, officials were expected to meet these administrative costs out of the tax-income due to central government. Moreover, regional officials were able to exploit the crude methods of assessing the taxable area

and taxable population of their regions. The interests of officials lay always in understating the taxable income of their regions, and so widening the gap between the proportion of tax revenues submitted to central government and the proportion retained by themselves. Weber feels that just as the centrifugal forces noted above were endemic throughout the patrimonial period, so they were always crystallised around this particular struggle for revenues between central government and local officials.

Two particular consequences followed from this perpetual, institutionalised conflict of interests. Firstly, the unpredictability of the central governments' tax revenues made rational budgeting virtually impossible. Thus, it constituted both a non-rational aspect of state administration, and a further particular obstacle to rationalisation of financial administration. Secondly, it generated the prebendary structure of interests which Weber later identifies as underlying the mandarins' resistance to administrative reform, and hence to innovations favourable to capitalism. These two consequences of the taxation system are particularly important for Weber in his attempt to explain the persistence of a non-rational state in China.

In this way, Weber offers an account of the administrative system of the Chinese patrimonial state, and its centrifugal tendencies, which he takes to be typical of all patrimonial states. However, he notes that the uniquely Chinese variant of this patrimonial type of administration was a use of the examination system as a means of appointing officials on the basis of educational qualifications rather

than qualifications of "birth and rank" (p.50). However, although this might have been a particularly effective means of checking centrifugal tendencies towards the:

" emergence of feudal status and the emancipation of officials from central authority " (p. 50);

this does not in itself make the Chinese administrative system significantly different from that of other patrimonial states in terms of the non-rational characteristics outlined above. Weber's main point here is that, given these general and typical conditions of patrimonialism, rational administration was not possible, whatever form might be taken by the patrimonial bureaucracy in particular societies:

" given the conditions, no mechanism could have functioned precisely in the hands of the central authorities ". (p.50)

For Weber, this is not to deny the "decisive significance" of the specific characteristics of the Chinese bureaucrats for Chinese administration and Chinese culture in general. However, he sees the particular status ethic of the Chinese bureaucrats, its connections with the examination system, and its religious underpinnings in Confucianism, as "further (my emphasis - SM) blockages" (p.50) to rational administration, operating in addition to the typical patrimonial conditions already discussed. He makes an analytical distinction between material and ideal orientations, and reserves his discussion of the relations between Confucianism, the examination system, and the status ethic of the bureaucrats to his later account of the development of Confucianism per se.

At the present stage of his analysis he is in fact

primarily concerned with the extent to which the persistence of patrimonialism in China can be attributed to specifically material factors and interests. More precisely, to what extent did the features of this typically patrimonial administrative system generate opposition to administrative reform amongst China's dominant stratum of literati-officials and candidates for office? Before developing his causal analysis in this way, Weber inserts a discussion of the origins and development of the system of public charges in China. His main purpose here is to sketch very briefly the development of a tax quota system in China and to suggest that such a system was well established from the eighteenth century onwards. He presents a more elaborate account of the Chinese system of public charges in the following chapter, focussing upon its implications for the agrarian social structure.

The Development of a Tax Quota Ssystem

Weber claims that the system of public charges in China originated in the fact that, as in all societies where centralised water-control was necessary for economic survival,

"the monarch's power is derived from the servitude of his subjects, as indispensable for flood control as it was in Egypt and the Middle East" (p. 51)

This produces a system of public property in which all land originally belongs to the monarch and its prosperity depends on the centralised control of the labour necessary to construct flood controls and irrigation systems. Hence, public charges are seen as obligations upon the subjects to provide labour for (1) public construction projects and (2) work upon land which was originally leased to a chieftain or prince.

The products of this labour upon public land could then be transferred to the monarch for the purpose of provisioning his own household, administrative, and military needs, with a proportion being retained by the chieftain. In this sense, the payments in kind can be seen as a sort of taxation which

"developed partly from customary gifts, partly from obligatory tribute of subject populations, and partly from the claim to regalities." (p.51)

Hence public charges were levied in the forms of obligatory tax, originally in kind, and forced labour. To this was added forced labour in the form of military conscription.

These forms of public charges were levied in varying

proportions and combinations throughout China's history, as were the proportions of taxes paid in kind and in money. The precise amount and combination of levies at any one time was determined partly by the scope of the budgetary economy and the monetary system, partly by the degree to which different parts of the Empire were pacified and brought under effective military control from the centre, and partly upon the administrative effectiveness of the Imperial bureaucracy.

The development of the system of public charges was further affected by two long term trends recognisable in all patrimonial regimes. Firstly, a tendency to commute the land-tax, upon which was based assessment of the population's obligations for labour duties and payments in kind, to money taxes. Secondly, a tendency to change the land tax into one fixed monetary sum directly apportionable to each province as a fixed quota for that province as a whole.

Weber claims that, in China, the system of public charges developed eventually into a tax quota system in which each administrative province of the Empire was allocated a fixed tax liability, and the chief official for each province was responsible for its collection and transmission to the central government. He suggests that this modern tax-quota system was established by an edict of the Manchu dynasty in 1713 (RoC,p.54).

Thus, competition between the Emperor and his officials for control over revenue collection, a competition generated by the patrimonial system of administration, was actually formalised most clearly in the crucial period of modern times, when the introduction of a tax-quota system for each province made China resemble a "confederation of

satrapies" (RoC., p.48). One historical precondition for the emergence of rational capitalism, the modern rational state, was therefore more remote in this period than it had ever been. In his earlier comments on the Chinese monetary system, Weber emphasised the inadequacy of seeing population increase, or the influx of precious metals, as capable of causing capitalistic innovation in the absence of an appropriate institutional context. Here, he identifies the tax quota system, and its associated structure of prebendal interests, as a crucial element of the relevant institutional context in China. It actually strengthened the opportunities for traditional sources of income and wealth for the dominant stratum.

Economic Expansion in the Modern Period

Weber suggests that the consolidation of the tax quota system was associated with a general period of economic growth and acquisition from about the eighteenth century. This allows him once more to re-orchestrate his discussion around his dominant melodic theme; the absence of significant capitalistic innovation and development in China, despite a number of apparently favourable conditions and circumstances in this modern period. He goes on to examine the problem of capitalism more directly in these terms, and to discuss the extent to which the administrative system of the patrimonial state, and the operation of the taxation system in particular, might be regarded as inhibiting factors.

After this time, the sources of government income from the land tax, the salt tax, mines taxes, and the Imperial customs duties, were relatively fixed and stable, and the Empire enjoyed a period of internal political and military stability until the wars with the European powers from the middle of the nineteenth century. Weber refers to these tax reforms as a source of:

"..the renewed flowering of China in the 18th. century." (RoC. p.54)

There was also a tremendous increase of population from the alleged figure of between 50 and 60 million people which had been maintained since the time of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti in the third century B.C., to the figure of some 350 to 400 million which Weber claimed had been achieved by the end of the

nineteenth century.

Moreover, during this period of quota-regulation of taxes, internal pacification, and rapid population growth, there were other factors which contributed to economic growth and expansion. In addition to the increased supply of precious metals, and the stabilisation of the monetary system and money economy already mentioned, Weber notes the easing or absence of other barriers to economic activity:

" Further ramifications were the expendability and elimination of servitude and the controls on occupational choice, of the compulsory passport system and other barriers to free mobility, of house ownership and control of production. " (RoC,p.54)

The result of all this was a considerable expansion of economic activity, and the accumulation of considerable fortunes, as:

" proverbial Chinese acquisitiveness developed on both a small and large scale. " (RoC, p.55)

Weber claims, however, that this burst of economic activity and acquisitiveness took purely traditional, non-innovative forms. Continuing this same passage, he raises what he calls "our central problem" (p. 55) very directly. Why was this particular period of economic expansion not associated with capitalist development, given the apparently favourable conditions?

In attempting to illustrate the absence of capitalistic innovation, Weber claims that there was no revival of the "once considerable export trade of China " and that:

" there was only passive trade in a single port (Canton) which was open to Europeans but strictly controlled. " (p.55)

Moreover, there was no general pressure, such as might have been stimulated by capitalistic interests among the Chinese

themselves, to remove these barriers to international trade. He goes on to suggest that, more generally, there was no "progressivism", in the European sense, in the fields of technology, economics, or administration, and that intellectual life, too, "remained completely static" (RoC,p.55).

Thus, economic innovation was prevented by a more general traditionalism in Chinese culture and society and Weber sees his principal task as the identification of the sources of this traditionalism and its implications for economic life. He suggests that both economic and intellectual factors were at work but suggests that both:

" resulted from the peculiarity of the leading stratum of China, the estate of officials and candidates for office, the mandarins. " (RoC,p.55)

In effect, what Weber does here is to locate the traditionalistic obstacles to capitalistic development most centrally in the actions and attitudes of China's dominant stratum of literati. Some of these obstacles are "political-economic" (p.55) and originate from the material interests of prebendary officials within the Chinese patrimonial state. There are also intellectual obstacles generated by the ideal interests of this stratum. They in turn originate from the ideational context provided by the demand for expertise in the Confucian tradition as a qualification for office.

In this chapter on the feudal and prebendal state, Weber explicitly restricts himself to a discussion of the political-economic factor. He attempts to demonstrate how the administrative structure and operation of the Chinese state outlined above, and particularly the system of tax

collection which culminated in the quota system of the 18th and 19th centuries, produced a politically determined structure of material interests which ran counter to rational administration, and to rationalisation in the political and economic spheres more generally.

The Structure of Prebendal Interests

Opposition towards reform of the administrative system, either as a whole or of its constituent elements, thus came from the officials themselves. Moreover, the officials were part of a dominant stratum which was internally unified in its opposition to administrative change. When Weber refers to the dominant stratum as mandarins he includes not just the actual administrative elite of current office-holders, but also a sub-elite of candidates for office, qualified through their possession of educational qualifications.

Current office holders were opposed to reform in so far as the nature of the administrative system concentrated enormous wealth and power in their hands and maximised their opportunities for accumulating wealth through political office. Moreover, office-holding per se, as opposed to, say, the purely commercial exploitation of landholding, was the primary means of wealth accumulation in China. Thus, as the principal beneficiaries of the administrative status quo, current office-holders had a vested interest in its preservation. They were also opposed to what might be termed piecemeal administrative reform in so far as most such attempts entailed a greater increase of centralised control. Thus, any net gain for administrative rationality was a net loss to the local independence of regional officials.

Equally significant, for Weber, was the fact that the sub-elite was also opposed to administrative change. The typically prebendal system of appointing officials only for fixed terms, and at the Emperor's will, meant that, however

secure might be the position of officialdom as a whole, the situation of individual officials was highly precarious. Thus, members of the sub-elite were a potential elite themselves, entertaining real hopes of an official appointment for themselves or their relatives. They shared the vested interests of the actual officials in resisting any departure from the administrative system that maximised their potential for income opportunities.

Weber emphasises the significance of this internal unity within China's dominant stratum by pointing out the contrasts with the patrimonial states of early modern Europe. Here, administrative appointments, and the income and profit opportunities arising from them, retained a stronger legacy from feudalism. They tended to be monopolised by members of an hereditary aristocracy whose appointments were held for their lifetimes and might be inherited by their descendants. Moreover, both they and the sub-elites were hereditary landlords. This opened the way for disunity within the West's dominant stratum of wealthy landowners. A sub-elite of landed gentry existed beneath the great aristocratic families. The interests of the former, in opposition to those of the latter, lay in administrative reform. Monarchical power might ally itself with the sub-elite in order to undermine the dominance of the elite, as in the case say of Tudor and Stuart reliance upon the squirearchy as a bulwark against the formerly baronial, and later Whig, aristocracy. This had the simultaneous consequences of distributing the spoils of office more widely and rationalising the administration of states.

In this stage of KuT, Weber's causal analysis is focussed upon the obstacles to rationalisation of the state created by the lack of any comparable will towards administrative reform on the part of China's dominant stratum of mandarins. He claims that this lack of impetus towards reform was broadly characteristic of the whole patrimonial period in China, even when central governments tried to suggest or implement such reforms as would lead to cheaper forms of internal transport, communications, and customs collection, or procedures for settling petitions and trials. Moreover, he compares this situation with that of early modern Europe where not just reformist but revolutionary movements were mobilized against the existing political and administrative systems:

"In the occident there were strong and independent forces. With these princely power could ally itself in order to shatter traditional fetters; or, under very special conditions, these forces could use their own military power to throw off bonds of patrimonial power. This was the case in the five great revolutions which decided the destiny of the Occident: the Italian revolutions of the 12th. and 13th. centuries, the Netherlands revolution of the 16th. century, the English revolution of the 17th. century, and the French revolution of the 18th. century." (RoC, p.62)

Summary and Conclusions

The chapter as a whole is addressed to two of the problematics of the EE series, one directly, and one more tangentially. It is addressed tangentially to the historical development of religious conceptions and particularly religious ethics in China through its account of the historical development of the Chinese state and the structural location within it of the stratum of officials and candidates for office. As such, it establishes the sociological foundations for Weber's account of religious development elsewhere in the essay by identifying the political-economic basis of the material interests of the stratum for whom Confucianism operated as a status ethic and who influenced its development profoundly. Moreover, his analysis of Chou feudalism is not simply an historical prelude to his more conjunctural focus upon the patrimonial state of the later Imperial period, but forms a crucial part of his analysis of the long-term historical relations between material and ideal interests which were profoundly influential for the production and reproduction of the patrimonial state itself. These issues are examined more fully in chapters ten and eleven below.

More directly, however, it is concerned with the problem of capitalism in terms of Weber's comparative theory of Occidental and Oriental civilisation. This identifies the nature of political communities as a crucial differentiating dimension, and singles out the concepts and institutions of citizenship, as developed particularly in the mediaeval

cities and the modern rational nation-states, as uniquely Western phenomena with crucial implications for the development of modern capitalism (cf. GEH, part IV, especially chapters 28 and 29, and chapter six above).

In these terms, Weber's specification and characterisation of the administrative system of the patrimonial empire as a non-rational form of state organisation provides the central configurational level of his analysis. At the same time it provides a point of departure for the causal and consequential dimensions. His causal analysis examines the reasons why the Chinese patrimonial state remained non-rational rather than undergoing the process of rationalisation which occurred in the patrimonial states of early modern Europe. The consequential dimension of the analysis is related to this through his prior identification of rational law and administration as an institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism. Thus the absence of a rational state in China implies the absence of a crucial institutional prerequisite of capitalist development. However, he ventures beyond the rather sweeping brushstrokes of the language of institutional prerequisites and advances suggestions about the more specific role of the Chinese officials and Chinese political organisation as a whole in channelling economic expansion away from capitalist innovations in the modern period.

The crucial nexus which ties together all three dimensions of the analysis is the structure of material interests generated for the Chinese officials by the structure of the Chinese state. This constitutes a structurally induced

feedback mechanism which inhibits political rationalisation. The non-rational form of administration optimises opportunities for prebendal income and guarantees the political and economic dominance of the literati. The material interests of the literati were firmly opposed to administrative rationalisation and their social and political dominance allowed them to articulate and mobilise their opposition to maximum effect. Each of these levels of analysis can be examined in a little more detail.

Thus, on the configurational level of analysis, Weber sees the Chinese patrimonial state as non-rational to the extent that the emperors were unable to exercise their domination effectively because of the independence of administrative officials from centralised control, and because the local officials were themselves unable to administer their territories effectively and consistently. This non-rationality of the administrative system could be seen particularly clearly in the constant struggles over revenue collection between the Emperor and his officials, between central and regional officials, and between subordinate and superior officials.

Weber does not pursue the consequential implications for the problem of capitalism of this configurational contrast in any great detail in this particular chapter. He does mention the difficulties this created for rational accounting in the state's budgetary system, but he does not elaborate on the ways in which the absence of rational accounting at the national level constituted the absence of an institutional prerequisite for modern capitalism. Here, he is more concerned with how this non-rational system of administration

affected revenue collection in particular in such a way as to generate a set of material interests for the dominant stratum of officials and candidates for office. Hence he is predominantly concerned with a causal level of analysis directed to the question of why the non-rational state remained non-rational.

Weber answers this question primarily in terms of the opposition mounted by the officials themselves to any movement in the direction of administrative reform. There might well have been instances of particularly zealous or crusading officials who spasmodically sought administrative rationalisation either independently or in alliance with vigorous and reforming Emperors. However, he implies that these were isolated cases whose efforts were doomed to failure in the long-run in the face of the opposition to reform that was much more typical of officialdom as a whole. This opposition to the sorts of reform that might have produced administrative rationalisation was, of course, generated by the structure of material interests typical for officials in a patrimonial regime.

Moreover, the political structure of the patrimonial state and its administrative system did not simply provide its officials with material interests in opposing reform. It also provided them with a position of political dominance which enabled them to pursue these interests effectively. Thus, he brings to the fore a very clear claim that the political system itself would have had to change, and the profit opportunities for prebendalism be dismantled, before the materially induced opposition to rationalisation of the

state could have been removed.

This claim brings Weber increasingly close to the position adopted by a marxist historian such as Christopher Hill,² who suggests that a capitalist, and eventually industrial revolution in England, had to be preceded by a political revolution in the early modern period, a political revolution which saw its most violent expression in the English Civil War. This resonates with Weber's insistence that the five political revolutions mentioned above were crucial for the destiny of the West. In the case of China, Weber goes on to emphasise the continued absence, right into the modern period, of any internal or external forces leading towards a revolutionary transformation of the social and political structure.

This is the focus of the comparisons he makes in the present chapter between sub-elites in China and the West. According to Weber the only significant sub-elite in China was constituted by those literati who did not themselves hold office but aspired to the spoils of office through a future appointment for themselves or a member of their family. Even if their proximity to actual office-holding was more remote than this, most of them had far more to gain from the preservation of the system than from its reform or abolition, given the high social status, political dominance, and opportunities for wealth accorded to the literati in general. In the West, by contrast, there had been "strong and independent forces" (p.62), stemming from the divisions within the landowning stratum, and the emergence of the modern bourgeoisie, capable of overturning traditional power structures unaided or in alliance with the "princely power".

Thus, this chapter as a whole emphasises again and again the immense significance of a whole complex of non-religious factors and material interests. The absence of a rational state guaranteeing rational law and administration constitutes the absence of a major institutional prerequisite for rational capitalism. This must be related to the fact that, especially in the modern period, the administrative system of a patrimonial empire generated the material interests of its officials in opposing administrative rationalisation and simultaneously endowed them with the political power to pursue these interests effectively.

The absence of reformist and even revolutionary social strata within China, and the corresponding absence of fundamental social and political change, is in fact the theme on which Weber concludes this chapter:

"We may ask: were there no comparable forces in China?"
(RoC, p.62)

Moreover, this emphasis on specifically political factors, concerned ultimately with the structure of the Chinese state and its more general social influence yet again constitutes the central nexus tying together Weber's discussion of non-religious phenomena in the Sociological Foundations. He attaches so much significance to this issue that it constitutes his link to the remaining two chapters. Firstly, in the following chapter's discussion of agrarian social relations, Weber tries to explain the absence of a stratum of large-scale capitalistic landlords in China which might have challenged the social and political dominance of the literati. In relating this absence ultimately to the agrarian policies of successive Chinese governments he

attempts to establish one of the longer-term enduring mechanisms through which was effected the reproduction of Chinese patrimonialism. However, this analysis also attempts to examine the co-determining influence of the kinship system upon the structure of agrarian society and hence upon the structure of the state, a complex of issues to which Weber returns in the subsequent, concluding chapter of the Sociological Foundations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AGRARIAN POLICY AND RURAL STRUCTURE

I

Introduction

Weber's chapter 3 is concerned mainly with the effects of government policy upon the rural economy and society, especially its implications for the size of land-holdings and patterns of land-tenure. It focusses upon the extent to which China experienced a commercialisation of agriculture and the development of capitalist social relations within rural society. More particularly, Weber wants to examine the extent to which there developed a stratum of large-scale individual landlords and to what extent such a stratum could be thought of as a capitalistic stratum. At the same time, if such capitalistic phenomena can not be discerned, he wants to establish what patterns of stratification actually did exist amongst the majority of China's population that was engaged in agriculture. Is it appropriate to think in terms of a rural population of serfs or free peasants? If the latter, were the Chinese peasant farmers predominantly owners or tenants, and how large were their landholdings?

Three particular issues inform Weber's orientation to these problems. Firstly, although his discussion of the extent to which capitalist social relations existed in rural society is developed further in the next chapter, here he is concerned with the specific consequences of specifically agrarian policies.

Secondly, developing a theme from his previous chapter, he wants to establish whether any intermediate social strata existed between the literati and the peasants. He feels that such intermediate strata, in the West, had been involved in the decisive political reforms and revolutions which had created favourable conditions for the emergence of capitalism.

Thirdly, the chapter presents a significant variation upon Weber's dominant "melodic theme" of identifying obstacles to capitalist development in the modern period. Thus, he returns directly to the central question posed at the end of the very first section of the essay when he discusses the monetary system. He noted there the increases in population and the supply of precious metals at about the same time in both modern China and the West, and the fact that they had stimulated capitalist development only in the West. In the chapter under discussion, he examines the extent to which this different economic response to the same sorts of economic stimuli was influenced by differences in agrarian social relations.

" By European conceptions the tremendous growth of the Chinese population since the early 18th century and the constant increase of precious metals would lead one to expect favourable opportunities for capitalistic development. Again we return to our initial problem. Although we have adduced some reasons for the fact that capitalism did not emerge we have no satisfactory answer as yet. " (RoC,p.63)

In terms of this problem of capitalism in the modern period Weber's discussion of rural society is focussed very clearly upon several closely related phenomena. The absence of large-scale capitalist agriculture in China was closely associated with the fragmentation of the land into

intensively farmed peasant small-holdings. Moreover, as the Chinese population increased it was associated not with rural depopulation and the capitalist accumulation and exploitation of land as in the West, but with an increase in rural population and yet more fragmentation of landholding.

" The following features of Chinese development stand in sharp contrast to the Occident: The epoch beginning with the eighteenth century was characterized by a tremendously increasing population - not, as in England, by a relatively decreasing rural one. In the countryside there were typically more and smaller holdings of peasants rather than the large scale agricultural enterprises to be found, for example, in Eastern Germany. " (RoC, pp.63-4)

The core to Weber's discussion of all these issues is provided by his attempts to identify the major persisting elements of the agrarian policies of successive central governments and their consequences for the rural structure. His attempts to document and illustrate these policies are extremely haphazard as he flits back and forth over some 3,000 years of Chinese history. He also tends to accept idealised reconstructions of the past found in the classical literary sources, and administrative decrees and proposals, as historically accurate descriptions of rural social structure. However, some justification at least for his procedure can be found in the fact that he is primarily concerned with the motives underlying the agrarian policies of central governments in China.

Persisting Elements in Agrarian Policy

The clearest way to impose some sort of order upon Weber's discussion is to begin with what he takes to be the typical motives and measures of agrarian policy. This can be illustrated most conveniently from his discussion of the patrimonial period, though it is clear that Weber sees the same typical motives and measures applying in some form throughout the whole of Chinese history, including the period of the feudal "Empire".

The typical agrarian policy is perhaps best described in Weber's own words as a policy for "fiscal protection of the peasants": a phrase he uses constantly throughout the chapter. Its prime aim was to levy public charges directly upon a population of peasant small-holders, and to prevent any tendencies to reduce the peasants to a serf-like status, owing labour and taxes to feudalistic lords rather than directly to central government. Thus, a principal motive of agrarian policy, inseparably linked to that of maximising and monopolising the tax-paying and labour resources of the peasantry, was to prevent the emergence of a powerful stratum of local landed magnates who might present a general challenge to the authority of central governments and exploit the peasantry in their interests rather than those of the state. Thus, agrarian policy, in the form of land reforms to redistribute land-ownership, and interventions in the legal forms and institutions of land-ownership, must be seen as part of more general fiscal policy.

Fiscal policy refers here to the ways in which the state attempted to levy public charges upon its population in the form of taxation in money or kind and compulsory labour services including military conscription. As Weber suggests in the previous chapter, this system of public charges varied from period to period in terms of the different emphases given to taxation in money or kind, and to organising compulsory labour for military service or for civil engineering projects such as public buildings, defensive fortifications, dykes, canals, roadways, etc.. According to Weber, throughout China's history the different emphases given to these public charges varied with the following factors:

1. the extent to which monetarization of the economy permitted taxation in money rather than in kind;
2. the relative urgency of labour requirements for military defence or civil engineering;
3. whether the central government attempted to raise and maintain an army of mercenaries paid for out of money taxes, or regiment its subjects through military conscription and arm and provision them through taxation in kind;
4. the technical means of administration available to central governments in their attempts to assess and collect these various public charges.

Thus, fiscal policies were concerned with attempts to levy public charges in accordance with the varying needs of central governments at different times, and the varying resources available to them for assessing and collecting these charges. They were related with the agrarian policy of affording fiscal protection to the peasants through attempts to levy these charges primarily upon a population of peasant small-holders. Hence successive proposals and attempts at land reform were intended to ensure that each peasant family

had a secure holding of land sufficient to meet its subsistence needs and to provide a surplus for the state. Weber seems to be fairly clear that this situation represented an administrative ideal and as such was the desired outcome of agrarian policy rather than its actually achieved end.

He summarises this policy in a couple of sentences, emphasizing the link between between land redistribution, the prevention of acumulations of land in the hands of powerful minorities, and policies for effective land-use and reclamation.

" the attempt was made to raise and maintain the number of taxable peasants in order to prevent the accumulation of property and the development of uncultivated or extensively farmed lands. Moreover, repeated attempts were made to define maximal holdings, to link the right to own land to effective cultivation, to open up land for settlement, and to redistribute land on the basis of an average land allotment per working peasant." (p.68)

Weber attempts to identify a range of related measures, stemming from the same patrimonial fiscal motives, seen in government policies towards land purchase. He suggests that the typical policy of extending fiscal protection to the peasantry frequently expressed itself in "injunctions against traffic in land " (p.80). In 653 A.D. for example, land purchases by the wealthy were specifically forbidden, and land sales more generally were again forbidden by an injunction of 1205 A.D. The latter was associated with similar injunctions against the impoverished seller of land staying on to work the land as the buyer's bondsman. Again, Weber sees this as an attempt to curb the tendency for wealthy landowning strata to introduce forms of serfdom and debt-bondage through buying out and exploiting the indebted

peasants. In this form, moreover, debt bondage could be used as a means through which money accumulated in trade or through office might be invested in land in such a way as to produce not only a stratum of wealthy landlords, but a stratum of feudalistic landlords.

Weber suggests that successive central governments did not, however, apply the typical agrarian policy consistently;

" As we have noticed, legislation wavered. The government alternately freed the peasants or handed them over to the landlords by restricting their mobility and permitting their commendation into servitude. " (p.80)

Similarly, prohibitions against the sale of land were not consistently maintained. The 1205 prohibitions just noted, for example, were only necessary in so far as alienable private property existed to some extent at the time of the reform legislation and:

"even long before that according to other reports."(p.80)

This vagueness as to when and to what extent there existed alienable private property in land is very characteristic of the whole chapter. It is particularly unfortunate because Weber's identification of the ownership of land as alienable private property is identified as one of the institutional prerequisites of capitalism. However, Weber does seem to feel that this particular prerequisite was never institutionalised to the same extent in China as it was in the West.

Overall, Weber characterises Chinese fiscal policy as vacillating between "arbitrary intervention", usually directed towards the maintenance of a small-holding peasantry, and "complete laissez-faire" (p.80). Policies of the latter type were likely to result in a tendency towards

the accumulation of land in the hands of wealthy landlords, especially at times of unrest, political instability, and threats of military invasion. This was associated with voluntary commendation of the peasantry as "serfs or "coloni" of feudalistic landlords. Nonetheless, despite these vacillations in agrarian policy, Weber claims that:

" On the whole the tendency to protect the peasantry prevailed . " (p.80)

His next task, therefore, is to try to identify the major consequences of this policy, and its uneven application, for the structure of rural society.

The Principal Effects of Agrarian Policy

Weber claims that these agrarian policies and their fiscal underpinnings produced conditions of landownership which he characterises as "precarious" and "largely irrational". He suggests that these precarious conditions prevailed for something like 1500 years (without actually specifying which 1500 years) and were exacerbated by the official's rejection of any codification of landownership. However, he suggests that there was a certain degree of legal rationalisation in the modern period. Thus, in "the contemporary Chinese law of real property" (p.80.), there are "apparently modern features". These included a general land registration which facilitated land transfer by the "mere transfer of documents" and certification of land transfer through the requirement of "a fee and seal (shou ch'i) for every document of sale" (p.80). Similarly, in phrases which echo his accounts of the commercialisation of economic life in the West, Weber claims that:

" the possession of titles of purchase, copies of the land register, and receipts for tax payment have come to be considered property certificates " (p.81)

However, as with his discussion of Chinese currency, he suggests that these apparently modern features of Chinese property are mixed with much earlier features which suggest its relatively underdeveloped, non-rational state. Residues of the earlier restrictions on the free transferability of land are found in every document of sale in the form of a clause which states that:

" the property is sold in consequence of a real need for money and for a legitimate purpose ". (p.81)

Although, in modern times this clause had become an empty formula, it reflects those earlier conditions in which the sale of land was permitted as an exceptional response to exceptional needs of expanding the population through the resettlement and cultivation of land. Similarly, the purely formal right of relatives to prohibit the alienation of "family land" through private sale is a legacy of the earlier conditions under which this right was actually enforced. (p.81)

Weber seems to suggest that these traces of earlier restrictions on the free sale of land, especially those which insisted on the proprietorial rights of the wider familial community, testify to those distinctive characteristics of Chinese land-ownership which persisted into modern times.

"the truly national form of alienation was not therefore, the ... hereditary lease." (p.81)

That is to say, the traditional expectation that peasant families should enjoy a state-protected right to sufficient land for subsistence was enshrined in such legal institutions as the rights of individual families or their relatives to repurchase their land when economic conditions were more favourable to them; and to enjoy an hereditary tenancy right to cultivate the surface of the land, even when ownership of the land itself was purchased by a third party. Similarly, the traditional expectations that the wider familial community should have rights over the disposal of land by its constituent individual families was an important element in the legal concept and institutions of land-ownership. These latter rights of the wider familial

community represent for Weber a crucial feature of landownership throughout Chinese history, one which had clear implications for agrarian social relations.

The implications of Weber's discussion can best be clarified by identifying the most important configurational, causal, and consequential levels of analysis.

The Configurational Level of Analysis

This is the clearest of the three levels to characterise. Weber outlines the elements of an agrarian social structure which he characterises most generally in terms of the absence of large scale rational agricultural enterprise. Rather, there existed a mass of peasant smallholdings becoming ever larger in number and smaller in size from the 18th century onwards. In the course of his account he draws a broad contrast between agrarian social relations in the patrimonial and feudal periods.

Weber claims that in both the patrimonial and feudal periods there had been a politically and economically dominant stratum of rural notables; and a much larger subordinate stratum of peasant farmers which in fact comprised the vast majority of the Chinese population. In the feudal period, the dominant rural stratum had consisted of an hereditary, feudal, landed aristocracy and gentry with a knightly life-style and status ethic. The majority of the peasants probably occupied a serf-like status, owing labour and taxes to their feudal lords, and there may have been some degree of manorial economy. However, in the patrimonial period, the rural notables were no longer the holders of feudalistic fiefs and the peasants were formally free from servile status.

During this latter period, the vast majority of the rural population were peasant smallholders, who worked their land as owners, part-owners, tenants, or share-croppers.

Weber does not give us any clear indication of the relative sizes of these groups, although Gerth, in a footnote, notes J.L. Buck's estimates for the Republican period of 17% tenants, less than 1/3 part-owners and over 1/2 owners. (f.30,p.274 ref. to J.L. Buck, "Land Utilization in China, Chicago, 1937). This seems to accord with Weber's more sweeping claim that:

" even nowadays small tenancy does not seem to be widespread." (RoC,p.273,f.21)

Thus, land-holdings were typically extremely small and cultivated extremely intensively. Weber suggests that holdings of less than two and a half acres were very common and were considered sufficient for a family of five.

He also notes that relations between landlord and tenant resembled those between the landlord and colonus of classical antiquity in their tone and patriarchal manner. Despite the decline of feudal relations in the patrimonial period, there was a persisting tendency, especially during periods of social and economic crisis, for peasants to fall into a dependent or even partly servile status in relation to a powerful local landowner.

The rural notables, however, were not typically the individual owners of large, consolidated estates. Rural landholdings were typically of only moderate size, fragmented and geographically dispersed, and leased out to smallholders. Lineages and other "sib associations" were just as likely to be landlords as were individuals. Crucially, for Weber, such landed strata as did exist in China were not agricultural capitalists, seeking to use land directly as a capital resource in agricultural production for a profit. Rather,

they preferred to acquire wealth from rents and invest this wealth in the education and official ambitions of family members.

He claims that this marked contrast with the early modern West in particular was closely related to the fact that, as a general social and legal institution, individual landlordism in China was much more precarious than it had been in the West. Privately accumulated land was subject to periodic redistribution by central governments; officials were often unwilling or unable to enforce the rights of landlords against tenants and debtors; and the free purchase and sale of land was severely circumscribed by traditionalist rights and obligations subordinating the individual to the wider family in matters of land purchase and tenure.

In relation to the questions raised by Weber at the start of this analysis, he concludes therefore that there was no intermediate stratum of capitalistic landowners mediating between the central government, its officials, and the literati stratum of rural gentry on the one hand and the small-holding peasantry on the other. The literati stratum was certainly a politically and economically dominant stratum of rural notables or gentry and they owned significantly more land than the mass of the rural population. However, they were neither a feudal aristocracy of landed magnates nor a class of large scale capitalistic agriculturalists. Nor did they enjoy any legally guaranteed privileges as a distinctive estate comparable to the aristocratic stratum of feudal China or the landed aristocracy of mediaeval and early modern Europe.

The Causal Level of Analysis

Weber's causal level of analysis is directed to the problem of explaining this agrarian social structure as being largely a product of the agrarian policies of successive Chinese central governments. He suggests that, throughout both the feudal and patrimonial periods, central governments sought to impose public charges directly upon a small-holding peasantry and to weaken the position of any intermediate rural stratum of landed magnates. Despite the vacillation and administrative limitations of central governments, this fiscally oriented policy of protecting the peasants generally prevailed, at least in the middle and later patrimonial period, to the extent that the accumulation and exploitation of large estates by a landed stratum was made difficult by government policies of land redistribution and restrictions on the sale and purchase of land.

However, Weber suggests that the operation of the kinship system also circumscribed the development of individual landlordism and land accumulation. Thus, one need not attribute the absence of a baronial stratum entirely to these agrarian policies. Certainly they were important causes of the precariousness of landlordism and they made it difficult for wealthy strata to accumulate land that could be farmed for profit through the expropriation and exploitation of the peasantry. In this sense governmental protection of the peasantry and resistance to the dominance of local, landowning elites, were principal causes of the predominance of small-scale intensive peasant farming at the expense of

large scale commercialisation of agriculture. However, the operation of the kinship system, and indeed the absence of primogeniture, itself supported and encouraged by fiscal policies, were important co-determinants.

The Consequential Level of Analysis

It might therefore be argued that Weber has presented a plausible, or at least, when the tangled threads of his discussion are unravelled, an intelligible characterisation and causal analysis of the typical agrarian social structure particularly in the patrimonial period. However, the consequential dimension of the analysis in relation to the problem of capitalism is much less clear or explicit. His account of rural society was explicitly introduced as an attempt to gain greater purchase on his central problem of the Sociological Foundations: why did the modern increase in population and the supply of precious metals not stimulate capitalistic development as it had done in the West? At the same time, he also wanted to relate this account to the problem established at the end of his previous chapter. Why were there no social strata opposed to the political system and sufficiently powerful to change it by violent and revolutionary means if necessary?

To a large extent, Weber gives a much more coherent and consistent answer to this second problem than the first. In attributing the absence of a potentially reformist or revolutionary stratum of landed magnates to the difficulties of capitalistically oriented land accumulation noted above, Weber has attempted to further his analysis of why there was no political change in China of the type he felt would have been necessary to facilitate capitalistic economic development. If the structure of the prebendal Chinese state

was a major inhibitor of capitalist development, as he argued in his previous chapter, then the absence of a stratum capable of changing the structure of the state was a further inhibiting factor and represented a very significant contrast with the course of Western history.¹

Weber actually gives no clear answer in the text itself to the question of why agrarian social relations in China directly inhibited capitalist development, especially during the apparently favourable conditions of the modern period. In terms of his "initial problem" he does not explain how the the structure of rural society, and the absence of large-scale capitalist agriculture, directly inhibited capitalist development more generally. However, by identifying a crucial difference in the agrarian context of the increases in population and precious metals common to both China and the West in roughly the same period, he does indicate that capitalist social relations were less well developed in the former. In this sense, he returns reasonably clearly to the problem of Chinese capitalism identified at the end of his discussion of the monetary system.

Thus, although population increase in the West might just as easily be seen as an expression of capitalist development than as its cause, there is no doubt that an increase in the number and proportion of the population available for employment as an industrial proletariat was important for the growth of industrial capitalism. In China, however, population increase was neither an expression nor a cause of capitalistic development. The economic significance of population increase was entirely different. In China there was no significant capitalist agriculture or industry

to be stimulated further by population increase. Here, population increase was associated with yet further fragmentation of the countryside into smaller intensively cultivated landholdings. This is important to Weber as a further means of demonstrating that population increase cannot be seen as a sufficient cause of capitalist development in the West.

Interpretation and Contextualisation

As noted above, especially in chapter six, Weber identifies the appropriation of all physical means of production, including agricultural land, as an institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism (cf. GEH. ch.23) It could therefore be argued that, in KuT, he identifies a number of restrictions on the free sale and purchase of land as an alienable commodity and so presents a case for the absence or at least relative underdevelopment of this particular prerequisite. There is also an argument in the same text which seems to imply that the commercialisation of agriculture in the West played an important role in stimulating industrial capitalism and modern rational capitalism more generally. (GEH, esp, chs. 5 and 6) However, this is not an issue which Weber addresses at any great length and is perhaps more familiar in the discourse of modern economic historians than in that of Weber and his contemporaries.

In general, however, Weber's analysis of rural society in China also contributes at least as much to his longer-term developmental analysis of the problem of capitalism as to what was referred to above as a sort of conjunctural inventory of non-religious phenomena in China and the West. The absence of large-scale commercialised agriculture in China was at least as significant, for Weber, in its implications for the reproduction of the patrimonial state through the absence of the sorts of internal oppositional strata and factions that

had initiated political rationalisation and even revolutionary political change in the West. Moreover, this absence of oppositional landed magnates was itself a partly intended and partly unintended consequence of the traditional patrimonial state's agrarian policies. As such, his discussion contributes to his analysis of the long-term persistence of the Chinese patrimonial state more effectively than is at first apparent from the mass of circumstantial detail in which this analysis is encrusted.

This helps to explain the fact that the significance of this analysis has been neglected in the commentaries, even in those, such as Turner's (ch. 3 above), which grasp the centrality of Weber's discussion of the Chinese patrimonial state itself. At the same time, of course, it does make even more untenable any interpretive claim that agrarian social relations in China, as a non-religious institutional sphere, were "neutral" in their favourability for modern capitalistic development when compared with those of early modern Europe.

Moreover, in terms of the longer-term developmental analysis, the agrarian structure is seen by Weber very largely as a product of the material interests and agrarian policies of successive Chinese Emperors and prebendal officials, and these in turn are seen as generally typical of the anti-centrifugal policies of the rulers of patrimonial states. The specifically Chinese element added to this materialist nexus is the coincidence of the material interests of the Chinese Literati with these policies, and their position as the administrative elite changed with their implementation. These factors are closely related to the absence of a social stratum of powerful landed magnates

opposed to the political system.

Only two more points need be noted at this stage. Firstly, as was argued in chapter two above, the concept of agrarian social structure used frequently in this discussion does not equate unproblematically with the non-religious/material/structural side of the ideal:material dichotomies criticised in that earlier chapter. As was argued there, an institutional sphere such as that constituted by agrarian social relations can refer to a complex of equally structured meaning systems and material practice.

Secondly, Weber's claim that:

"technological improvements were almost ruled out by the extensive partitioning of land.." (and that).. "tradition held sway despite a developed money economy" (RoC, p.83),

comes remarkably close to the Sinha-Elvin thesis that capitalist development in the modern period was thwarted by a "high-level equilibrium trap"² in which population increase was associated with a maximally possible intensive utilisation of land under pre-modern technology. In this sense, Weber's analysis not only departs from the "culturalist" explanation attributed to him by Elvin but actually focusses, in part at least, on precisely the sorts of economic conjunctural conditions which Elvin feels should take priority in explaining the problem of Chinese capitalism.³ (cf. chapter 3 above)

Thus, the structure of the state, the policies of successive governments, the absence of a politically and economically independent landed estate, the fragmentation of land-holding and the nature of the kinship system are key

non-religious conjunctural, as well as long-term, factors singled out by Weber to help explain the non-emergence of capitalism. There is no suggestion here that the fragmentation of the Chinese countryside and the absence of capitalistic agriculture can be attributed directly to the economic ethics of Confucianism. One could certainly argue that Confucianism was an integral element of the Chinese political and kinship systems and so entered into the constellation of policies and interests which influenced and maintained the agrarian social structure. However, this would be to argue once again that religious beliefs had a primarily "indirect" influence upon the course of China's economic development and that it was exerted through a mediating complex of social institutions and material interests.

The following chapter examines Weber's own attempt to focus more precisely on the economic significance of the non-religious institutional complex of late Imperial China. It discusses the sorts of general conjunctural conclusions which Weber sought to formulate in the concluding chapter of the *Sociological Foundations to KuT*.

CHAPTER NINE

THE CONJUNCTURAL COMPLEX OF LATE IMPERIAL CHINA

I

The Absence of Capitalist Social Relations

In his fourth and concluding chapter of the Sociological Foundations to KuT, Weber does precisely what Elvin, as noted at the end of the previous chapter, accuses him of not doing. That is to say, he draws together observations advanced in his earlier comments on Chinese non-religious phenomena and treats them as the inter-related institutional context for specifically economic activity at a particular historical conjuncture. To a large extent, the earlier chapters discussed these non-religious institutions primarily at the configurational and causal levels of analysis, as was the case for example in his discussion of the Chinese city and the Chinese state. Weber's own title for this chapter, "Self-government, Law and Capitalism", indicates this by including an explicit reference to capitalism in a chapter heading for the first time, and by focussing upon the inter-relationships between "self-governing" kinship associations and the patrimonial system of law and administration.

Although several major issues are introduced into the analysis at this point, this chapter more than any of its three predecessors, attempts to demonstrate the absence of modern capitalism in China through a discussion of specifically economic institutions. Hence, Weber gives considerable attention to organised economic enterprises in traditional China, especially those forms of enterprise which

were larger in scale than the individual household or the workshop of the individual artisan.

Thus, Weber is concerned for example with whether or not there were petty capitalist enterprises in China, comparable to those of the mediaeval Western and particularly Italian cities, which might have provided the specifically economic foundations for the subsequent development of modern capitalist enterprises and a modern capitalist economy. As will be seen, his general conclusion is that whilst certain forms of petty capitalism did exist in China, such that from this purely economic point of view modern capitalism might subsequently have developed, the broader institutional context influenced them in such a way as to inhibit the further development of modern capitalist social relations within them. Within this institutional context, Weber particularly emphasises the role of kinship relations and the role of the Chinese state.

In this chapter, therefore, Weber tries to show that the typically Chinese manner of forming economic organisations and enterprises that might be regarded as petty capitalist did not in fact involve capitalist social relations to any significant extent. If one applies his vocabulary of institutional prerequisites more explicitly and consistently than Weber did himself, one can emphasise, for example, his claim that although in the modern period especially there were few restrictions on labour mobility and labour markets, there was no substantive compulsion for a proletarian stratum to sell its labour to capitalist employers in order to survive. Thus, no strata emerged comparable to those of the modern social classes of proletariat and bourgeoisie.

A main reason for this was that the typically Chinese petty capitalist enterprise was based upon actual or simulated kinship organisations, and these protected individuals against:

" the dangers of proletarianisation and capitalistic subjection " (RoC, p.97).

Weber relates this fact specifically to his "modern times" theme by pointing out that this absence of genuinely capitalist subjugation, and hence of genuinely modern capitalism, was a crucial feature of Chinese society which persisted into the modern period. This was so despite the existence of some apparently favourable features for capitalist development in the same period. These latter included the apparently " democratic " and open nature of Chinese society in terms of the absence of fixed status orders and the absence of elaborate restrictions on geographical mobility.

Similarly, there were no laws restricting usury, or similar legal restrictions to trade. These factors, combined with the undoubted existence of certain forms of petty capitalist enterprise, constitute the basis for Weber's claim that from a purely economic point of view, a:

"genuine bourgeois, industrial capitalism might have developed from these petty capitalistic beginnings" (RoC, p.100),

were it not for the countervailing influence of the broader institutional context articulated in particular around the political and kinship systems.

Weber begins his discussion of these issues by insisting that there was little free-market capitalism in either the feudal or patrimonial periods. There had been

political capitalism relating to the financing of territorial rulers during the period of the Warring States but, very profitable though this had been, it had been stifled when political unification prevented "international" competition between the states. In the patrimonial period, profit opportunities were greater in industry than in agriculture, (despite the traditional esteem of the latter), and greater in trade than in industry, but there was only petty capitalism without more developed forms of capitalist labour relations in both urban and rural forms of trade and industry. This absence of capitalist social relations could be seen in: the typically Chinese forms of petty capitalism, the forms of profit seeking typical of "the stratum of land magnates" (p.86), and the ways in which both of these forms of economic activity were connected to the kinship system. Weber claims that, as is "usual with patrimonial states" the best opportunities for wealth were available to:

"he who was formally an official and actually a tax-farmer" (p.85).

Thus, the "propertied strata" were those who invested their wealth in land as a means towards office-holding rather than rational profit-making. They were not rational profit-makers of either a feudal or bourgeois type. Rather, they:

"speculated in opportunities for the purely political exploitation of office. " (p.86)

The economic activity of both the propertied strata and the petty capitalists was based upon actual or simulated kinship ties in such a way as to provide protection against the essentially exploitative nature of capitalist social relations. The stratum of rural gentry operated economically

as a characteristically Chinese type of "acquisitive familial community" (p.86). Wealth accumulated through office was invested in landholdings owned by the lineage as an association of co-heirs of the retired official. This landed wealth was used to enable other members of the family association to study and qualify for office-holding in turn. When they attained office, they were expected to enrich the co-heirs and provide other lineage members with political office or at least influence. Thus, this stratum consisted of:

"...associations of heirs organised as household partnerships for the pursuit of office" (p.85),

as opposed to the pursuit of profit through a market economy.

Having outlined these characteristically Chinese forms of wealth acquisition, Weber goes on to relate them more systematically to his comparative typology of capitalistic and non-capitalistic forms of wealth acquisition, and his comparative theory of Occidental and Oriental civilisations. He claims that the propertied strata accumulated their wealth through a system of "internal booty capitalism" which was "not primarily a matter of rational profit-making". It also included the jobbing of tax-premiums (p.86), and the whole system of charging for administration and "justice". This, together with tax-farming, constituted the system of wealth accumulation through office-holding and privileged access to office-holders which Weber sees as the essence of politically-oriented capitalism.

Similarly, the co-operative forms of enterprise in agriculture, trade, and industry, in both the villages and the towns, were not modern forms of capitalism with

capitalistic social relations. Before developing this last point in more detail, Weber links his causal and configurational levels of analysis together in a way reminiscent of his linking of the lack of urban autonomy with the absence of groups moving to secure it. Weber points out the lack of those points of departure for modern capitalism which were found in such institutions as were:

"...characteristically developed by the flourishing burghers of the mediaeval (Western) cities (who forged the) legal forms and societal foundations for capitalistic enterprise. " (p.85)

Thus there was:

"..no rational depersonalisation of business comparable to its unmistakable beginnings in the commercial law of the Italian cities." (p.85)

This returns him to his theme of the difference between acquisitive familial communities in China and those sorts of family association from which "our occidental" trading company later emerged "at least in Italy" (p. 85).

The latter were oriented towards the rational pursuit of profit under stable legal guarantees in autonomous cities. Their attempts to expand these legal forms and societal foundations in their own interest simultaneously created an institutional infrastructure for the further development of modern capitalism. However, the wealth accumulation of Chinese families was conditioned by the sorts of profit opportunities presented by a prebendal system of administration, and the all-encompassing, religiously sanctified ties of kinship. This claim leads Weber on to a discussion of what he calls (p.95) the "sib fetters of the economy". I have sub-headed this discussssion, for reasons which I hope will become clear, "the political economy of Chinese kinship".

II

The Political Economy of Chinese Kinship

In general, Weber suggests that the typically Chinese ways of forming economic organisations and enterprises that might be regarded as petty capitalist did not in fact involve capitalistic social relations to any significant extent. The main reason was that those economic organisations which did extend:

" beyond the scope of the individual establishment "
(RoC, p.96),

were based upon actual or simulated kinship organisation and as such they protected individuals against the dangers of proletarianisation and capitalist subjection at the hands of landlords, lessors, employers, etc..

There was, however, some degree of capitalistic subjection, and the potential for more, and there was also free residential mobility and free choice of occupations. Also, in the modern period, there were no compulsory passports, compulsory schooling, or compulsory military service. Nor were there any laws restricting usury or any similar restrictions upon trade. Nonetheless, despite these apparently favourable phenomena, modern capitalism did not emerge and Weber claims that "a number of reasons - mostly related to the structure of the state" - can be given for this (RoC, p.100). In fact, in this chapter Weber is concerned as much with the inter-related economic influence of both kinship organisation and the patrimonial state, and their reciprocal influence upon their mutual reproduction. In elaborating upon this perspective, he goes on to identify two

principal ways in which "sib fetters" inhibited capitalistic development through both their economic and their political consequences.

Firstly, the close articulation of kinship groupings with a cohesive stratum of village notables inhibited the rationalisation of administration. Innovation in this direction, especially fiscal innovation, was resisted as a threat to traditional practice, which was itself religiously sanctioned. This resistance was, of course, effectively aided by the weakness and extensiveness (i.e. "thinness") of the bureaucracy.

" The rationalism of the bureaucracy was confronted with a resolute and traditionalistic power which, on the whole and in the long run, was stronger because it operated continuously and was supported by the most intimate personal associations." (p.95)

Secondly, not only was there stubborn, kin-aided resistance to the state official but also to:

"..the landlord lessor, employer, and indeed any "superior" outside of the sib. " (p.95)

Weber suggests that as a result of this fact alone:

".... "work discipline" and the free-market selection of labour which have characterised modern large enterprise have been thwarted in China . " (p.95)

This is the theme which dominates Weber's discussion of the non-development of rational entrepreneurial capitalism amongst the economic enterprises which did exist. He claims that the protection against capitalistic subjection afforded by kinship networks thwarted, for example, any development of the putting-out system:

"....which had introduced capitalist domination in the West" (p. 97).

As in GEH, Weber is particularly concerned with the

development of a proletariat who can, and must, sell their labour to an employer. His suggestion that it is not possible to discern genuinely bourgeois or proletarian strata in Chinese petty capitalism leads him to comment more generally on Chinese social stratification.

In these terms, he suggests that the absence of significant developments towards a capitalistic system of social stratification is a part of the "much discussed democracy" of China (RoC. p.96). By this, Weber means not a democracy in the modern sense of representative government, but a degree of openness and fluidity of social status greater than that seen in many traditional societies. He emphasises the relative freedom of the Chinese people from any rigid compulsory membership of fixed social strata such as estates (legal compulsion), castes (religious compulsion), or classes (economic compulsion). He sees this as an expression of the abolition of feudal relations and other forms of legally enforced servility, the overall weakness of government administration, and the unbroken vigour and omnipotence of the patriarchal lineage.

Weber goes on to elaborate upon this conception of a lineage-based democracy which provided the key resistance to political and economic rationalisation and to capitalistic subjection in particular. He considers, as typical examples, two forms of larger scale economic enterprise, one rural and one urban.

The tsung-tsu: rural entrepreneurial enterprise

According to Weber, this was a type of lineage organisation which, in addition to owning the typical

ancestral temple and school buildings, also owned:

" sib houses for provisions and implements for the processing of rice, for the preparation of conserves, for weaving, and other domestic industries " (RoC,p.96).

It was a form of larger economic organisation, undertaking a variety of agriculturally based industrial tasks, which Weber sees as a:

" sib and cumulative household community expanded into a producers' co-operative " (RoC,p.96).

Urban entrepreneurial communities

Weber suggests that in the cities too there were economic organisations larger than the shops of individual artisans. Weber sees these as essentially communal workshops but with petty capitalist forms of work organisation including specialisation of manual, technical, and managerial labour, and profit distribution on clearly specified grounds.

" Small capitalist in nature, they were organised as communal workshops with an intensive division of manual labour. Furthermore, technical and commercial management were often specialised and profits were distributed according to capital shares and partly according to special commercial or technical services. " (RoC,p.96)

For Weber, both of these forms of economic organisation were typically Chinese in that they rested "almost wholly upon actual or imitated personal sib relationships" (RoC,p.96), and thereby display a specifically democratic character in the sense noted above. The Chinese masses were not subjected to capitalist social relations, because they could draw upon the resources of their extended kinship networks to avoid complete reliance upon the sale of their labour power in a free labour market.

Weber applies precisely the same sort of analysis to

those forms of industrial and factory organisation that could be discerned in China. He claims that there was very little development of manufacturing industry, scarcely any trace of large individually owned capitalist factories, and no significant development of the putting out system which "introduced capitalist domination in the West" (RoC,p.97). Again, Weber sees kinship groups as crucial protectors of the formally free Chinese masses against substantive subjugation by capitalist social relations:

" ... it may well have been decisive that there was extremely little opportunity of coercing the services of domestic workers and getting them to deliver on time in prescribed quality and quantity " (RoC,p.97).

Weber goes on to examine further ramifications of the non-development of capitalistic social relations upon the formation of social classes and other social strata. Weber's departure point is the non-development of capitalist relations from guild organisation, as compared with the Western pattern of employer-employee relations emerging from the relationships between masters and journeymen and the emergence of defensive journeymen associations.

" The guilds, as mentioned above, regulated apprenticeship, but there is no mention of journeymen associations " (RoC,p.98)

He suggests that, in individual cases, workers in the guilds combined against their masters in a strike, but that these rudimentary "class conflicts" (my phrase SM) should not be allowed to obscure the fact that these workers:

" had scarcely begun to develop into a class of their own " (RoC,p.98).

Weber relates this absence of capitalistic class divisions to questions of strata formation more generally and points out that, in the later patrimonial period especially, there

were no castes or any real residues of the former estate-like status order, despite the persistence of certain legal privileges enjoyed by the literati and the "great families", and the legally inferior position of a very small number of the population in certain degrading occupations, (RoC,p.99).

His point here seems to be that there was very little status differentiation by birth, and individual personal freedom existed to an extent which might have favoured the formation of a bourgeois stratum. However, just as there was no proletariat, neither did there develop "a bourgeois stratum of Occidental character" (RoC,p.100). After surveying those obstacles to capitalistic development which can be attributed primarily to the existence of countervailing kinship networks Weber returns to an examination of the directly economic influence of the patrimonial state per se.

The Patrimonial Structure of Law

As was presaged in his earlier more configurational and causal analysis of the Chinese patrimonial state, Weber's discussion of its more specifically economic conjunctural consequences focusses upon the absence of rational law and administration which he sees as an institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism. In terms of the emergence of the institutional complex of capitalism in the West, Weber notes that:

" legal schemata appropriate to capitalism were created in the occidental Middle Ages " (RoC,p.101)

The Western cities had combined the two principles of "corporate political economy" and "decisive legal institutions, fixed and guaranteed by privilege" to create these legal schemata (RoC,p.101). Similarly, "the imperial administration of the Occidental Middle Ages" had enacted large numbers of statutes whose:

" legal provisions were distinguished, at least technically, by their relatively brief and business-like form "... (thus).." law was no longer a norm valid from the remote past, and justice was no longer "found " by magical means alone" (RoC,p.101).

In this way there had been created the rational and calculable administration and law enforcement necessary for industrial capitalism. Weber points out that industrial capitalism and capital investment in industry is highly sensitive to irrational rule (RoC,p.100).

In China, however, administration and law were intertwined in a way which was typical of patrimonialism. Its ethical orientation was towards substantive justice rather than formal law. Statutes codified ethical rather

than legal norms, and the whole administration was oriented to orthodoxy by an essentially theocratic board of literati, the Hanlin Academy (which Weber compares to the Papal Curia). Hence:

" legal administration remained largely " Cadi " and possibly " Cabinet justice ""(RoC,p.102)

Once again, as in his earlier discussion of the absence of an external stimulus to political rationalisation produced by the geo-political implications of the persistence of the Imperial form, Weber relates the persistence of this traditional legal system, not just to the internal obstacles to rationalisation imposed by the patriarchal lineages, but also to the absence of the stimulus to legal rationalisation which had been provided by the competition between nation states in the early modern West (RoC,p.103).

Summary and Conclusions

In the previous chapters of the Sociological Foundations, it is easier to establish a configurational subject around which Weber's levels of analysis can be organised. Thus, the monetary system; the Chinese city; the patrimonial state; and agrarian social relations; all provide the configurational foci to which Weber addresses what is often a predominantly causal rather than explicitly consequential analysis. In the present chapter, the configurational foci are more diffuse, as one might expect from Weber's attempt to examine more generally the institutional complex constituting the conjunctural context for economic activity in late Imperial China.

However, it is possible to establish three central configurational foci for the chapter. The first, and the one to which he pays most attention at this level of analysis, is the absence of modern capitalistic forms of economic enterprise, labour relations, and social strata. The second is the patrimonial state, although focussed more upon patrimonial law and the legal aspects of administration than in his earlier account of the relationships between the administrative system, revenue collection, and the structure of prebendal interests. The third is the kinship system of the patrimonial period and its articulation with the village community.

The first of these, the non-capitalist nature of economic enterprises, labour relations, and social strata,

is, to a certain extent, self-contained at the configurational level. In KuT, Weber wants to demonstrate the fact that modern rational capitalism did not develop in China. Although the appearance of the text might sometimes imply his taking this for granted, such is never his intention. An important function of the Sociological Foundations is the attempt to gain greater purchase upon the economic implications of the original study of Chinese religions written several years earlier and constituting the final four chapters of the final version of KuT. If he was to carry further his prima facie case, established in this earlier version of the essay, that religious conceptions might have a role to play in explaining divergent courses of economic development, then some attention must be given to what sorts of economic institutions did exist in China, whether or not they can be regarded as capitalistic, and, if not, the extent to which this can be attributed to the economic influence of specifically non-religious phenomena.

Thus, at the end of his opening discussion of the Chinese monetary system, he identified the initial problem of why there was no significant development towards rational capitalism in China's modern period, given the existence of two phenomena - rapid population increase and an influx of precious metals - which had commonly been regarded as prime movers of capitalist innovation in the West. He never actually gives an explicitly clear or precise answer to this question in KuT; although he answers it more generally in GEH by suggesting that a crucial difference between China, India, and the West lay in the institutional context of these

changes. In the West, and only in the West, there was already some considerable development of modern, rational capitalist enterprise and labour relations.

In this way, Weber's comments in GEH provide a vital missing link between two very tortuously connected parts of KuT. Similarly, his configurational analysis of Chinese economic enterprises takes on a much more precise consequential implication for the problem of capitalism. At the same time, it pushes his causal analysis one stage further back by posing the further problem of how to explain this absence of rational capitalism in Chinese economic enterprises. His discussion of the economic significance of the Chinese city, the Chinese state, and the agrarian social structure has contributed to, but not exhausted, his analysis of this problem.

At this point his configurational analysis of the kinship system and village organisation, and the patrimonial state, takes on more precise consequential dimensions. Certain consequences which each one has for the development of economic enterprise contribute to a causal analysis of the absence of capitalist development within the latter. Thus, the nature of the kinship system is such as to impose "sib fetters" upon economic development by protecting the ordinary Chinese from being compelled into forming a proletarian stratum. Again, in GEH, Weber tells us that the existence of a stratum of labourers who are formally free but substantively compelled to sell their labour power to a capitalist employer is one of the institutional prerequisites of modern rational capitalism. He has, therefore, identified the absence of this particular prerequisite and contributed

to a causal explanation of its absence.

Similarly, the conjunctural inter-relationships between the kinship system and the patrimonial state had very specific consequences for the development of capitalist enterprise and the problem of capitalism. In addition to being handicapped by the factors just mentioned, the "acquisitive familial communities" of China were encouraged by the structure of prebendal opportunities to adopt modes of wealth acquisition that were different from those of rational capitalism. Rather than engage in a possibly hopeless attempt to invest in permanent industrial capitalist enterprise it was actually more rational within this institutional complex to indulge in the forms of "internal booty capitalism" and tax farming available to officials and their literati families and connections, and to invest in the education of future generations of officials and candidates for office.

This also clarifies the precise sense in which the absence of rational and calculable law, and administration as the rational application and adjudication of law, constituted the absence of an institutional prerequisite for rational capitalist development in China. It was yet another factor encouraging wealthy social strata, or those who aspired to wealth, to avoid rational capitalistic enterprise. Purely economic contracts and relationships could not reliably and predictably be enforced to a point which made feasible the rational calculation of future profits and losses. Nor could market-oriented economic enterprises be expected to operate free from the threat of arbitrary intervention by administrative officials acting "legitimately" on behalf of a

despotic government, or "illegitimately" in their own interests.

Thus, in this concluding chapter of the Sociological Foundations, Weber attempts to refocus upon his central problem with as much clarity as he can muster. By drawing upon the appropriate context for his analysis one can follow these apparent intentions as closely as seems possible. He identifies the absence in China of most of the institutional prerequisites for modern capitalism outlined in GEH and indeed in E+S (pp.107-9). Moreover, in his concentration upon the problem of capitalism in the modern period one can see his attempt to translate the very general vocabulary of institutional prerequisites into a specific institutional complex operating, in particular ways at a particular time, to inhibit capitalistic development at a time when many conditions seemed superficially favourable.

The Sociological Foundations to KuT can therefore be interpreted most profitably, at least in so far as the problem of capitalism is most directly concerned, in terms of the vocabulary of institutional prerequisites, and the comparative theory of Oriental and Occidental civilisation, summarised in GEH. The final chapter of the Sociological Foundations can also be seen more particularly to have its heuristic point of departure in the comparative theory. If the nature of the kinship system and the nature of the patrimonial state are the two crucial factors adduced to explain the absence of an appropriate institutional context for capitalist development in China, this is no more than one would expect from Weber's identification of the nature of territorial political organisations and the nature of

religious traditions as the fundamental dimensions of his longer-term developmental analysis of Eastern and Western civilizations.

For the West, he identifies the concept and institutions of citizenship and the Judaeo-Christian tradition as the two most fundamental aspects of the unique course of cultural development which culminated in the emergence of modern rational capitalism. In China, he identifies the patrimonial state and the religiously sanctioned kinship system as two fundamental obstacles to its development. In less teleological and more authentically Weberian terms, they might better be conceptualised as two fundamental aspects of Chinese social organisation whose historical interaction imposed their own autonomous logic upon China's economic history. Both, however, operate within an ideational, religious and cosmological, context and, in this chapter particularly, Weber notes the influence of religious factors, and especially the cult of ancestors, upon the preservation and persistently powerful influence of extended kinship in China. As this indicates, an analysis and re-interpretation of the Sociological Foundations to KuT cannot be concluded without a final consideration of its bearings for the inter-relations between religious and non-religious phenomena, and material and ideal interests, in Weber's perspective.

Like all the other chapters of the Sociological Foundations, the final one makes a series of points which, even if they never quite constitute a systematically integrated theory of Chinese economic development, throw the

inadequacies of "culturalist" or "idealist" interpretation of KuT into sharp relief. Not only does the "Sociological Foundations" part of the essay point out the absence in China of those social institutions which Weber identifies as the prerequisites of a modern capitalist economy, but it also indicates the considerable extent to which their absence might be attributed to the influence of non-religious phenomena upon the long-term course of historical development in China.

The problem of whether his still very fragmentary and disjointed analysis of China's social institutions and economic history constitutes a coherent developmental vision of Chinese history remains very difficult to resolve and, as is attempted in the next part of this thesis, Weber's developmental and conjunctural analyses of religious doctrines and economic ethics still needs to be re-integrated into the analysis. What does seem clear, however, from an adequately close examination of the Sociological Foundations alone, is the inappropriateness of attributing to Weber any sort of claim that non-religious phenomena in China can be shown to be neither nor more less favourable to modern capitalist development than analogous phenomena in the West. Whether Weber is considering very broad social institutions, such as the Chinese cities, the patrimonial state, the agrarian social structure, or the kinship system, or the more specifically defined institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism, he comes to the virtually unwavering conclusion that, with the possible exception of early modern monetary systems, all these factors, conditions, influences or, more accurately, processes, were markedly less favourable

to capitalist development than they were in the West.

A strange sort of testimony to all this is offered by C.K. Yang in his introduction to RoC. Yang is sinologically well-equipped to thread his way through the structurally anarchic mass of confused and confusing references to Chinese institutions and history, out of which Weber tries to construct his essay. For all its terseness, his synopsis of many of the points made by Weber in the Sociological Foundations to KuT is accurate and reliable, when these points are considered in isolation from his idealist account of the essays' analytical structure.

However, he remains indissolubly wedded to this interpretation of the analytical structure. The result is the rather peculiar situation in which his account of the Sociological Foundations starts and concludes with the general claim that they substantiate "Weber's" case for the nondecisiveness of "social structure" whilst virtually every point of his actual summary documents the dissimilarity from the West of the phenomena he includes within this rubric.

Thus, Yang concludes his summary and discussions of the Sociological Foundations with a quotation from RoC which appears to be Webers own general conclusion drawn from his survey of social institutions and economic history in China:

"...From a purely economic point of view, a genuine bourgeoisie industrial capitalism might have developed....." The failure of capitalism to appear in China was basically owing to the lack of a "particular mentality" such as that of ascetic Protestantism"

(C.K. Yang, RoC, p.XXVIII - the passages quoted from RoC, p.100 are underlined).

It is a highly instructive exercise to fill in the dots, as

it were, of Yang's truncated quotation from Weber. In RoC, the underlined passage quoted by Yang actually continues thus:

"....."Again there is the old question that, from a purely economic point of view, a genuine bourgeois, industrial capitalism might have developed from the petty capitalist beginnings we have noted above. A number of reasons mostly related to the structure of the state (my emphasis - S M) can be seen for the fact that capitalism failed to develop." (RoC, p.100)

Yang seems to be rather ingenuous here in assuming that this "purely economic point of view" encompassed Weber's conclusions on the economic significance of all non-religious phenomena in general rather than the particular types of petty capitalist enterprise examined above. As the full quotation shows, Weber was quite clear that the influence of other non-religious phenomena, and pre-eminently the patrimonial state, must be adduced to explain the non-development of capitalism from these specifically economic forms of organisation.

However, nothing can be resolved satisfactorily by plucking quotations out of their context, especially in the case of Weber. It is sufficient to point out the dangers in Yang's use of this particular quotation in the context in which he uses it. Doubtless he, and others offering similar interpretations from Parsons onwards, have simply selected quotations which they felt were genuinely illustrative of a case they had already made. The alternative would be to assume that a generation of commentators on Weber's KuT have, for whatever reason, hastened to publish their comments and conclusions on the Sociological Foundations without taking the (admittedly considerable) trouble to examine it on its own terms in sufficient depth and detail.

Having said that, one must hasten to conclude this examination of the Sociological Foundations by noting Weber's own persisting ambivalence about the inferences to which his analysis of China's non-religious social institutions would seem to have led him.

"Rational entrepreneurial capitalism, which in the Occident found its specific focus in the industry has been handicapped not only by the lack of a formally guaranteed law, a rational administration and judiciary, and by the ramifications of a system of prebends, but also, basically, by the lack of a particular mentality. Above all it has been handicapped by the attitude rooted in the Chinese "ethos" and peculiar to a stratum of officials and aspirants to office. This brings us to our central theme" (RoC, p.104)

This paragraph indicates, as clearly as anything else, the ambivalence within Weber's work that he never really resolved. One suspects he felt, with some justification, that this sort of ambivalence never could satisfactorily be resolved. After having spent some 100 pages piling up point after point demonstrating the inhibiting consequences for capitalistic innovation resulting from non-religious influences and the operation of material interests, Weber almost appears to step back, as it were, from what he felt might have been interpreted as a "materialist" brink.

In fact, as will be seen, Weber's extreme sensitivity to the historical influence of both material and ideal constellations of interest, and his profound resistance to one-sided reductionism, is mirrored uncannily in the final paragraph of the whole essay. After a concluding chapter which emphasises the influence of Confucianism over "economic mentalities" unfavourable to capitalist development, Weber retreats hastily to an insistence that such mentalities are

codetermined by political and economic structures and that he has merely established a prima facie for considering the possibility that religiously influenced economic mentalities might have been counteractive to the development of capitalism!

It will be argued in the concluding chapters below that this sort of ambivalence proceeds in large part from Weber's attempts to stitch together two parts of an essay which were written at different times. For the moment, a reminder of Weber's profound opposition to any sort of one-sided determinism provides a most appropriate point at which to begin an examination of his more substantial analysis of the historical development of Chinese religions and their implications for economic development.

CHAPTER TEN

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHINESE WORLD VIEW

I

Introduction

Weber's discussion of Chinese non-religious phenomena and social institutions provides the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT in two principal respects. Both of these are related to the fact that this part of the essay was written several years after the first version. The earlier version was concerned much more exclusively with Chinese religions themselves, and constructed a prima facie case for their relatively autonomous influence upon specifically economic development partly by concluding that their economic ethics, as compared with those of ascetic Protestantism, were unfavourable for the development of modern rational capitalism.

However, this left two main items of unfinished business, as it were, which Weber eventually addressed in the later discussion of non-religious phenomena which he actually made textually and analytically antecedent in the final published version of KuT. (See the first section of chapter One above). Firstly, he needed to examine the influence of non-religious phenomena over economic development and economic orientations. The directions and conclusions towards which this analysis led him have been examined in the second part of this thesis. Secondly, he wanted to examine in more detail the influence of non-religious phenomena upon the historical

development of the Chinese religions themselves. This was a topic which he developed only to a limited extent in the earlier version of the essay, through his attempt to characterise the social location and material interests of the Chinese literati as the historical bearers of Confucianism and as the social stratum most influential for the historical development of Chinese religions more generally.

As was suggested in the first part of this thesis, especially in chapter Three, there is virtual unanimity in the commentaries on the substance of Weber's configurational characterisation of Confucianism and Taoism and their economic ethics. However, widespread disagreement persists on the consequential significance of this typological contrast. Depending upon whether Weber concluded that non-religious phenomena were favourable, unfavourable, or neutral for the development of modern capitalism, the unfavourability of Chinese religious ethics can be regarded either as a "reinforcing" factor (e.g. Bendix, Giddens, Parkin) or as a "decisive" factor, (e.g. Parsons, Yang, Marshall). In Turner's view, as indicated above, non-religious factors are themselves seen as "decisive" for the problem of capitalism. The discussion above has attempted to demonstrate that Weber found non-religious phenomena in China to be clearly unfavourable, on balance, to the development of modern capitalism. The significance of this conclusion for the various interpretations of KuT, and indeed for Weber's own conception of the relative autonomy of religious beliefs will be re-examined in the conclusions to this thesis. However,

be re-examined in the conclusions to this thesis. However, before final conclusions can be drawn, a re-examination and re-interpretation of KuT must be directed to Weber's long-term, developmental, causal analysis of Chinese religions which constitutes the second item of unfinished business from the first version of the essay.

Unlike his relatively uncontroversial configurational characterisation of Confucianism and Taoism, or his highly controversial conclusions about their consequential implications for the problem of capitalism, this causal level of Weber's analysis has been substantively neglected in the commentaries. Bendix incorporates aspects of it, though he leaves its precise analytical significance unclear. As noted in chapter Three above, many commentators, including Parsons and Turner, have pointed out the programmatic concern with a causal, developmental analysis of religious doctrines which Weber articulated in the SPWR/Introduction to the EE essays and in the SR chapter of E+S. However, only Collins ever really begins to get to grips with the ways in which Weber actually applied this problematic in KuT itself.

"Interestingly enough, though Weber from time to time stressed the independent effect of religious ideas upon economic development, he also provided an extensive sociological analysis of the conditions under which religious ideas are themselves produced." (Collins, 1986a, p.121)

However, the two or three paragraphs which Collins is able to devote to Weber's pursuit of this problematic in KuT itself can do little more than point out one or two examples of how this analysis was undertaken.

"For example the basic structure of Chinese society was heavily influenced by geographical conditions...From very early in its history, its social organisation was formed around irrigation, canals, flood control, and other water-

works...Weber draws an interesting religious consequence from this. Not only is the state centralised quite early, before traditions of independent powers arise in either the political or economic spheres, (but also) the Emperor himself rules with a religious charisma, which Weber argues derives from the nature-magic of primitive societies." (Collins, *ibid.*, p.121)

Collins's emphasis upon the fundamental significance which Weber attached to the influence of physical, economic, and political geography upon the development of contrasting religious conceptions in the early civilizations of the Near, Middle, and Far East is of seminal importance for Weberian scholarship. This perspective has been noted by various commentators at various times but no real attempt has yet been made to re-assess its significance for Weber's comparative analyses of the historical development of religious and cultural rationalisation, certainly not for the case of China (though cf. Collins, 1986b for further applications of this general perspective, and Schluchter, 1981, for some movement in this direction in the case of the West).

Thus, this chapter and the one which follows attempt to re-examine and re-present Weber's long-term developmental analysis of the historical distinctiveness of Chinese religions themselves. This requires, for example, a much more detailed consideration than Collins is able to offer of Weber's attempts to explain the origins and emergence of a cosmocentric religious world-view in China in contrast to the theocentric world-view which developed in the Middle East, and which eventually provided the basis for the Judaeo-Christian world-view which was historically unique to the West.

Weber's dialectical analysis of the historical development

of Chinese religions is rooted in the third section of the first chapter of KuT, "Princely Administration and the Conception of Deity; A Comparison with the Middle East (RoC.pp13-20). This section of the essay is concerned with the origins and early development of religious conceptions, especially during the pre-patrimonial Chou period. As such, it goes to the heart of Weber's attempts to identify points at which religious traditions may be said to have received their distinctive stamp and how these characteristic conceptions affect subsequent religious, social and economic development. This is the causal problematic identified by Weber in the SPWR/Introduction to the Economic Ethics, and examined in some detail in Chapter Two above. As will be seen, it attempts to distinguish the fundamental, cosmological elements of a Chinese world-view which Weber suggests was formed to a significant extent before the "hundred schools" of philosophical debate in the later centuries of the Warring States period. As such it provided the pre-existing doctrinal context for the emergence of both Taoism and Confucianism, and already provides a basic conception of the legitimacy of political domination which was subsequently developed by the two traditions in different directions. As such, Weber's analysis here is a vital and much neglected element of his attempt to suggest that if religious orientations did autonomously influence the course of economic development in China, their influence must be traced at least as much through a long term rationalisation of culture as through a characterisation of "economic ethics" at any particular stage of development. Moreover, and this is

the crux of Weber's analysis here, even these most fundamental religious conceptions were profoundly influenced by political and economic conditions, and the interplay of ideal and material interests.

Weber's account begins with an assessment of the significance for religious development of the economic necessity for centrally controlled water-regulation. He suggests that, in China, this influenced the development of religious conceptions in at least two ways.

Firstly, it facilitated the growth of centralised domination by monarchical rulers and their administrative staffs. Centralised water regulation was crucial to the economic survival of the general population, and a centrally directed administrative staff was necessary for effective co-ordination of water-regulation. Secondly, the degree to which economic survival and prosperity were perceived as being dependent upon either a central ruler capable of controlling the forces of nature, or upon uncontrollable natural forces themselves, also had a more direct effect upon the formation of religious conceptions. Weber claims that in Egypt and Mesopotamia, for example, the total dependence of the population upon the secular ruler's control of irrigation stimulated the isomorphic conception of a supreme, supernatural, but anthropomorphic ruler equally capable of controlling all natural forces and human destiny. In China, by contrast, the uncontrollable and unpredictable appearance of natural disasters such as flooding, drought, and earthquakes provided literally less fertile soil for the nurturing of religious conceptions of a single, all-powerful, supreme, personalised deity.

Thus, the significance of water-control was not the same in China as in Egypt and Mesopotamia where the desert areas simply could not be cultivated without irrigation. In China, or at least in the North Chinese nucleus of the Empire, irrigation was not so vitally important. In North China, water control assigned priority to the construction of dikes against floods and canals for inland water transport. Important though these enterprises might have been, they did not supplant the influence of natural forces to the same extent as in the Middle East.

" ..in Northern China, natural events, especially rainfall, loomed much larger despite the considerable development of irrigation." (RoC. p.21)

Weber goes on to suggest that the influence of these economic conditions upon religious development in China must be seen as operating in association with political conditions: that is to say, the historical development of centralised political domination, and a geo-political location which facilitated resistance to external conquest by neighbouring empires, especially during the first millennium B.C..

However, Weber's analysis of these political conditions is organised around a highly idiosyncratic and confusing schematisation of Chinese political development. This involves a sequence of early developmental stages which derive as much from the perspectives adumbrated in E+S and GEH, and Weber's comparative writings on the ancient civilisations, as from his or other scholars' researches on China itself. In so far as Weber does try to relate his own developmental schema to more conventional, dynastically-

based periodisations of Chinese history, he incorporates some assumptions of contemporary sinologists which have since been revised.

The sinologists of Weber's own time tended to assume that the Chinese historical period proper began with the foundation of the Chou dynasty in about the eleventh or twelfth century B.C. and that events before that time belong to the period of Chinese pre-history, about which speculation could proceed only on the basis of myth and legends. They also assumed that the traditional Chinese literature, most of which dates from at least 600 or 700 years after the founding of the Chou, is historically unreliable and is highly prejudiced by the polemical and paradigmatic style of its Confucian authors.

In general, Weber appears to accept these assumptions, although, as noted in chapter seven above, he is perhaps less sceptical than contemporaries in taking later classics such as the Chou Li as reliable guides to political and religious life during the Chou period. His own addition to these contemporary assumptions consists in the identification of two stages of early Chinese history which he characterises in terms of technological and military organisation: the epoch of the "bachelor house", and the epoch of "individual hero-combat". These derive from similarities he detects between ancient Greek and other early civilisations. The "Agrarian Sociology of the Ancient Civilisations" examines these issues more fully, with chapters on Egypt, Mesopotamia, Israel and Graeco-Roman civilisation, but not China. (Weber, 1976.)

Weber suggests that the epochs of the bachelor-house and

individual hero-combat belong to very remote periods in China's history, and he seems to see the former and its transformation into the latter as part of China's pre-Chou history. However, he feels that the epoch of individual hero-combat, and the horse-drawn war-chariot upon which it was based, persisted well into the Chou period. Some of the historical assumptions he makes are examined and classified in the final section of this chapter, in the light of subsequent archaeological research.

Weber derives his initial perspective from a series of comparisons he draws between China and the Middle East generally, and ancient Palestine in particular. The characteristically Middle Eastern conception of the divine power as a transcendental anthropomorphic monotheistic deity reached its full development, he claims, only in Palestine, in Ancient Judaism, at a particular historical conjuncture. These initial contrasts provide the focus for his analysis of the influence of economic and geo-political factors upon the development of Judaic and Chinese religious conceptions.

Firstly, Weber provides a brief historical survey of the various deities of the Chinese people, claiming that:

" the contrast between the Middle and Far Eastern conceptions of deity was by no means always so sharp. "
(p.21)

He appears to suggest two things here:

a. the conception of a personalised supreme deity issuing ethical demands finds certain parallels the further back one goes into Chinese history;

b. these parallels can probably be explained by the fact that, in both the Middle and Far East, religious conceptions had their origins in cults of local peasant associations addressed to personalised spirits and deities of the fertile land. Similarly, all societies in the Middle, Near, and Far East probably went through a sort of "Homeric Age" in which warfare was conducted by individual noble heroes. This stage

of warfare prompted religious development in the direction of a personalised god of the heavens, resembling the Hellenic Zeus.

Weber's account of these early similarities and assumed parallels is very confused but his main point seem relatively clear. At certain stages in the early history of both Chinese and Judaic religions, beliefs in a personalised supreme deity co-existed alongside beliefs in lesser local deities and animistic semi-personal spirits.

Secondly, Weber attempts to to clarify the political conditions which influenced the development of a monotheistic conception of Jahwe. He attaches great significance to the fact that the people of Israel were involved almost constantly in a military struggle to achieve and preserve their independent nationhood. This raises dimensions of militarism and pacification which provide significant themes for Weber's analysis of the religious influence of political conditions in China.

Thus, a crucial geo-political factor influencing the religion of the ancient Israelites was the fact that their own armed struggle for independent nationhood was doomed to failure. Faced as they were by powerful Middle Eastern empires in Egypt and Mesopotamia, they had no opportunity to establish a "world-empire" of their own. By contrast, the Chinese people lived within a political community which, they believed, encapsulated the whole civilised world and which, in some form or another, persisted throughout virtually the whole of their history. However, Weber's analysis of the developmental significance of these contrasts is brief and highly elliptical in KuT, and needs to be supplemented by reference to "Ancient Judaism" (AJ).

The Political Foundations of Religious Transcendentalism:
Conceptions of Yahwe

The crux of Weber's analysis of ancient Judaism is his claim that Yahwe did not rise to a position of "absolutely supramundane supremacy" (RoC,p.21) until the period of the exile in Babylon, with the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah. It was only after this period that Yahwe was generally regarded not only as a personalised, supreme deity who had created the world from out of the void, but also as the only true God; the sole legitimate source of ethics, and the sole arbiter of the destiny of all the human nations.

In touching upon this development in KuT, Weber makes consistent but usually implicit reference to particular historical periods examined in more detail in AJ: the exodus of the tribes of Israel from Egypt (about 1280 B.C); their occupation of Palestine as a conquering oath-bound confederacy (1280-1030); the formation of the United Monarchy (1030-922); their disruption and subjugation by Assyria, Egypt, Chaldea, and Babylonia (922-587); and their enforced exile and enslavement in Babylon (587-538).

The Exodus and the Confederacy

In AJ, Weber suggests that the basic religious orientation of ancient Judaism had been formed during the exodus from Egypt of the tribes of Israel in about 1280 B.C., and their subsequent occupation of Palestine during the

next 200 years. During this period, the Israelite tribes, possibly in alliance with Hebraic tribes already settled in northern Palestine (Canaan), formed a military confederation for offence and defence. As well as having to subdue the hostile inhabitants of the Palestinian city states (Canaanite towns) and protect themselves against the latter's resurgence, they were faced with hostile, nomadic Bedouins and, from the last half of the twelfth century, by the Philistine invaders from the Aegean. The defeat of the confederacy by the latter in about 1050 led to the foundation of the United Monarchy under Saul in about 1030 B.C..

The basis of the Israelites' religion during this period was the Mosaic covenant with Yahwe. The people of Yahwe had pledged themselves to honour and worship him and to keep his commandments. In return for their homage and as a pledge of his earnest, Yahwe had led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and had established them as victorious conquerors in a land of "milk and honey".

Weber goes on to discuss briefly several aspects of the conceptions of Yahwe prevalent at this time. They provided the basis for further elaborations during the crucial period of political turmoil during and after the United Monarchy and already present certain crucial contrasts with the earlier periods of religious development in China.

The first of these concerns the unambiguous conception of Yahwe as a personalised deity. Weber suggests that this was partly due to the already mentioned influence of creator kings over Middle Eastern conceptions of deity. In KuT, he develops this point by reference to the cult of Baal, a fertility cult which he claims was widespread throughout the

Semitic Orient. Weber's point is that, despite similar origins in cults of the fertile land, religious development in China and the Middle East diverged critically in the extent to which these fertile spirits developed into personalised deities. In the Middle East:

" the fertile land, the land with natural water, was the "land of Baal " and at the same time his residence. The Baal of the peasants's land, in the sense of harvest-yielding soil, also became the local deity of the political association of the homeland. "(RoC,p.23).

Weber's account of Chinese religion similarly locates its foundations in a cult of the fertile land and a system of tutelary deities associated with specific territories, in turn associated with political and familial divisions. However, the land of Baal was considered the personal property of a personal deity, whereas the Chinese spirit of the soil and the harvest was conceptualised in less anthropomorphic imagery. It was probably:

" first conceived naturalistically as a semi-material magical force or substance " (RoC,p.22).

However, reflecting the general Middle Eastern tendency towards personalised conceptions of deity, Yahwe both originated as, and remained, a personal deity with specific personality traits. He was:

" originally a mountain deity of storms and natural catastrophes " who, in war, " made his approach through clouds and thunderstorms in order to render aid to his heroes " (RoC,p.23).

However, in KuT, Weber's comments on early Middle Eastern religion note two further aspects of the conception of Yahwe which were still relatively fluid in the period of the confederacy: his position as the sole creator of the world; and his position as supreme controller of events

within it. In his comments on Baal worship in KuT, Weber is concerned to illustrate the general, very early Middle Eastern tendency to worship the spirits as personal deities. Before the covenant, Yahwe was just such a personalised deity, but was still only one - albeit a particularly fearsome one - of a large number of "nature-spirits".

However, in Ancient Judaism, Weber is more specifically concerned with the Baal worship of the Canaanites with whom the Israelites came into conflict during their post-exodus occupation of Palestine. Cults of the local Baals were the outstanding competitors of Yahwe but were partly fused with Yahwe cults into a form of religious syncretism which persisted throughout the period of the United Monarchy at least. In KuT, Weber refers only obliquely to this syncretism in his recognition that Yahwe was still only one deity in an essentially polytheistic situation. Yahwe rose to a:

" highest position of power and finally...to an absolutely supramundane supremacy " only in a much later period, " with Deutero-Isaiah in exile " (RoC,p.21).

Although the Mosaic covenant had sown the seeds of a fully developed monotheism, this conception did not grow to maturity until the classical age of biblical prophecy from the 9th to the 6th centuries B.C.. This is what Weber means when he claims that Middle Eastern, and particularly Judaic conceptions of deity cannot be deduced from economic factors alone. Certainly the early development of water control in the Middle East stimulated royal absolutism and provided for religion the model of an omnipotent, harvest-creating king; but this does not sufficiently explain the fact that in the far more fertile areas of Palestine, Yahwe came to be seen as

the provider of the natural rain and sunshine which produced agricultural fertility without elaborate works of irrigation.

This later development of a fully matured monotheism can be explained only by reference to the political history of the Israelite tribes down to the exilic and post-exilic periods. Only then did the inherent monotheism of the Mosaic covenant come to fruition in the concept of a God who had, unaided, created the world from nothing; who ruled supreme, unaided by lesser gods and demons; and who ordered all events in the world according to his own divine Will. One might also add that when further sustained thought was given to the nature of Yahwe in this period, the absolute power of the Middle Eastern kings was still there as a model for religious conceptions. In fact, the exile to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, and the release of the Israelites by the all-conquering Cyrus of Persia in 538 B.C. may well have thrust them into closer proximity with supreme monarchical power than ever before.

However, there was one aspect of Yahwe which, although equally subject to later modification, took on a crucial form in the period of the confederacy. Entirely in keeping with his war-like origins, Yahwe came to be seen as a god whose special function was to preside over the fate of his people in time of war, and even intervene when necessary. Yahwe became:

" by means of a covenant mediated by priests... the federal deity of the conquering oath-bound confederacy" (p.23).

Thus emerged the conception of Yahwe as a deity who was:

"and remained first of all a God of the extraordinary, that is, of the destiny of his people in war." (p.23)

For Weber, this particular politically influenced conception was profoundly influential in the shaping of Yahwe's image.

" Foreign affairs permanently remained his demesne... and set the stage for his deeds, namely, for the peripeties of war and the destiny of nations."
(RoC,p.23)

The Later Prophecies

Such was the conception of Yahwe which provided the pre-existing doctrinal matrix for the later prophecies. In KuT, Weber's main analytical consideration is to identify the distinctively Judaic monotheism which crystallised in this period and contrast it with the basic enduring features of Chinese cosmology and religion. However, his insistence upon presenting this account tangentially, in relation to his previous account of the early development of patrimonial administration, and his simultaneous treatment of the economic and political factors underlying the divergence between Middle and Far Eastern religions generally, distracts both his and his reader's attention from his main theme.

Weber insists, as a crucial political factor, upon the significance of the Israelites' military weakness in the whole post-confederacy period:

" ... his people could not create a world-empire of their own, and remained a small state in the midst of world powers to which they finally succumbed". (p.23)

Yahwe could only become the supernatural ruler of the world as:

" a supramundane ruler of destiny " (RoC,p.23).

Thus, misfortunes were interpreted as the result of God's people breaking his laws, tolerating syncretism and foresaking the old traditions of the confederacy which was

now harked back to as a golden age.

The final and crucial phase came with the suffering of the Jews in exile. Suffering came to be seen as a necessary prelude to salvation, and the suffering of Israel glorifies the endurance of its people and gives meaning to their world historical mission. In the prophecies of the second Isaiah, the ignominious fate of Israel became the most important means for the realisation of Yahwe's hidden designs. Thus, as Weber suggests in *KuT*, the conception of Yahwe as a personalised, supernatural ruler of national destinies developed because of the ancient Israelites' inability to create a world-order of their own. There was no this-worldly empire for Yahwe to rule, transcendentally or immanently.

Thus when one examines in a little more detail the rather elliptical references to ancient Judaism which Weber makes in *KuT*, the analytical significance of these comments becomes more clear. At the most general level, they emphasise Weber's insistence that economic and political conditions must be seen as crucial historical influences upon the development of fundamental religious conceptions. Weber feels that economic conditions help to explain the tendency towards more personalised conceptions of deity in the Middle East as compared with China. Similarly, the political conditions facing the ancient Israelites help to explain the monotheistic conceptions of Yahwe and his status as the controller of international destinies.

More specifically, in identifying the vulnerable and ultimately doomed geo-political strategic situation of the ancient Israelites as a crucial political factor, Weber

identifies a contrast between the political situation of the Israelite and Chinese people which he feels was a crucial factor explaining subsequent divergence away from not dissimilar religious origins. The single most important factor which Weber identifies as a determinant of the Chinese conceptions of deity is the Chinese geo-political situation. Instead of being permanently threatened and eventually subjugated by neighbouring empires, the Chinese were able to establish a long enduring world-empire of their own.

III

Conceptions of Supreme Religious Power in China

Weber traces the origin of Chinese religion to cults of the fertile land similar in many respects to the cults of Baal in the Middle East.

" Chinese antiquity knew a dual god of the peasantry (She-chi) for every local association; it represented a fusion of the fertile soil (She) and the spirit of harvest (Chi). " (RoC,p.22)

He also claims that, in China, ancestral spirits ("chung-miao") were worshipped in their own temples but he is rather unclear about the relationship between the ancestral and the She-chi spirits. He appears to suggest that they were fused together into a "tutelary spirit of the local community" and, as such :

" These spirits together (She-chi chung-miao) were the main object of the local rural cults. " (RoC,p.22)

Thus, in Chinese antiquity, each local community of peasants had its own spirit or tutelary deity who was capable of meting out ethical sanctions. Weber seems to imply that these local deities were inter-related along similar lines to those of the cult of Baal. They were part emanations, part local representatives, of the all-pervading spirit of the fertile land. However, where the local Baals were characterised in very personalistic terms, the Chinese tutelary spirit was conceived more naturalistically as a semi-magical material force or substance. Weber implies that, even in this very early period, the two regions were set on divergent courses of religious development.

He suggests that there was originally a greater tension

between animist-naturist and anthropomorphic conceptions of deity in the Chinese peasant cults than in those of the Ancient Middle East. The objects of worship were the natural sources of agricultural fertility but these were anthropomorphised as personalised spirits to a lesser extent than in the cult of Baal. In China, the land itself was worshipped albeit in personalised form, whereas, in the semitic Orient, Baal himself was worshipped as a personalised possessor of the fertile land (RoC,p.23).

This also seems to be Weber's case for the existence of "Earth", "the Earth", or the "spirit of Earth" as a primaeval object of Chinese cults. This is particularly significant for his general analysis, which strives to emphasise and illuminate the eventual emergence, later in Chinese history, of "Heaven and Earth" as the principal, but impersonal, supreme religious powers of China.

Weber suggests that the early development of religious conceptions in China may have been influenced by two consequences following from the less absolute reliance of early Chinese civilisation upon centralised irrigation. Firstly, it is unlikely that the Chinese would have developed a sense of economic survival depending entirely upon a remote creator-king who might have served as a model for conceptions of deity. Secondly, the greater dependence upon uncontrollable natural forces is likely to have stimulated conceptions of nature itself as a supreme life-force. Weber sees these economic conditions as contributing to the distinctive development of Chinese religion away from its origins as a fertility cult which bore initial resemblances to those of the Middle East.

As noted above, however, Weber examines the development of religious conceptions with reference to a rather idiosyncratic periodisation of Chinese history. In Weber's account, there were two basic stages of early Chinese development: an epoch of the "bachelor house" being superseded by an "Homeric age". Both of these stages display what Weber calls the "militaristic" origins of Chinese culture. In the earliest stage of this development, the Chinese, like almost all warrior and hunting peoples, knew the bachelor house in which:

"the fraternity of young warriors were garrisoned by age group away from family life" (RoC,p.24).

This militaristic culture of the bachelor house was superseded by an equally militaristic but technologically more sophisticated stage of development: an Homeric Age in which troops of foot soldiers were displaced by aristocratic charioteers.

"Use of the horse in individual hero-combat - in China as well as the world over - led to the disintegration of the bachelor house of foot soldiers. The horse was first used as a draft animal for the war-chariot and was instrumental in the ascendancy of hero combat. The highly trained individual hero, equipped with costly arms, stepped forward." (RoC,p.24)

The modern historical evidence for this Homeric period is discussed below, and allows a more precise delineation of those aspects of Chinese socio-political organisation which Weber takes to be significant for religious development. In Weber's own terms the epoch of the bachelor house and its transition into an Homeric Age preceded the Chou period, although aspects of the latter together with its individualist and feudal forms of social organisation

persisted well into the Warring States period. He claims that the Homeric Age was marked by two major social and political changes which produced corresponding changes in religious conceptions.

In the first place, the rise of the aristocratic charioteers is seen to coincide with the rise of princely power and so lead to a closer identification of the "spirit of the ploughland" with "the spirit of the princely territory" (RoC, p.22). Weber seems to suggest a process in which the tutelary deities of the local agricultural communities came to be seen as the local representatives and emanations of a spirit of all the land encompassed within a bounded "state" or princely territory. Thus the spirit of the fertile earth became the spirit of the territorial chieftains and princes and later the political domain of the Chou rulers.

Secondly, and still distinct from the spirit of the fertile land, there developed a form of hero-God, a personal God of Heaven. Weber feels that this was a typical concomitant of the emergence of a "stratum of noble heroes", and that, in so far as this God "roughly corresponded to the Hellenic Zeus", he can be assumed to have been cast in a warlike mould, descending from the heavens to participate in the conquests of his warriors (RoC, p.22). Again, there are clear parallels with the emergence of the cult of Yahwe. In a footnote (RoC, p.238), Weber suggests that this God of Heaven was originally conceived as ruling with a pantheon of six lesser deities beside him. Thus, there emerged a dual focus for ritual in the co-existence of a spirit of the Earth

and a God of Heaven or the heavens.

Weber makes one further point about this Homeric Age which appears to lay the basis for the subsequent distinctiveness of Chinese conceptions of deity. He suggests that:

" In China, as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the technique of knightly combat apparently never led to an individualist social order as strong as that of Homeric Hellas or the Occidental Middle Ages. " (RoC,p.25)

This returns Weber to his earlier theme of the significance of economic factors for religious development and the tensions between feudal and prebendal forms of social organisation produced by the existence of some degree of central monarchical rule through proto-bureaucratic officials. Weber feels that these tensions persisted throughout the Homeric Age and thus influenced religious conceptions in the Chou and even pre-Chou periods. In the specifically religious context, Weber implies that these bureaucratic checks to an individualistic social order also checked tendencies towards a fully developed concept of a militaristic hero-god which might otherwise have emerged in the Homeric Age.

At this point, Weber's distinction between the epochs of the "bachelor house" and the "Homeric Age" gradually gives way to the more conventional sinological distinction between pre-history and history proper. In accordance with contemporary scholarship, Weber associates the latter with the beginning of the Chou period, and we can assume that he intends to locate the epoch of the bachelor house in the preceding pre-historical period. He assumes that the Homeric Age began in these pre-historic times, but continued well into the

historical times of the Chou dynasty.

All the characteristics of the Homeric Age considered above are presented by Weber as having pre-historical origins but also as having undergone significant further development in the Chou period. Moreover, he recognises that whilst certain features, particularly those relating to the bureaucratic checks on social and religious development, operated in much the same way throughout the Homeric age, there were other respects in which the establishment of the Chou dynasty saw a crucial break with the earlier traditions.

According to Weber, the inception of the Chou dynasty saw a crucial innovation in the area of religious conceptions. The founder of the Chou "empire" worshipped a God of Heavens whom Weber associates with the hero-god of the earlier pre-historical period. However, the distinction between this god and the spirit of the fertile land was no longer maintained to the same degree, the two being fused more closely into what Weber calls a "dualist unit" (p.22). In a footnote, he claims that the personal God of Heaven was "allegedly replaced" by the "impersonal expressions of Heaven and earth" (p.258). This syncretised guiding spirit, or supreme deity, subsequently took on an increasingly impersonal aspect, and there began to appear the distinctively Chinese tensions concerning the Spirit of Heaven, whom Weber refers to as Shang Ti. Shang Ti could be conceived of either as an anthropomorphic King of Heaven or as "Heaven" itself by which Weber means a conception tinged with "animist-naturalist notions" of one supreme life-force or principle pervading the whole of the Universe.

In this latter conception there is a further dualism. On

the one hand Heaven is seen as "the heavens", the locus of the sun, moon, and stars, and the source of the natural forces of warmth, rain, wind, etc.. In this sense, fertility arises out of the fusion between the heavens and the earth - the latter being the locus of the soil, crops and vegetation. Simultaneously, however, Heaven can be seen as the fundamental life-force permeating this fertile union of the the heavens and the earth.

A second crucial innovation came with the monopolisation by the Chou emperors of the sacrificial rites to Heaven and the adoption of the title "Son of Heaven". Below this level, religious practices reflected the developing structures of feudal suzerainty:

" the princes made sacrifices to the spirits of the land and to the ancestors: the heads of households made sacrifices to the ancestral spirits of their kinship group. " (RoC. p.22)

For Weber, these aspects of Chou religion laid the basis for the subsequent emphasis on impersonal conceptions of deity and the divergence from the incipiently monotheistic Middle Eastern notions of a personalised creator god,

" raised above the animist semi-personal spirits and the local deity ", (RoC. p.22)

These developments were underpinned by political conditions in China. In this early Chou period, China was already in the process of becoming an "increasingly pacified world empire". Thus not only was there, relatively speaking, less occasion for internal warfare, there was also less justification for it. This latter ideological aspect of early unification is taken by Weber to be particularly significant. The first two hundred years of the Chou dynasty

saw the forging of a cultural cohesion which survived the next six hundred years of feudal decline and provided a basis for further cohesion when the Chinese empire proper was formed by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti.

An ideology was formed around the ritual position of the Chou "emperor" as "simultaneously and primarily high priest" (p.26), which circumscribed subsequent periods of disruption and provided a basis for the development of an increasingly pacifist ideology. This ideology focussed upon the role of the "emperor" as "Son of Heaven", a position he occupied not only in the period of Chou political supremacy but also throughout the period of disunity between the eighth and third centuries B.C. which Weber sees as decisive for the formation of intellectual culture.

Thus, "the emperor was an essential element of cultural cohesion" among the individual states (p.26). Because there was only one Heaven, there could be only one Son of Heaven and his presence in the sacrificial rites was vital to the preservation of cosmic harmony. The heads of the warring states subscribed to this concept and it is significant that they sought, not to replace the Son of Heaven, but to fill the vacuum left by his increasing political impotence whilst maintaining the correct ritual forms.

Weber points out several implications of this situation. Firstly, although the relationship between the force of arms and political power was very close throughout China's history, it was operated through a potent nexus of ideology and ritual. Weber suggests that only once was a victorious general proclaimed emperor by the army. On other occasions dynastic conquest and rebellion against an emperor was

justified and sanctioned ritualistically in terms of supplanting an emperor who could no longer be regarded as a legitimate Son of Heaven. Although this notion of Heaven withdrawing its mandate from one imperial house and bestowing it upon another received its more complete elaboration at a later time, there is evidence to suggest that it was recognised in some form throughout the Chou period. Secondly, formal homogeneity of ritual cemented the general cultural cohesion and, thirdly, it allowed the families of noble statesmen to be fairly mobile from one contending state to another.

With the establishment of the patrimonial empire at the end of the third century B.C., China became more firmly and more lastingly unified and pacified. This had two major implications for religious development. Firstly, there was no longer legitimate opportunity for internal warfare and there was even less need than before for a warlike god of a people locked in struggles for the survival of their whole social order. This internal pacification represented, at least in principle, a complete break between the fate of a people and its success or failure in war. Military enterprise came in general to be seen as something remote from the destiny of ordinary people. It became a governmental police duty, a matter of defence against the "barbarians" on China's borders.

Moreover, the Chinese world empire became so well established as a permanent social order that it could eventually survive successive changes of dynasty and even periodic conquests. The basic social fabric enveloping the

lives of the common people was unaltered by a change of rulers at the top.

" Successful usurpation of the throne or successful invasion simply meant a different tax receiver, not an altered social order. " (RoC,p.27)

Especially during the patrimonial period, there was increasingly no need for a personalised interventionist deity controlling the national destiny of His people.

Secondly, unity and pacification brought further ideological developments away from militarism. Weber suggests that the spirit of Heaven came to be seen as a sort of spiritual ombudsman to whom the ordinary people might appeal in their attempts to relieve bureaucratic oppression.

"Since the abolition of feudalism, the spirit of Heaven, like the Egyptian deities, has been conceived as a sort of ideal court of appeal against the office-holders of this earth from the emperor right down to the lowest official." (p.25)

Thus, as bureaucratic government and the ideological influence of Confucian officials became established, the concept of the Mandate of Heaven stimulated an essentially pacifist mentality as a substitute for direct, armed rebellion in the face of injustice. Weber suggests that this notion was:

"a quasi-superstitious Magna Charta(sic) - the only available and gravely feared weapon the subjects could use against the privileged, the officials, and the rich." (p.25)

Thus, for Weber, the crucial difference between the political history of the Israelites and the Chinese stemmed from their geo-political situations and the consequent relative strengths of militarism and pacifism as influences upon religious development. Whereas the Israelites had constantly been involved in a military struggle for national

survival which they eventually lost, the cultural continuity of the Chinese people, developing a distinctively Chinese civilization in the Chinese geographical homeland, had never been challenged in the long term.

In so far as militarism did exert a significant influence upon religious conceptions, it did so during the historically remote times of the Homeric Age. The earlier part of this period had certainly seen the emergence of personalised hero-gods and the emergence of a personalised God of Heaven as the supreme religious power; but even here the individualistic militarism of the social order, and its religious expressions, had been tempered by the existence of some form of officialdom.

The 200 years of the High Chou period had itself produced a degree of internal pacification and the stabilisation of the social order into an embryonic world-empire. Right from the outset of this period there had been a mutually reinforcing bureaucratic and pacifist mentality in which the prosperity and national survival of the Chinese people was dependent upon effective government rather than military prowess. Even during the period of the Warring States territorial rulers had employed their own non-militaristic administrative officers in their attempts to bring rival feudalistic lords and princes under their centralised domination. For Weber, the gradually emergent predominance of the scholar-official and patrimonial administration, over militarism and feudalism, represented the triumph of pacifist and bureaucratic ideologies which in turn was reflected in religious conceptions.

Thus religious conceptions were influenced profoundly by the quest for legitimating principles and organizational practices of government and administration. There was an "Empire", or at least a culturally cohesive congeries of territories, to be administered, and the problems of exercising power were at least as important as those of seizing and retaining it. Weber seems to suggest that under these conditions, religious speculation took for granted the existence of a Chinese world-empire which stretched back into the legendary past and forward into eternity.

Out of this account of political and religious development Weber sets out the elements of a Chinese world-view in which an impersonal supreme religious power which he refers to as "Heaven" exercised dominion over an organically integrated universe of natural phenomena, supernatural spirits, and human beings. Again, it is difficult to decide whether Weber sees this world-view as having emerged at a particular period under particular social conditions. It seems wisest to assume that he sees it as characteristic of the whole patrimonial period at least, with many of its constituent elements existing in much earlier periods.

He suggests that from the 3rd. century B.C. onwards, the unification and internal pacification of the Empire persisted, at least in principle, into the twentieth century. In so doing he tends to neglect the frequent periods of popular rebellion, internal secession, territorial fragmentation and sub-division under rival dynasties, and periods of rule by non-Chinese dynasties. It is not that Weber was unaware of such phenomena. Rather, he felt that, in contrast to the historical experience of the ancient

Israelites, the Chinese had never been threatened by national subjugation, exile, or enslavement by foreign powers.

"When quiet religious speculation was being developed such events were too remote to be seized upon. They were not constantly visualised as ordained menaces, or as ordeals which had been mastered, or as problems governing man's very existence. Above all, such matters of fate were not the business of the common people."
(RoC,p.27)

Under these conditions:

"the god of Heaven could not assume the form of a hero-god who revealed himself in the national destiny of his people through its foreign relations, or who was worshipped in war, victory, defeat, exile, and nostalgia." (P.26)

Rather:

"the unshaken order of social and political life, with thousands of years behind it, was placed under divine tutelage and then considered as the revelation of the divine" (p.27).

Animism and the Way of Heaven

For Weber, the relationship between Heaven and the social order is the key to the Chinese world-view. However, in his attempts simultaneously to distinguish the Chinese concept of Heaven from the concept of Yahwe; to identify the underlying geo-political contrasts; and to relate the concept of Heaven to a more general animistic world-view: he tends to obscure each of these separate strands. Hence the following exposition gives a slightly fuller account of the Chinese world-view by introducing and clarifying material which Weber originally introduced in later chapters of KuT.

Having attempted to demonstrate the long-term political conditions which resulted in the long-term tendency towards an impersonal conception of religious supremacy, Weber goes on to examine this conception in more detail. At the same time he relates it to the survival of animist beliefs, which he claims were also favoured by the political foundations of Chinese life. The result was a fusion of the two into a cosmological system referred to as "Universalism" by the 19th. century Dutch missionary and religious folklorist, de Groot (1906). Weber relies heavily on de Groot and "Universalism" as his means of characterising the Chinese world-view.

The intimate relationship between Heaven and the Chinese social and political order is the starting point for Weber's own understanding of this universalistic world view. The latter assumes that:

1. A certain social and political order is a natural order;
2. This social order was created by the legendary first emperors of China and has its roots in the long distant past, certainly before the time of the Chou;
3. It had degenerated somewhat and had to be restored by the early Chou emperors and the highly revered Duke of Chou;
4. Chinese history since the Chou had seen periods of alternation between Emperors who had sought to restore this natural order to the world and those who had let it degenerate or had actively corrupted it.

Weber is not sufficiently explicit or detailed in his own account to clarify these assumptions but something like them seems to underly it. This is what he means when he claims that:

" for the heavenly powers of China, however, the ancient social order was the one and only one " (RoC,p.27).

Thus, Heaven is intimately connected to the natural social order as its guardian and protector :

" Heaven reigned as the guardian of its permanence and undisturbed sanctity and as the seat of tranquility guaranteed by the rule of reasonable norms. " (RoC,p.27)

This was the sense in which Heaven was the supreme religious source and protector of the natural social order, a conception which contrasts strongly with the conception of Yahwe. Heaven was not "the fountainhead of irrational, feared, or hoped for peripeties of fate" (p.27) in the sense of victory or defeat in a battle for national survival.

" Tranquility and internal order could best be guaranteed by a power which, impersonal in nature, was specifically above mundane affairs. Such a power had to steer clear of passion, above all "wrath" - the most important attribute of Yahwe. " (p.27)

In this impersonalised sense Heaven was an integral part of the social order, a life-force within it rather than a personified deity over and above it:

"... the God of Heaven was victorious as the God of heavenly order not heavenly hosts....Here (in China and also in India though for different reasons) the timeless and irrevocable attained religious supremacy... Not a supramundane lord creator but a supra-divine, impersonal, identical and eternal existence was felt to be the ultimate and supreme. This was to sanction the validity of eternal order and its timeless existence." (p.28)

From Weber's disorganised and sketchy comments, it seems clear that he has three main points to make about the distinguishing features of Heaven as a supreme but impersonal power. These are obscured somewhat by his persistent tendency to use the terms "Heaven", "God of Heaven", and "Way of Heaven" interchangeably. This is understandable up to a point given the ambiguity in the Chinese conceptions themselves. However, the term "God of Heaven" will be avoided here except in direct quotation. Heaven and "Way of Heaven" are more in accord with Weber's own intention of emphasising and clarifying the impersonal conception. The "Way of Heaven" can thus be understood in the sense of the Tao, a supreme life force or guiding principle immanent within the universe.

In this context the first crucial aspect of Heaven concerns its immanence as a natural force in some senses equivalent to the Western conception of the laws of nature. Both the Way of Heaven and the laws of nature underly the manifold diversity of visible events and phenomena in the natural and human worlds. Similarly, both are equally removed from the notion of a personalised God who predated and created the universe. For Weber, the Way of Heaven was timeless but only as old as the universe itself. It was not an external creator of the world.

The second characteristic attributed by Weber to the Way of Heaven is its essential benevolence, an attribute which distinguishes it sharply from the modern Western concept of natural laws as morally neutral. Weber refers to an "optimistic conception of cosmic harmony" (p.28), based on the assumption that the universe had a natural tendency towards harmonious equilibrium amongst its constituent parts, and that this equilibrium was benevolent in its consequences for human beings. Misfortune only occurs when this natural cosmic harmony is artificially disturbed. Such disturbance, generally introduced by human actions, was held to be the ultimate cause of all misfortunes, whether they were natural disasters like floods or droughts, individual disease and sickness, social unrest, or despotic government.

"The welfare of the subjects documented heavenly contentment and the correct functioning of the order. All bad elements were symptomatic of the disturbance in the providential harmony of heaven and earth through magical forces." (p.28)

The third feature of the impersonalised conception of Heaven was that its Way could only be learned indirectly.

"The impersonal power of Heaven did not speak to man. It revealed itself in the regimen on earth, in the firm order of nature and tradition which were part of the cosmic order and as elsewhere it revealed itself in what occurred to man." (p.28)

Whilst Yahwe revealed His Will in spoken commands to his people, the Way of Heaven could only be inferred. It revealed itself through the regular order displayed in the workings of nature: the regular progression of the planets; the alternation of night and day; the succession of the seasons; the growth, decay, and fresh growth of vegetation. Weber also notes that the Way of Heaven revealed itself in

human destiny. Particular misfortunes were "proved", often through divination, to be the result of human actions opposed to the Way of Heaven.

Weber goes on to try to specify the mechanism through which this impersonal force was able to exercise its power; to identify the relationships between Heaven and the animistic beliefs and practices which he claims were also favoured by the political foundations outlined above; and to specify the relationship between Heaven and human beings in their official and non-official capacities.

He suggests that, like all religions, Chinese religion evolved from individualistic magical practices to organised cults of redemption and that animism was therefore inherent within it. Weber uses animism to refer to beliefs in the existence of spirits, and the use of rituals through which the spirits could be coerced provided the correct formulae and procedures were adhered to. In the West, this complex of animistic magic had been broken down firstly by the development of beliefs in personalised hero-gods as superior to the naturalistic spirits, and secondly by the developing faith of plebeian strata in a personalised, ethical, world-redeeming God.

In China, this typical progression had taken place only to a limited extent. A hero God had emerged, and aristocratic, knightly strata had been instrumental in the suppression of orgiastic peasant cults directed towards spirits of the fertile earth. The elimination of similarly orgiastic and ecstatic elements of ritual and belief had later been undertaken by the literati.

However, magical beliefs in general, and beliefs in

supernatural spirits in particular had persisted in China to a greater extent than the West and had actually been incorporated within a universalistic, organic, world-view. Weber claims that political conditions favoured this fusion. Just as an assumed or real eternal social order could be seen as an expression of the eternal Way of Heaven, so it could be seen as animated by equally eternal magical forces and beings. The assumptions of an eternal Way of Heaven and an eternal social order could be fused within an organic world view in which the magical forces and beings constituted the crucial mediating linkages between the mundane and the supramundane.

Weber's account of this organicist world-view assumes that it originated from a primaeval, dualist belief in spirits and their powers.

" This optimistic conception of cosmic harmony is fundamental for China, and has gradually evolved from the primitive belief in spirits. Here as elsewhere, there was originally a dualism of good (useful) and evil (harmful) spirits, of the "shen" and the "kuei", which animated the whole universe and expressed themselves in supernatural events as well as in man's conduct and condition. Man's "soul" too, was also believed to be composed of the heaven-derived shen and the earthly kuei substance which separated again after death. This corresponds to the widely diffused assumption of a plurality of animating forces. The doctrine held in common by all schools of philosophy summarised the " good" spirits as the (heavenly and masculine) Yang principle, the "evil" ones as the (earthly and feminine) Yin principle, explaining the origin of the world from their fusion. Both principles were, like heaven and earth, eternal. " (p.29)

This account, which must be unpacked with great care, has certain strengths and one considerable weakness. It presents a reasonably accurate conception of traditional Chinese concepts of Yin and Yang and their relationship to Heaven, the spirits, and human beings. Its weakness is a

tendency to explain Chinese conceptions of the universe and its origins in terms of a dualistic opposition between Yin and Yang as good and evil forces. This misses the point, crucial to traditional Chinese conceptions, that although Yang and Yin have positive and negative connotations respectively, they are essentially complementary. It would be quite mistaken to assume that within this world-view, cosmic harmony is attained by the suppression of Yin by Yang in the sense of a conquest of the forces of evil or darkness by the forces of light or goodness.

With this reservation in mind, Weber's account can be elaborated and clarified. The key to the Chinese world-view lies in its organicism as opposed to the atomism of the West. That is to say, all "natural phenomena" are integrated and inter-related elements of the universe. As an organic whole this universe is quite literally living and breathing from day to day, season to season, year to year, generation to generation, from and into eternity. Organic life is essentially cyclic, as seen in the regular succession of night and day, the seasons, the planets and the stars. The natural cycle of birth, decay, and regeneration, is a profound expression of the Way of Heaven.

However, the precise mechanism which links the Way of Heaven with the manifold phenomena of the universe is provided by Yang and Yin, forces which are associated not just with heaven and earth but with a host of other antinomies: light and dark; warmth and cold; sun and moon; south and north; male and female. These forces are not opposed to each other but are complementary. Both are essential for the life of the whole cosmos, just as male and

female are necessary for the continuation of human life. The Way of Heaven lies in an appropriate balance between Yang and Yin at appropriate times and occasions. Thus, it is entirely appropriate for Yang forces to be in the ascendant in the daytime and in the Summer, and Yin forces at night and in the Winter.

Thus, Yang and Yin, through their interaction, are the active and activating forces of the impersonal Way of Heaven. This is what Weber means when he writes of an impersonal conception of Heaven being fused with more animistic conceptions into a universalistic cosmogony.

" This was brought about by joining an inviolate and uniform magical ritual to the calendar. The ritual compelled the spirits; the calendar was indispensable for a people of peasants. Thus, the laws of nature and of rites were fused into the unity of Tao. " (p.28)

However, there are problems with Weber's conception of how the spirits fitted in with the Yin-Yang beliefs. The Yin-Yang system is of course closely related to the calendar in so far as each time of the year has its appropriate proportion of one to the other. The ritual observances are also closely enmeshed with the calendar. Yin and Yang are themselves magical forces in so far as humans must perform the appropriate rites at the appropriate times in order to assist in the maintenance of their harmony and the regularity of the " breathings of the year ".

Weber claims that the universalistic world-view evolved from a primaeval dualistic belief in good and evil spirits which constituted a plurality of animating forces and were derived from heaven and earth respectively. This dualism was

also reflected in the constitution of the human soul. In this way, Yang-Yin conceptions synthesised the plurality of good spirits and bad spirits with the supreme but essentially passive Way of Heaven.

Magical ritual was initially seen as a means towards supporting and placating the good, shen spirits and keeping the evil, kwei spirits at bay or at rest, by the performance of appropriate rituals at the appropriate times of the year. Weber claims that the universalistic world-view was produced by a fusion between the system of magical ritual directed towards a host of animating personalised spirits, with the impersonal conception of the Way of Heaven operating through Yang and Yin.

This identification of the shen spirits, and the shen element in the human soul, with Yang, also presents Weber with the basis of the hierarchical relationship between supernatural and human beings. Although all gods and spirits were generally more powerful than human beings, there were important qualifications.

" No single God, no apotheosized spirit, however powerful, was omniscient or omnipotent. " (p.29)

Firstly, the "charismatically qualified man" had power over the evil spirits. His charismatic qualities emanated from a strong proportion of Yang within himself. Secondly, because all superhuman beings were "far below the impersonal supreme power of Heaven" (p.29), they also ranked below the Emperor, the Son of Heaven. This hierarchy persisted so long as the Emperor continued to conform to the Way of Heaven. This clear subordination of the personalised spirits and deities to the supreme impersonal deities of Heaven or Heaven

and Earth was reflected in cultic practices. Weber claims that only the supreme impersonal powers were the objects of the supra-individual community because these were the powers which could influence the destiny of the community as a whole. The magical coercion of the spirits was attempted in the interests of particular individuals.

Weber derives this distinction between official and popular cults from de Groot once again. In general, when sinologists refer to the official cult, they are referring to annual and seasonal rituals regularly conducted by the Emperor himself or by central and local officials, always for the well-being of their respective territories. There is no real evidence, even from that which Weber cites himself, to suggest that the official cult was directed only to the great impersonal powers of Heaven or Heaven and Earth. However, it would be accurate to claim, as Weber does, that they were the supreme objects of the official cult and that it was indeed performed by the Emperor and his officials in the interests of political communities rather than individuals.

Within this overall nexus, the relationship between human and spirit beings proceeded on the basis of what Weber calls:

"primitive mutuality: so and so many ritual acts brought so and so many benefits " (p.29).

Although the destiny of human beings could be affected by the Way of Heaven and the spirits - and therefore appropriate behaviour, sacrifices and ritual were owed to them - the destiny of the spirits themselves was subject to human intervention, directly and indirectly, in relation to the perceived efficacy of a particular spirit.

Thus, the Emperor bestowed titles and rank upon deities in a fashion paralleling that of promotion, demotion and dismissal within the official bureaucracy itself. Proven deities could be elevated to a higher status in the spiritual bureaucracy, and those who had failed to respond to official requests to alleviate a drought, a flood, or whatever, could be demoted, and even publicly castigated by the officials.

" Only proven charisma legitimized a spirit. To be sure, the emperor was responsible for misfortune, but misfortune also disgraced the God who, through oracles drawn by lot or other imperatives, was responsible for the failure of a venture. As late as 1445 an emperor publicly gave a verbal lashing to the spirit of the Tasi mountain. In similar cases worship and sacrifice were withheld from unworthy spirits. Among the great emperors the "rationalist" unifier of the Empire, Shih Huang Ti, according to Ssu-ma Ch'ien's biography, had a mountain deforested in order to punish a penitent spirit for obstructing access to the mountain." (p.30)

Indirectly, the supernatural objects of unofficial or popular cults could simply fall into abeyance, and the particular deity into obscurity, if his supplicants lost their faith in his efficacy.

" If a tutelary spirit proved insufficiently strong to protect a man, in spite of all sacrifices and virtues, he had to be substituted, for only the spirit who proved to be truly powerful was worthy of worship. Actually such shifts occurred frequently. " (p.29)

The Chinese World View and Conditional Charismatic Legitimacy

Weber goes on to suggest that just as the conditional nature of a spirit's magical charisma was an integral aspect of the Chinese world-view, so was the charismatic legitimacy of political domination. In this respect, he suggests, charismatic status and legitimacy had originated in China in much the same way as in other cultures.

As an extraordinary quality attributed to groups, individuals, or institutions, the possession of charisma was always originally revealed in either sorcery or military heroism.

" Originally, heroic strength was considered quite as much a magical quality as "magical force" in the narrower sense, for instance, rainmaking, magical healing, or extraordinary craftsmanship. " (p.30)

As such, the charismatic magician or warrior had to demonstrate that charisma had not been lost or withdrawn by performing "recurrent miracles and heroic feats". At the very least:

" .. the magician or hero must not expose himself and his following to obvious failure. " (p.30)

However there are two issues which are decisive for the evolution of any culture. Firstly, were these two sources of charisma - military heroism and magical prowess - combined in the same person, which is the case of caesaro-papism? Secondly, if they were, which of the two was predominant for the development of rulership ?

Weber suggests that Chinese rulership was a form of caesaro-papism in so far as supreme secular and spiritual authority were combined in the same person. Again, he feels

that centralised water-regulation was at least a co-determinant of the transposition of magical charisma to imperial domination; although he tends to agree with Jellinek that the precise interconnections of "imperium and sacerdotium" are products of particular conjunctures in particular cases (f.59, p.261). Thus, although the Chinese emperors had to prove their charisma through military success or at least the avoidance of military failure, their principal responsibility lay in the securing of agricultural prosperity and internal stability. This was felt to be the province of their particular charismatic prowess, and the arena in which their charisma had to be demonstrated.

Even more significant for the charismatic status of imperial domination was the gradual transition in the charismatic nature of the Chinese emperors. Originally, charisma had been attributed to their inherent personal qualities, demonstrated by their militaristic or rain-making prowess. This was gradually transformed into a charismatic status which was dependent at first upon their conformity to ritual and to an ethical system.

" ..the personal qualities which were necessary to the charismatic image of the Emperor were turned into ritualism and then into ethics by the ritualists and philosophers...he was the old rainmaker of magical religion translated into ethics. " (p.31)

For Weber, this was a central element of an Emperor's rule as "primarily a pontifex". The Emperor retained his charisma by conforming ethically to the Way of Heaven. If he did this, the welfare of his people was assured. If he conducted himself and the business of government improperly, he lost this charisma. This was demonstrated by social

unrest and natural disasters: all of which could be taken as signs that the Emperor had departed from the Way of Heaven and could no longer be regarded as a legitimate Son of Heaven.

" He had to prove himself as the " Son of Heaven " and as the lord approved by Heaven insofar as the people fared well under him. If he failed he simply lacked charisma. Thus, if the rivers broke the dikes, or if rain did not fall despite the sacrifices made, it was evidence - such was expressly taught - that the Emperor did not have the charismatic qualities demanded by Heaven. " (p.31)

Similarly, the patrimonial official enjoyed a charismatic status as a man of great ethical virtue, living close to the Way of Heaven and favoured by the Son of Heaven. Nonetheless, the charisma of officialdom was equally conditional.

" All unrest and disorder in his bailiwick- whether social or cosmic-metereological in nature - demonstrated that the official was not in the grace of the spirits. Without questioning the reasons, the official had to retire from office. " (p.32)

Historical Context and Validity

Much of the modern information about the pre-Chou Shang dynasty, which was thought to be legendary by Weber and his contemporaries, is based less upon the literary and historical sources than upon archaeological excavations of several Shang cities in the central and Eastern Hwang Ho valley, all but one of which were made only after 1950 (Eberhard, 1977 p.14). These have allowed modern scholars to replace the legendary dates for the Shang period (1751-1112 B.C., according to Eberhard, *ibid.*, p.13), with a more accurate though still imprecise estimate of c.1500-1000 B.C., and to identify the extent of the Shang domain as a fairly circumscribed area in N.E. China, centred on the northern bank of the Hwang Ho.

" The area under more or less organised Shang control comprised towards the end of the dynasty, the present provinces of Honan, western Shantung, southern Hopei, central and south Shansi, east Shensi, parts of Kinagsu and Anhui." (Eberhard,p.16)

However, parts of this area were almost certainly under the control of vassal states and it is virtually impossible to identify the extent of direct Shang control (Loewe, 1966, p.45; Fairbank, 1979, p.28).

The excavations shed considerable light on those aspects of early Chinese culture which Weber felt were important for his analysis. In general, they not only illuminate the points which Weber makes but they also tend rather to support his analysis than otherwise. However, one point which needs to be borne in mind is that during the Shang dynasty and its successor the Chou, China was, strictly speaking, not an

empire but a kingdom. One of the flaws in Weber's analysis is his tendency to follow the Chinese tradition in referring to past ages, especially the ages of Shang and Chou, as, at least during certain periods, a golden age of imperial government. This leads him to refer to the Chou Kings as Chinese Emperors and to overemphasise the similarities between their position and the rulers of China's genuinely imperial age from 221 B.C. to 1911 A.D..

Be that as it may, certain features which Weber refers to as characteristic of the "Homeric Age" may undoubtedly be substantiated and clarified by reference to more recent historical scholarship. The Shang period certainly marked a significant advance in cultural development. It coincided with the emergence of Chinese civilisation from the Stone Age into the Bronze Age and, certainly towards the end of the dynasty, the breeding of horses for use in chariot warfare was well established. It also seems clear that not only were horses and war chariots very expensive, but so was the bronze weaponry and armour used by the charioteers (Eberhard, *op.cit.*, p.17).

On this basis, the "Homeric Age" which Weber constructs rather speculatively on the basis of the older sources and his own comparative insights, can be reconstructed quite fruitfully. Shang society was clearly stratified, and its charioteers were drawn exclusively from the ranks of the wealthy, dominant aristocracy. Fairbank suggests that:

"A virtual monopoly of bronze metallurgy, bronze weapons, and chariots gave the ruling class great power over the other members of the state in Shang times."
(Fairbank, 1979, p.30)

The Shang war chariot was manned by two men in addition

to the noble warrior himself. There was a driver and a servant who handed his master his arrows and other weapons when needed. In combat, each nobleman was surrounded by his personal retinue and armies of 300 men were divided into 3 units of 100 men each. Although battles might be described as infantry engagements in so far as there was yet no individually mounted cavalry, the nobles were usually the actual combatants and conducted themselves according to chivalric notions. The wholesale extermination of subjugated foes was characteristic of a much later period and perhaps Weber is not too far astray in drawing analogies between these aristocratic warriors and those of the Iliad and Odyssey.

Weber gives no clear indication of when he assumes this Homeric Age came to an end, but again reference may be made to a general agreement amongst modern sinologists that the war chariot was the decisive weapon until about the fourth century B.C., when several developments took place. Cheaper iron weapons led to a great increase in the size of fighting forces and large peasant armies of foot soldiers replaced the aristocratic charioteers (Fairbank, *op. cit.*, p.38). At about the same time, war chariots were gradually succeeded by mounted cavalry, an innovation originally developed by the pastoral peoples of central and West Asia.

The pace of change was accelerated by the introduction of the crossbow, a native Chinese weapon which seems to have been used, in its lighter version, to supplement the cavalry's military capacity and, in its heavier version, to arm the defenders of walled fortifications. In fact, the

need for defence against skilled nomadic cavalry stimulated the construction of the:

" long defensive fortifications which began to appear in the North and West at this time and which were the precursors of the Ch'in Great Wall" (Elvin,1973,p.26-7).

Thus, in terms of more conventional periodisations, Weber's "Homeric Age" persisted into the later Chou period, if one defines it primarily in terms of military technology. However, Weber's account confines it rather more narrowly and it seems fairly clear that, in certain respects, he wishes to limit it to the period when it most closely approximated its pure or ideal form. In this sense, it is associated not just with aristocratic charioteers but with certain religious developments. Principally, these latter involved the development of a personal "God of Heavens", who roughly corresponded to the Hellenic Zeus, and the transformation of the "spirit of the ploughland" into the "spirit of the princely territory" (RoC,p.22).

Taking these religious developments into account, Weber seems to assume a religiously decisive break between the Shang and Chou dynasties. Certainly, he assumes that historical times only really began with the Chou and he suggests that although the Chou rulers took over religious conceptions from their predecessors, significant changes took place in conceptions of the deity, reflecting changes in the social relationship between the ruler and his vassals.

Turning once again to modern scholarship, there is certainly some support for Weber's assumption that the typical religious concomitants of an Homeric Age can be identified most clearly in the pre-Chou period, and significant changes separate one epoch from the other.

Interpreting the archaeological evidence, Eberhard suggests that before the Shang period, there may well have existed a series of petty statelets from around 2000 B.C. in the area of the southern part of the modern province of Shansi (Eberhard, op.cit., p.11). These emerged from, and existed alongside, earlier cultures which still used stone implements but which developed quite sophisticated agricultural techniques, clothing, pottery implements, and even sericulture.

The increase of princely power which Weber attributes rather vaguely to the whole pre-Chou period might well have predated the Shang dynasty in these petty statelets. In this case, the "spirit of the ploughland" or the "fertile soil", worshipped in the village communities, might well have come to be seen as the spirit of a larger princely territory in these pre-Shang petty statelets. Whether this was the case or not, the Shang dynasty certainly established the concept of princely territorial domination in North China.

The Shang king and his successors stood at the head of, and ruled over, a tribal alliance. The Shang nobility was a slave-owning aristocracy, living in walled cities, who generally acknowledged the Shang king as supreme overlord and religious leader. The land was worked by an unfree peasantry who owed services in kind and labour to the Shang nobility but had a serf-like, rather than a completely servile status. Where the Shang state ended, and gave way to 30 or so loosely independent states is still difficult to say but differences in the relations between a ruler and his vassals, inside or outside the Shang state proper, differed in degree rather

than kind.

Whether Eberhard is entirely correct to designate this as a feudal period, it seems reasonably clear that the tenants-in-chief of the king generally acknowledged their obligation to send tributes of grain and other commodities to the capital, and to participate with their soldiers in time of war. This latter point is especially significant for Weber's analysis because he suggests that:

" even at its height the technique of knightly combat never led to an individualist social order as strong as that of Homeric Hellas or the occidental Middle Ages " (p.25),

and he assumes that the main counterweight was some degree of centralised administration.

Although Weber applies these comments more specifically to the period of the Chou dynasty which he sees as essentially feudal in organisation, there is some support for his comments even when one is able to trace the Homeric Age back to the Shang period. Even here, the Shang kings ruled with the aid of a proto-bureaucracy. In his capital, the king was served not only by scribes and military officials but by "ch'en" - officials who served the king personally and who occupied quite different and often quite specialised functions (Eberhard, op.cit., p.20).

However, it is doubtful whether Weber's analysis applies quite as clearly as he felt to the early influence wrought by a bureaucratic system. Although in both the Shang and Chou periods there was indeed no personal contract between king and vassals, on the same scale as in mediaeval Europe, it is doubtful whether one can substitute for it Weber's bureaucratic notion of military obligations placed upon

administrative districts according to census registrations. Similarly , the notion of bureaucratic strength stemming from dependence upon river regulation contradicts Weber's earlier perceptive comments on the lesser importance of irrigation in China and runs counter to more recent scholarship. Fairbank suggests that the great co-ordinated efforts at water control did not really take place until the period of the later Chou. (Fairbank, op. cit.,p.31)

VII

Summary and Conclusions

In this section of KuT Weber points out a broad contrast between the development of Ancient Judaism and the development of fundamental Chinese religious conceptions. Both originated in similar cults of the fertile land addressed to local tutelary spirits of a particular territory. The only basic difference was the tendency for the tutelary spirit to be conceptualised in more personalised terms in the Middle East and more semi-material terms in China. Weber suggests this may be related to the more general tendency towards personalised conceptions of deities in the Middle East, influenced in turn by the harvest-creating Kings of the desert regions.

However, the religious conceptions of the ancient Israelites and Chinese subsequently developed in very different and virtually opposite directions. In ancient Judaism a system of supreme religious divinity developed which can be described as monotheistic transcendentalism as compared with the impersonalised immanentism of the Chinese. In ancient Judaism, the earlier tutelary deities and other supernatural competitors of Yahwe were gradually superseded by the conception of Yahwe as a highly personalised, one true god, intervening in the fate of human nations from above and beyond this world; imposing his ethical commandments through the word vouchsafed to his prophets.

In China, virtually the opposite course of events took place. The earlier developments towards a personalised God of Heaven all but disappeared in the conception of an

impersonal Way of Heaven, immanent within the world rather than dualistically opposed to it. At the same time, the lesser spirits and deities proliferated, again following a course of events virtually opposite to that which took place amongst the ancient Israelites.

Weber's clear intention throughout this section is to develop a causal and configurational analysis of the Chinese world-view with particular reference to the nature of Heaven as a supreme religious power, and the relation of Heaven to the lesser spirits and the Yin-Yang cosmology. The comparisons with the development of religious conceptions in the Middle East provide a useful heuristic orientation in identifying the distinctive features of this world view; its major and particularly early historical stages; and the potential influence of the early centralisation of imperial power and the persistence of imperial unity.

The precise extent to which Weber is able to substantiate and systematise his causal analysis beyond this heuristic orientation is rather limited, however. The problem is not so much one of historical accuracy as of the internal consistency and structure of his analysis. If one wants to explain the historical development of religious conceptions in a particular society, one must do so ultimately with reference to what actually happened in that society, no matter how useful heuristic comparisons may be. The posing of negative questions is a perennial problem in Weber's work, and his essay on China provides no exception (cf. Elvin (1983), Hamilton (1985)). Although he is actually less prone than many of his followers and interpreters to

claim that historical development in a particular society can be explained by the absence of certain phenomena from that society, he does tend to leave his analysis at the point of establishing, rather than transcending, heuristic orientations.

This is the case to a considerable extent with his causal analysis of the historical development of the Chinese world-view. It relies rather too heavily on the heuristic claim that the characteristic impersonalism and immanentism of the Chinese "Heaven" can be related causally to the absence of those economic and political conditions which stimulated the development of different conceptions in the Middle East. This heuristic orientation allows Weber to identify certain factors which influenced the development of the Chinese world-view in particular ways at particular times, but his analysis is never substantiated or specified with sufficient historical precision. He has difficulty in moving beyond the heuristic argument that monotheistic transcendentalism did not develop in China because the conditions which stimulated it in the Middle East were not present in Chinese history.

Thus, Weber's causal analysis tends to fall back on the claim that the long tradition of imperial power and effectively unchallenged nationhood in China produced no need for an intellectual rationalisation of religious conceptions to explain the loss of nationhood by reference to the will and actions of an anthropomorphic, transcendental controller of national destinies. Weber is unable to substantiate his implication that the imperial tradition of China necessarily produced an impersonal and immanentist conception of supreme

divinity. Beyond this, there are insightful hints as to the influence of particular political conditions at particular historical conjunctures, but little precise clarification.

This can be seen in Weber's comments about the Chou and pre-Chou periods in particular, where he makes a number of analytically clear and even historically plausible suggestions. The emergence of a personalised God of Heaven, similar to the Hellenic Zeus, was stimulated by the predominance of the aristocratic stratum of chariot-riding warriors in this early period, and helps to explain the accession of a heavenly deity to at least equal eminence with the primaeval spirit of the fertile earth. This might help to explain the origins of the distinctively Chinese dualism of Heaven and Earth as supreme religious powers. Similarly, the rise of princely power might help to explain the association of the spirit of the fertile land with the spirit of a political community. The rise of some sort of "emperor" or at least high king against the background of this basic religious matrix might help to explain the eventual monopolisation of sacrifices to Heaven by the "Son of Heaven".

However, the crux of Weber's analysis is that the dualistic conception of Heaven and Earth took a significant turn in the direction of impersonalism from the time of the first Chou rulers as the concept of a God of Heaven was increasingly supplanted by the concept of the Way of Heaven. The role of the first Chou rulers may well have been crucial here, as Weber suggests, but he does not tell us what particular political conditions stimulated such a change.

The remainder of his analysis is even less historically specific, amounting in the end to little more than a claim that, as the Chinese empire became increasingly pacified and unified over the course of the next 3,000 years, so the impersonal conception of Heaven was consolidated.

Similarly, the way in which political conditions also favoured the persistence of animism is also left rather imprecise in Weber's analysis. What he seems to suggest is that, as the supreme supramundane "ruler" of the universe was an impersonal principle, and could not therefore intervene in human destiny as an anthropomorphic agent, the lesser deities and spirits had to be assigned the role of direct interventionists and the Yin-Yang cosmology developed to synthesise Heaven and the spirits into a universalist world-view.

As a configurational analysis, Weber's account operates rather more clearly. He identifies the major constituents of a world-view which he suggests was a constant feature of Chinese civilisation throughout the patrimonial period and possibly for much of the pre-Ch'in period. In this sense, his discussion contributes substantially to his attempt to establish the sociological foundations for consideration of the three major problematics of the EE series. For Weber, this account clarifies the nature of imperial domination in China and its claims to legitimacy, and so helps to explain the nature and development of the Chinese state and society in both the feudal and patrimonial periods. It also establishes some foundations for his later discussion of the historical emergence and development of both Confucianism and Taoism, particularly through his assumption that both of

these systems developed within a basic world-view which was probably established before the great period of philosophical speculation in the period of the Warring States.

In terms of the overall problematics of the EE series, Weber is concerned most directly in this section of KuT with the emergence and early development of Chinese religions and a world-view which preceded Confucianism. He is less concerned at this point with the consequential problem of the economic significance of religious ethics, and this probably explains the general neglect of this part of the analysis in the commentaries. It does, however, have a vital role to play in Weber's attempt to apply a dialectical perspective to the interaction of religious world-views, ideal interests, material interests, and other external determinants, in the historical development of religious traditions. As his later discussions emphasise more clearly, the religious innovations of the Chou rulers, the pre-Ch'in literati, and then the scholar-officials of the patrimonial period, were closely related to their material interests. However, their innovations only took place within a pre-existing doctrinal context.

Nor does the dialectic end there, of course. The Chinese world-view out of which the pre-Ch'in literati fashioned the basic elements of both Confucianism and Taoism had been influenced itself by political conditions and material interests in even earlier and historically more remote periods. Weber makes no fruitless attempt to resolve an historically infinite regression by assigning meta-theoretical or historical primacy to either material

interests or ideational context. It is clear, however, that, in intention at least, Weber's account of the historical development of the Chinese world-view is more than a tiresome historical prologue to a claim that the non-development of capitalism can be explained by the operation of a concrete Confucian value-system at a particular stage of Chinese development. In both China and the West, the impact of religious factors can only be assessed by tracing back the development to earlier and often ancient religious traditions and their impact upon social, economic, and religious development at a considerable number of historical conjunctures. Weber's analysis of religious development in the period before the time of Confucius himself, in the context of a more detailed examination of non-religious phenomena in China, thus extends and provides "sociological foundations" for his more specific discussion of Confucianism and Taoism per se. This discussion provides the focus for the following chapter.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONFUCIANISM AND TAOISM

I

Introduction

Chapters five and six of KuT are addressed to the historical realisation of Confucian ethics but they overlap considerably with the following chapter on Taoism. The secondary commentators tend to collapse this part of Weber's discussion into the configurational and consequential levels of analysis rather than the causal analysis for which they were originally intended. In the "Einleitung"/SPWR, Weber insists that the "directive elements in the life-style" of the "historical bearers" of the world religions are crucial factors in the development of religious ethics. Hence, in KuT, he is concerned with the Chinese Literati as the group for whom Confucianism operated as a status ethic. However, Weber (and his readers) encounter considerable difficulties in going beyond the rather general congruences and affinities which Weber identifies between the "practical rationalism" of the literati and the predominantly this-worldly and world-affirming doctrine and ethics of Confucianism.

Weber's chapter on the literati is relatively clear on broad configurational contrasts between the literati and the historical bearers of other world religions: the prophets and Rabbis of ancient Judaism; the warriors of early Islam; the priests of Hinduism; and the monks of Buddhism. However, his

account of the different characteristics of literati strata at different periods of Chinese history is unsystematic and often confused. He is certainly aware that the Chinese literatus was a different social animal at different historical periods. However, his specification of these differences, and their particular influence upon the development of Confucianism at particular times, often does little more than hint at the more densely interwoven texture of a complex historical process.

Similarly, just as his discussion of the literati tends to be rather over-reliant upon broad contrasts with analogous strata in other societies, so his discussion of the Confucian life-orientation is stronger on taking heuristic bearings than on exploring specific historical pathways. He is clearly aware of at least three major stages in the development of Confucianism: the life and work of Confucius and other philosophers of the "hundred schools" which flourished in the last three to four hundred years of the Chou period; the early and middle empires of the Han, Sui, and T'ang dynasties; and the consolidation of a neo-Confucian orthodoxy from the Sung dynasty to the Republican revolution. However, his analysis of the general congruence between the literati's practical rationalism and the development of Confucianism is only spasmodically and unsystematically extended to the analysis of particular influences operating at particular times with particular consequences.

Weber's discussion of both Confucianism and Taoism begins strongly by transposing the heuristics of the EE series into an heuristic for KuT. The chapter on the literati begins by emphasising the "Caesaro-papist" nature of

political domination in China, rooted as it was in the broader world-view examined in the chapter above, and its influence upon the socio-political situation of the literati. The chapter on the Confucian life-orientation begins equally vigorously with an emphasis on the ways in which this socio-political situation produced both a general orientation towards practical rationalism, and sufficient political power to propel religious development in that direction. Unfortunately, his allocation of a separate chapter to each of them imposes blinkers upon the dialectical gaze he envisaged in his introduction to the EE series. This textual division might appear to be necessitated by the analytical primacy attributed to the literati as the historical bearers of Confucianism. Existentially, it was they who acted in history, and not an abstract body of ideas. However, this textual division endangers a crucial element in Weber's dialectical perspective. It is certainly only through the agency of human beings that religious ideas are developed and changed, but each generation does so only within an existing ideational context. In not considering the development of Confucianism and the literati within a more clearly articulated chronological and even narrative framework, of the sort he adopts for example in Ancient Judaism, Weber falls somewhat short of his ambitions to examine clearly their historical interaction. The following discussion attempts to re-integrate and systematise this historical and dialectical perspective.

The Literati and Caesarism

For Weber, the caesaro-papist nature of political domination, which existed in China from the earliest times, was crucially important for the development of the literati. Whether it refers to the rule of the Western Chou kings, to the feudalistic territorial princes of the later Chou periods, or to the emperors of the patrimonial period, the essence of caesaro-papism lies in the fact that the secular ruler of the political community was also its high priest (p.110). Caesarism implies not just the complex of political institutions associated with monarchical rule but also an associated complex of beliefs. Central rulers everywhere have had similar needs for scribes, clerks, and ritual experts, but the particularity of literati strata in China was intimately connected with the Chinese world-view examined in chapter ten above.

In his discussion of the Chinese world-view Weber suggests that three of its elements were particularly significant for the historical development of the literati. Firstly, the belief that the well-being of the political community, and the welfare of the subjects, were the responsibility of the political ruler. Secondly, that the well-being of the community depended on the preservation of the cosmic equilibrium of Heaven and Earth, humans and the spirits. Thirdly, that the political ruler could preserve this equilibrium primarily by ensuring that the conduct of himself and his government was in accordance with this naturally harmonious Way of Heaven. Hucker, (1975, p.55)

gives a very similar account of basic assumptions which he feels definitely existed by the time of the Ch'in and probably existed in some form at the beginning of the Chou.

Weber goes on to assume that a stratum of literati had existed throughout virtually the whole of Chinese history, serving various functions required by this particular form of caesaro-papism. He sees some sort of constant role for them within the caesaro-papist state, whether this involved giving counsel or reading natural portents and signs for the petty territorial rulers of the early feudal period, or being a salaried, degree-holding member of the later Imperial bureaucracy.

"Their intimate relations to the service of patrimonial princes existed from ancient times and has been decisive for the peculiar character of the literati." (p.110)

Weber picks out three closely related aspects of this relationship which he suggests remained constant throughout history and were intimately connected to the institutional and ideological complex of caesaro-papism. Firstly, the literati had a constant orientation towards the inter-related problems of ritually correct conduct and practical administration. Hence, even the "intellectual stratum" of the feudal period was characterised by a "far-reaching and practical rationalism" (p.110). Secondly, they were experts in the knowledge of ancient tradition, which was indispensable if their political rulers were to maintain the Mandate of Heaven:

"Only the adept of scriptures and tradition had been considered competent for correctly ordering the internal administration, and the charismatically correct life-conduct of the prince, ritually and politically." (p.110)

Thirdly, unlike say the educated laymen of India, the Chinese literati sought employment in princely service as a source of income and a normal occupation. Thus, Weber suggests that:

" the relation to state-office (or office in a church-state) was of fundamental importance for the nature of the mentality of this stratum. " (p.112)

However, in postulating the existence of these constant and enduring characteristics of the literati, Weber also emphasises the fact that:

"The relation of the literati to the office has changed its nature (in the course of time)." (p.111)

He sees the increasingly bureaucratic structure of the Chinese state as a major factor influencing the development of the literati over time and identifies at least three major historical stages in their development. Firstly, there were the philosophers, scholars, teachers, and would-be ministers of the largely feudal, pre-Ch'in period. Secondly, there were the ascendant prebendal officials of the early patrimonial period up until the T'ang dynasty. Thirdly, there were the degree-holding literati who became even more bureaucratically organised and orientated after the introduction of an elaborate examination system during the T'ang dynasty. Weber emphasises the distinction between the literati of the feudal and the patrimonial periods as the major one. It was during the latter period that the literati became and remained a stratum of certified prebendal officials and claimants for office in a patrimonial state.

The Pre-Ch'in Period (c.220 B.C. and before)The Proto-literati

A number of imperfectly interwoven threads, often developed in different parts of the essay, make up Weber's assumptions about the origins of the literati. As noted in chapter ten above, Weber assumes that monarchical domination had achieved a marked degree of centralisation in China, even before the time of the Chou conquest, and frequently attributes this to the economic reliance of the Chinese people upon centralised water regulation. This underpinned the assertion and maintenance of monarchical domination and the early centralisation of administrative and military resources. The exercise of such power in turn demanded the employment of literate clerks and administrators.

For Weber, the first crucial stage in the development of the literati encompassed the whole of the Chou period and even more remote antiquity. He accepts that the origins of the literati are historically unknowable but suggests that their forebears were probably specialised functionaries of various types at the courts of political rulers. They included astronomers, calendar makers, astrologers, diviners, and interpreters of natural portents - all of which activities required knowledge of the relationships between the cosmological order and human destiny.

He also suggests that the rulers of Chinese political communities, even in remote antiquity, had required the services of two other types of expertise. One was expertise

in ritual, and particularly the sacrifices performed by political rulers on behalf of the political community as a whole. The other was a more mundane expertise in political administration, whether this was undertaken by relatively humble scribes and clerks employed in keeping records and accounts, and effecting communications, or by much more elevated officers of state.

As noted above, Weber displays a marked tendency to attribute a highly centralised and even bureaucratic form of administration to the Western Chou period, despite his avowed scepticism about the later idealisations of the Chou Li. Up to a point, this assumption finds some support from more recent sinological scholarship which also attributes a greater degree of political centralisation to this period than to the subsequent Spring and Autumn, and Warring States periods (cf. chapter ten above). However, Weber does not make clear, and seems to have understood only imperfectly, a crucial historical feature of the relationship between literati strata and office holding in at least the first half of the Chou period.

As Hucker, for example, points out, political office-holding in this period was monopolised by an hereditary aristocracy. There were two main strata of office-holders, serving either the Chou king himself or the regional lords. The first, and more prestigious, were the ministers (ch'ing) and greater officers (ta-fu). The other stratum was more numerous, less wealthy and less prestigious though still claiming political office as members of the hereditary aristocracy. These were the shih, or "warrior-officials" as this term came to be understood at a later time. Both strata

of office-holders received fiefs of land in return for their military and administrative services and were certainly not organised into a clearly hierarchical and functionally specialised bureaucracy (Hucker, pp. 51-2).

In this sense, the officials of the Western Chou period, and very probably the Spring and Autumn period, were not members of an elaborate bureaucracy like the literati of the patrimonial period. However, the Chou ruler, the regional lords, the ministers and great officers, and probably even the majority of the warrior-officials with their modest fiefdoms, all employed staffs of clerks, scribes and record keepers recruited from the ranks of the commoners.

The vital point neglected by Weber is that during this period, which included that of the early Chou ascendancy, the political officials and the literati were clearly distinct strata. However, Weber's rather scattered comments on the struggles for office between the literati and the hereditary aristocracy during the feudal period show him to be aware of this distinction even if he does not make it sufficiently clear. When this distinction between officials in the sense of an hereditary feudal aristocracy and literati in the sense of commoner scribes and ritual specialists is properly appreciated his own analysis becomes more clear.

Weber suggests, perhaps with some justification, that the origins of the eventual patrimonial Confucian literati are related to the early development of the Chinese script and functionaries skilled in its use for various purposes. This might have been a skill shared by the early clerks with the other proto-literati functionaries identified by Weber,

even though they did not constitute a unitary social stratum at this time.

Weber's account of the development of the literati in the later Chou period of the Warring states is again rather sketchy but can be clarified and even supported by more recent scholarship. Hucker points out that very significant changes in the concept of "shih" and the institutions associated with this stratum, were taking place when the major philosophical traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism were being formulated. Although the term "shih" had originally designated "able-bodied young man" and, by the mid-Chou period, "fighting man", later writers used it to refer to the chariot-mounted warriors of the Shang and early Chou periods and the term came to denote the stratum of "warrior-officials" noted above (Hucker, 1975, pp.60-62).

However, during the period of social upheaval which culminated in the Warring States period, the functions of general and official tended to separate out and the term "shih" was "borrowed", especially by the philosophers of the time, to apply to the emerging intellectual elite. From the mid-Chou period to the Ch'in it was shorn of its hereditary and military connotations and came to mean official or intellectual (Hucker, 1975, p.62).

Weber himself does not formulate the relevant historical and terminological transition as clearly as this, because of his tendency to use the terms official and literati as though they were synonymous at a time when they were not. However, the emphasis he places upon the struggles for power and influence between the literati and the hereditary nobility in the feudal period shows a strong if unsystematic appreciation

of the significance of this transitional period for the development of the literati and Confucianism.

In the course of these struggles, members of the intellectual stratum elaborated the claim that good government depended upon the selection and recruitment of good officials and that the recruitment of officials should be based upon meritocratic rather than hereditary principles. Officials should be selected on the basis of merit and ability and an official career should be open to all irrespective of birth.

Weber notes that Confucius himself was a member of this non-militaristic stratum of peripatetic intellectuals who aspired, at least, to political office. Members of this later Chou stratum are more genuinely recognisable as the immediate forebears and indeed progenitors of the literati of the patrimonial period. However, from the point at which Confucius enters into the analysis, it becomes increasingly artificial, in the context of Weber's own dialectical perspective, to consider the development of Confucianism and the literati in isolation from each other.

Confucius and the Paradigmatic Transformation of Tradition

As Hucker points out, the native ideological traditions which developed in the pre-Ch'in period had a great deal in common. In particular, they shared an essentially optimistic, this-worldly orientation, believing that human errors could and should be corrected, and human life enjoyed, in this life rather than a hereafter. It is also important to stress the fact that despite their different orientations,

they shared very similar cosmological assumptions which were not mutually exclusive. Where they did differ was in their diagnoses and prognoses of the social and political turmoil of the later Chou period.

"Confucianism focuses on man in his social and political relationships, Taoism on man's status in the larger cosmic sphere, and Legalism in state administration." (Hucker, 1975, p.69)

Weber's perspective is much the same, although stated less clearly. He emphasises the different reworkings, by early Confucians and Taoists in particular, of the same cosmological assumptions in accord with their specific material and ideal interests. His brief account of Confucius himself is concerned mainly with his role as the putative editor or author of classical texts. He notes that in the orthodox Confucianism of the patrimonial period, Confucius was often attributed with some editorial responsibility for the Shih Ching (Book of Odes) and with the authorship of the skeletally chronological history, the Spring and Autumn Annals. He is sceptical about the historical accuracy of the former attribution and less so of the latter, though suggesting that Confucius himself may have been the author of one of the more elaborately moralising commentaries upon it.

At this point in his analysis, Weber is more concerned to associate Confucius with a process which he sees as central to the development of Confucianism: the paradigmatic transformation of tradition. He notes that the older sections of the Shih Ching are odes or hymns relating the exploits of ancient warrior-kings, as is the case with the sacred texts of other religions. However, these hymns seem to have undergone a later revision and re-interpretation:

"The heroic songs of the hymn-book (Shih Ching) tell of kings fighting from war chariots, as do the Hellenic and Indian epics. But considering their character as a whole, even these songs are no longer heralds of individual, and in general, purely human heroism, as are the Homeric and Germanic epics." (RoC, p.113)

Weber suggests that a very systematic expurgation had taken place which may have been the main contribution of Confucius himself. However, he is less concerned with the historical accuracy of this possibility than with the general paradigm in this editing of the past, in which the kings of even the most historically remote periods are presented as triumphing because they are favoured by Heaven for their moral virtue and conformity to tradition. He feels that whether or not the Shih Ching was edited by Confucius himself, his characteristic achievement was:

"this systematic and pragmatic correction of facts from the point of view of "propriety". His work must have appeared in this light to his contemporaries". (RoC, p.114)

Thus, in outlining the historical development of the literati, Weber is less concerned with the details of what Confucius said or wrote and more with the ways in which he drew upon the past to justify what he said. Weber refers to the sayings or ideas of Confucius quite frequently throughout this second half of KuT. Ultimately, these aphorisms and dicta are available from the "Analects of Confucius", a classic text produced in the patrimonial period. Whether Weber garners his comments on the ideas of Confucius directly from this primary source or from the writings of his sinological contemporaries is unclear from his own references and footnotes. What he does emphasise is the pragmatic and paradigmatic transformation of tradition

associated with Confucius and his immediate followers, and its centrality to this and subsequent phases in the development of Confucianism.

The classical literary texts of what later became the orthodox Confucianism of the patrimonial period all bear the signs of the paradigmatic transformation of tradition which Weber has already commented upon in relation to the Shih Ching and for which Confucius himself was particularly noted. From the time of the Master himself, Confucians revised and reinterpreted contemporary perceptions and understandings of the Chinese past. The past in question might be the remote and legendary origins of Chinese culture or the recent history of previous dynasties and individual reign periods. Thus, the first three "Emperors", Shao, Shun, and Yao, whom modern historians would regard as entirely mythical, are presented by Confucius to his pupils, and within the Confucian tradition subsequently, as the model imperial founders of Chinese civilisation.

"The ideal and legendary Emperors (Yao and Shun) designate their successors (Shun and Yue) without regard to birth, from the circle of their ministers and over the heads of their own sons, solely according to their personal charisma as certified by the highest court officials. The emperors designate their ministers in the same way, and only the third Emperor, Yu, does not name his first minister (Yi) but his son (Ch'i) to become his successor." (p.114)

Even when the period undergoing this paradigmatic transformation belongs to the time of feudal relationships and institutions, Weber feels that the imprint of Confucian revision is very clear.

"The princes and ministers of the classics act and speak like paradigms of rulers whose ethical conduct is rewarded by Heaven. Officialdom and the promotion of officials according to merit are topics for glorification. The princely realms are still ruled

hereditarily; some of the local offices are hereditary fiefs; but the classics view this system sceptically, at least the hereditary offices. Ultimately, they consider this system to be merely provisional." (p.114)

Philosophical Taoism in the pre-Ch'in period

Weber identifies the precursors of the philosophical Taoism which developed in the Warring States period as the anchorites and sages who, he claims, had existed from China's earliest history. The organic world-view had influenced their salvation goals in the direction of what he terms "macrobiotics" - the integration of the individual with the universe as a whole - in order to achieve long life, and perhaps even immortality and magical powers. In some sense, a macrobiotic perspective and its this-worldly goals were shared with the early Confucians; but not the means through which the latter sought an integration between the universe and the individual through conformity with an elaborate system of maxims for individual, interpersonal, and political conduct.

However, the early Taoists were influenced by the anchoritic tradition which stressed withdrawal from the world in order to "feel" or "experience" rather than to think. They also adopted a particular macrobiotic technique of this earlier tradition - the control or rational management of one's breath. This was thought to be very similar to "ether", the fundamental stuff of the universe out of which all life-forms came and to which they returned. If the adept could diet, even fast, and practise rigorous exercise and gymnastic discipline, to become quite literally as thin as air, then he could become one with the universe and even

slough off his bodily shell (RoC, p.179).

Weber suggests that this was a typical mystic's response to the cosmological assumptions of the Chinese world-view, and was just as logically or psychologically plausible a response as that of Confucius and his early followers. He suggests that the origins of philosophical Taoism lay in the fusion of a typically mystic orientation with this older anchoretic tradition and its macrobiotic techniques, and that the original articulator of this fusion was the author (or authors) of the Taoist classic, the Tao Teh Ching.

Weber seems to accept the historical dubiety of the traditional attribution of its authorship to Lao-Tzu, an allegedly older contemporary of Confucius who might actually never have existed, but he adopts the traditional usage as a convenient way of referring to the first articulator or articulators of the Taoist tradition. Thus:

"With Lao-Tzu, Tao was brought into relationship with the typical God-seeking of the mystic." (RoC, p.181)

Weber suggests that the original philosophical Taoists can be understood first of all as applying a typically mystical interpretation of the concept of Tao. The typical goal of the mystic is the achievement of the "unio mystica", a psychic experience of oneness with the divine. For Lao-Tzu, this consisted of a union with the Tao. Whilst Confucius and his followers sought integration with the Tao (Way) of Heaven through the active construction and maintenance of a socio-political order that would guarantee the cosmic harmony, Lao-Tzu advocated the minimisation of inner-worldly activity in favour of withdrawal from the world and mystical contemplation (RoC, pp.179-81).

This typically mystical "broken relationship with the world" is the point at which Weber draws his sharpest contrast between early Taoism and Confucianism (p.180). The former's goal of fusion with the Tao through a state of inactivity runs directly counter to the Confucian goal of seeking political office and practical involvement in order to ensure a politically regulated social order that accords with the Tao of Heaven. However, Weber also insists that the shared world-view of the early Confucians and Taoists actually limited the contrasts between the two schools.

"Semi-legendary tradition describes the personal antagonism between Confucius and Lao-Tzu. But as yet one could hardly have spoken of a "contrast of schools", especially of one clearly separating these two antagonists. Rather there existed a sharp difference of temperaments, ways of life, and attitudes, especially attitudes towards the practical state problem—the office." (RoC, p.189)

On the one hand, the Confucian commitment to the essential benevolence of the Way of Heaven meant that quietism was still a significant component of early Confucianism, especially in the view that exemplary conduct by the ruler and his officials would guarantee peace and prosperity with the minimum of actual supervision of the subjects. On the other hand, the typically mystic conclusion of true indifference to the world, or even rejection of it, was not carried through fully by Lao-Tzu. He shared with Confucians an essentially positive valuation of government.

"For Lao-Tzu, too, the good of man ultimately depended upon the qualities of the ruler." (RoC, p.185)

Hence, the early Taoists only drew the conclusion that there should be a minimisation of worldly action (p.187) and "as little bureaucracy as possible" (p.184).

Weber suggests that fierce and bitter antagonism between the two schools only really developed during the patrimonial period when internal competition for prebends and power resulted in attempts by Taoists to create an hierocracy and organisation of their own as a challenge to the Confucian monopolisation of political office, and Confucians sought to establish and maintain the heterodox status of Taoism. At this stage of his analysis, however, he is content to identify a particularly significant phase in the development of religious doctrines. A shared world-view circumscribed the initial differences between Confucianism and Taoism as well as permitting both a mystical and active interpretation of its basic premisses. In these terms, the distinctiveness of the early Confucians lay in their development of a doctrine which furthered the material interests of those members of the intellectual stratum who aspired to an official or ministerial career.

Similarly, Weber emphasises here the absence from the early philosophical Taoism of any religiously motivated active antagonism to the world and suggests this is typical of contemplative mysticism (RoC,p.182-4). He regards this as a fundamental and persisting element of philosophical Taoism, particularly significant for its influence upon subsequent religious development and for the question, shortly to be considered, of whether Taoism:

"could have or has been the source of a methodical way of life differing from the official cult in orientation." (RoC,p.174)

The Development of Confucianism and the Literati into the Han Period (Han Dynasty, 206 B.C. - 220 A.D.)

When Weber identifies the increasingly bureaucratic structure of the Chinese state as a crucial factor in the development of Confucianism and the literati, he suggests that administrative office in a "church-state" may well in some sense have been a constant feature of the literati's orientation throughout history. However, it was only from the later part of the Chou period, with the transition from feudalism to patrimonialism, that this orientation became increasingly dominant.

"The opportunities of the princes to compete for the literati ceased to exist in the unified empire. The literati and their disciples came to compete for the existing offices and the development could not fail to result in a unified orthodox doctrine adjusted to the situation. This doctrine was to be Confucianism. As Chinese prebendalism grew, the originally free mental mobility of the literati came to a halt." (p.112)

Weber again identifies the pragmatic transformation of tradition as a crucial mechanism through which Confucianism was adapted to the situation of prebendal officials in the patrimonial empire of the Han dynasty. In a way which he compares with the "finding of the Judaic sacred law under Josiah", (f.14, p.281), the ancient Chinese texts which had been destroyed by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti were "rediscovered" by the literati of the Han dynasty. Moreover:

"They were rediscovered in order that they might be revised, retouched and re-interpreted by the literati and therewith gain canonical value." (p.112)

He suggests that this revision of the texts to emphasise a central preoccupation with the problems of administering an internally pacified and unified patrimonial empire, reflected a pacifist ideology and marked a decisive

change towards tradition rather than charisma, especially military charisma, as the basis for political domination and its legitimacy. As an example of this process, he notes the appearance in the "Annals" of this period of the paradigmatic confession of a Ch'in prince for having followed the advice of youthful warriors rather than the elderly non-military scholars (p.118).

This is a useful point at which to clarify Weber's often confusing references to the annals and the classics. He tells us that:

" there were official annals, magically proved hymns of war and sacrifice, calendars, as well as books of ritual and ceremony." (p.110)

When Weber refers to the "Annals" he usually means the official histories of earlier dynasties and reign periods that were compiled by successive generations of literati throughout the patrimonial period. The more general principles of the paradigmatic transformation of tradition, which was undertaken by Confucius himself in discussion with his pupils, originated a tradition of Confucian historiography undertaken by all subsequent generations of Confucians.

The Confucian State

Weber's account of the development of Confucianism during the patrimonial period has to take account of the fact that it became more than simply the religion of a particular social stratum. During this period, from the time that the rulers of the Han dynasty appointed the Confucian literati to the system of administrative offices introduced for the

empire by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, the Chinese state became a Confucian state. The subsequent development of Confucianism, and Chinese religion in general, can only be understood in relation to this.

In making this point, Weber is quite aware of the degree of religious syncretism which existed in China on both the individual and societal levels. Apart from the fact that Confucianism and Taoism shared fundamentally the same cosmological assumptions and that, over the course of time, Confucianism absorbed influences from Taoism and even Buddhism, Chinese religion was not so clearly denominational or congregational as in the West. There were Taoist and Buddhist religious communities of priests, monks and nuns living in, or organised around, monastic settlements. However, the majority of individual Chinese, including the literati, did not necessarily see themselves as exclusive adherents of any one particular persuasion. It was by no means uncommon for retired officials to devote themselves to Taoist pursuits or, even whilst still in office, to be a Confucian in public and a Taoist or even a Buddhist in private.

Thus, whilst there was certainly a system of belief and practice which can legitimately be regarded as Confucianism - the doctrine of the scholars - the Confucian orthodoxy which Weber attempts to explain and characterise was essentially a body of theory and practice relating to the governance of a particular type of state. It is far from fanciful of Weber to compare Confucianism to Utilitarianism, as he does in the *Einleitung/SPWR* (p.293). Both contained a body of

philosophical assumptions legitimating a particular type of government and specifying the institutions through which it should be implemented. The relationship between utilitarian political philosophy and the system of representative parliamentary democracy is very similar to that between Confucianism and the Chinese system of prebendal government.

Weber's analysis of the development of Confucianism lays particular emphasis upon the patrimonial period when the literati became not just aspirants for, but the holders of, administrative office. In the pre-Ch'in period they had been a stratum of scholars and intellectuals seeking to establish themselves as the administrative elite of Chinese society. The crucial point about the patrimonial period as a whole was that the literati actually became a dominant social stratum of officials and potential officials. No other historical carriers of a world religion enjoyed such social and political, in addition to religious, dominance (perhaps the religious dominance of the literati in the conventional sense of religion was correspondingly less). The Chinese literati, like analogous strata elsewhere, developed their own doctrinal blueprint for social organisation. They also enjoyed a position of political dominance which allowed them to create a Confucian society which existed in some form for these two millenia. It is rather as though the Catholic Pope and episcopacy had also been the secular rulers of a unified European empire throughout the Christian era. Or as though, for 2,000 years, the Indian sub-continent had been organised as a vast Buddhist monastery.

This is what Weber means when he says that the creation of the patrimonial empire under the Han allowed the

intellectual orientation of the Confucian literati to dominate all subsequent religious development in China. This is not to say that the political dominance of the Confucian literati was always firmly established, especially in the early and middle empires. Nor is it to say that it was unchallenged by religious heterodoxy. However, in the patrimonial empire, the Chinese state became and remained essentially a Confucian state.

Weber attempts to examine the influence of the practical rationalism of the patrimonial literati on religious development in two main ways. Firstly, by identifying their influence upon the general religious situation in China; and secondly, by identifying distinctive characteristics of Confucianism per se.

The orientation of practical, "intellectualistic" (p.142) rationalism had been established by Confucius himself and by the Confucian literati of the pre-Ch'in period. From the Han dynasty onwards, when this stratum was also the stratum of prebendal officials, this general orientation provided the basis for a religious policy which was vigorously pursued in the interests of forming and maintaining a Confucian state.

In the orthodox Confucian orientation, and in the religious policy of the Confucian state, beliefs and practices relating to a supramundane realm were encouraged and tolerated only in so far as they were useful for social control. In this context, social control includes legitimation of the Confucian social and political order and the actual practice of Confucian government and

administration. Cults of redemption and more general beliefs in spirits and associated cultic practices tended to be disdained as superstitions fit only for the illiterate masses. The educated Confucian tended to remain aloof from such behaviour, and metaphysical speculation was important only in so far as it provided guidance for practical, this-worldly, individual and political conduct.

However, certain aspects of religion were tolerated, and even engaged in, by officials themselves in the interests of social control:

"...here as elsewhere this intellectualism inwardly despised religions unless they were needed for the taming of the masses. Intellectualism allowed the professional religionists only that measure of official prestige which was indispensable for its taming purposes, a prestige which was ineradicable in the face of the powerful associations of local sibs bound by tradition". (p143)

Thus, the state cult, the cult of ancestors and the popular religion each had its role to play within the Confucian orthodoxy.

The State Cult

For Weber, this was a system of ritual involving regular sacrifice and the paying of homage to the great impersonal spirits. The rituals were not conducted by specialist religious personnel but by the officials of the state in their official capacity. The chief official was of course the emperor himself and he conducted the sacrifices to the principal deities personally. These included the spirits of Heaven and Earth which had to be propitiated in the interests of maintaining cosmic harmony over the empire as a whole. The emperor performed these rituals at the great central

shrines of Heaven and Earth, aided by the chief officials of the central, imperial court.

The ritual duties of the imperial officials extended all the way down the bureaucracy. Each official was responsible for maintaining the cosmic harmony within his own administrative territory by performing the appropriate rituals to the appropriate deities. Just as the officials were the local representatives of the emperor, so the local deities were the local representatives of the great deities of Heaven and Earth.

In this way the "mundane orders" of the social and political institutions of the Confucian state received their "special and irrational anchorage" from a broader world-view which the state cult expressed symbolically (p.143). The sacred and the secular realms were fused together in a system of practice and belief which emphasised the indispensability of the secular institutions of government to the maintenance of the sacred cosmic harmony. Not only was it essential for the correct ritual to be performed by the correct official, but also the secular role of the officials was legitimated in the system of beliefs expressed in the state cult. If the cosmic harmony was to be preserved over the empire as a whole and in each of its administrative districts, then the governance of these territories had to be undertaken by experts in the maintenance of the cosmic harmony through correct deportment, correct ritual, and correct government. The emperor himself did not have to be as expert in ritual and government as his officials, although this was advantageous. Although the emperor's conformity to the Way of Heaven was vital to the cosmic harmony, this could be

ensured so long as he followed the advice of his officials.

These are the crucial elements of what Weber sees as the conditional nature of imperial and official charisma, both of which constituted an ideological legitimation of the stratum of scholar-officials. An emperor who failed to take the advice of his officials could lose the Mandate of Heaven and be replaced legitimately by another emperor. Similarly, an individual official who was deficient in maintaining the cosmic harmony through the exercise of correct ritual and government could be replaced. However, officialdom as a whole was indispensable.

The Cult of Ancestors

This was also oriented towards the welfare of a particular community, as a system of beliefs and practices directed towards the reverence and propitiation of the deceased ancestors of particular familial communities. As in the state cult the sacrifices were not conducted by specialised religious personnel. They were the responsibility of the senior male members of the family. The cult of ancestors could be regarded as the truly universal religion of the Chinese, involving the members of every single household.

Weber emphasises the fact that the cult of ancestors was the one form of religion, other than the state cult, which was actually prescribed within the Confucian orthodoxy. Apart from the fact that it was irremovably entrenched as the fundamental basis of Chinese society, it operated as a powerful force for social control.

The Popular Religion

Popular religion consisted of beliefs and practices related to what Weber terms:

"a completely unsystematic pluralism of magical and heroistic cults" (p.143).

Although he attributes their proliferation to the influence of magical Taoism, as discussed below, the supernatural beings which provided the focus for these cults are not clearly specified by Weber. Certainly, they were typically very localised, even though a large number of deities were revered under different names in different localities. The objects of these local cults could be personalised spirits of natural forces, or apotheosised local and national heroes, local magnates, or even military men, all of whose spirits were credited with conditionally charismatic powers to intervene in human destiny. As Weber points out:

"...the veneration and significance of the individual deities were still subject to the charismatic principle of success, just like a Neapolitan driver's or boatman's saint." (p.143)

The local cults therefore originated and persisted only so long as local adherents were prepared to erect and maintain a shrine, in the "saint's" own temple or another, and continue to offer sacrifices. If beliefs in the deity's magical efficacy declined then the cult would no longer attract adherents and would simply decay, often quite literally, into obsolescence.

Unlike the cult of ancestors, popular religion of this sort was ignored within the Confucian orthodoxy rather than encouraged. However, it was tolerated in the interests of social control. It rested upon a substratum of magical

belief which was shared with the Confucian world-view and which could not be attacked without simultaneous threats being posed to the latter.

Confucian Orthodoxy

The practical rationalism of the patrimonial officials, coupled with their political power, was therefore able to influence not just the development of Confucianism itself, but also the development of Chinese religion more generally. There was no impetus within Confucianism itself towards the rationalisation of religion in the direction of cults of redemption and the religiosity of a saviour. Moreover, the Confucian literati were implacably opposed to any movements of prophetic religiosity which might have been directed towards the suffering of the masses and which might have initiated and sustained such a rationalisation of the popular religion. This would have constituted a challenge to their own social, political, and religious dominance and might have seen the emergence of a rival hierocracy of specialised priests. In the long run, throughout the patrimonial period, the Confucian scholar-officials were able to use their social and political dominance to maintain an orthodox orientation within Confucianism itself, and to prevent any potentially challenging prophetic or priestly rationalisation of the general religious situation.

"Any rationalisation of popular belief as an independent religion of supra-mundane orientation would inevitably have constituted an independent power opposed to officialdom. This exigency repeatedly made itself felt in the resolute resistance of the officials toward any attempt to loosen a stone in this historic edifice."
(p.144)

Moreover, during the patrimonial period the Confucian literati were equally unchallenged by any other stratum, such as a religious hierocracy, which might have affected the process of religious rationalisation. Neither the Confucian religion, nor the Confucian world order, had to take account of, or contend with, cultural rationalisation in the spheres of law, science, technology, art, or medicine, which might have run counter to the predominant orientation of practical rationalism.

"Consequently, practical rationalism, the intrinsic attitude of the bureaucracy to life, free of all competition, could work itself out fully. There was no rational science, no rational practice of art, no rational theology, jurisprudence, medicine, natural science, or technology; there was neither divine nor human authority which could contest the bureaucracy. Only an ethic congruent with the bureaucracy could be created and this was limited solely by consideration of the forces of tradition in the sibs and by the belief in spirits. Unlike western civilization, there were no other specifically modern elements of rationalism standing either in competition or in support of bureaucracy." (p.151-2)

As a result of this situation, both the Confucian religion and the Confucian state developed as a sort of progressive experiment in the theory and practice of Confucian government.

"Hence the culture of this bureaucracy can be considered an experiment which approximately tests the practical rationalism of government by office prebendaries and its effects. Orthodox Confucianism resulted from this situation." (p.152)

This gave the literati enormous influence over the development of their "own" religion and the development of a social order which maintained their cultural and social dominance.

"The rule of orthodoxy followed from the unity of the world empire and its authoritative regulation of doctrine. During the Period of the Warring States with its violent struggles we find mobile intellectual currents contesting for dominance just as in the polis-culture of occidental Antiquity. Chinese philosophy, in all its contrast, was developed during roughly the same span of time as the philosophy of antiquity. Since the unification, at about the beginning of the Christian era, no entirely independent thinker has appeared. Only Confucians, Taoists, and Buddhists continued the struggles. Within the recognised or licensed Confucian doctrine there remained the struggles of philosophical and their related administrative-political schools. The rule of the Manchu definitively canonised Confucian orthodoxy." (p.152)

The Development of the Examination System

Weber sees the development of the examination system as an important factor in the historical consolidation of the literati into "a status group of certified claimants to office prebends"(p.115). It came to provide a particular system of certification as a mechanism for the monopolisation of office-holding in China. The eventual outcome was a system in which, in Weber's terms, the "literati" and the "mandarins" became synonymous. A member of this status group was someone who had passed an examination and was the holder of an official "degree". The precise status of the individual degree-holder was determined by the level of degree obtained, and the class of each degree. Similarly, according to Weber, the office for which an individual was qualified was determined by the number and levels of degree obtained.

Weber's discussion of the examination system reveals an historical analysis of its most significant stages of development in terms of the types of social influence exerted upon it by competing social strata. He sees its emergence and consolidation as the eventual outcome of a long struggle over office-holding and the spoils of office which originated in the competition of the literati of the feudal period against an hereditary nobility. Similar struggles against the hereditary appropriation of privilege and political power by non-Confucian strata were continued throughout the patrimonial period, especially the early and middle empires. The emergence of an elaborately developed

examination system under the T'ang dynasty (618 to 906 A.D.), and its consolidation and ramifications under subsequent dynasties, should thus be seen as the culmination and realisation of this anti-hereditary, meritocratic principle.

Precursors of the Examination System

Weber suggests that in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C., there was neither an examination system for official appointment nor even any possibility of official appointment for those who were not members of the hereditary aristocracy of what he calls the "great families" (p.116). He suggests that, as was the case with Vedic education in India, it was highly probable that literary education in China was monopolised by these great families during the feudal period, and that vestiges of the hereditary principle continued right into modern times in such institutions as preferential treatment in the examination system for the sons of officials and members of the Imperial family, and the exclusion from office of sons of the traditionally degraded occupational strata.

Confucius, his disciples and followers, and other members of literati strata during the feudal period, had challenged the hereditary principle philosophically by opposing the meritocratic principle. However, the most significant practical advances towards its implementation were not made, at least for China as a whole and as a general rule, until the Han period (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). He suggests that the first traces of an examination system seem to emerge at about the time of Confucius in the state of Ch'in, which

was most rigorously and violently opposed to the hereditary social strata and to political feudalism. Even here, however, the selection of candidates was determined essentially by military, rather than scholarly or administrative expertise (p.116).

The Han Dynasty

The Han period was crucial for the development of the literati into a "unified status group" of certified claimants for office. Weber uses the concept of pacifism once again to suggest that a crucial feature of the still very recently unified Empire was the creation of a politico-administrative system which made the internal warfare of the feudal period redundant, inappropriate, and illegal. The unification of the Empire made possible a system of prebendal rather than feudal government. The development of the literati, and indeed the examination system, turned upon this Han dynasty phase during which the pre-Ch'in literati became the victors in the struggle for political power and administrative office.

"The power of the literati was tremendously consolidated after they had succeeded in elevating the correct (my emphasis - SM) Kuang Wu to the throne in 21 A.D. and in maintaining him against the popular "usurper" Wang Mang." (p.117)

The T'ang and Subsequent Dynasties

Whilst the Han period might have been highly significant for the forging of a close association between the literati and patrimonial office, and the development of the principles and practice of meritocracy against heredity, it was the T'ang dynasty (618-906 A.D.) which introduced the modern examination system as part of its reforging of

Imperial unity after almost four centuries of disruption and disunity following the collapse of the Han dynasty in 220 A.D.:

"Even today the T'ang dynasty irradiates the glory of having been the actual creator of China's greatness and culture." (p.117)

Weber credits the T'ang dynasty with the establishment of the examination system whose general features he has already outlined. His attempt at a more detailed chronology and characterisation of the examination system under the T'ang and subsequent dynasties is rather confused and erratic, however. The main point he makes is that after the further disruption of the Mongol invasion and the imposition of the non-Chinese Yuan dynasty (1276-1367), the resurgent and chauvinistically Chinese dynasty of the Ming re-established the examination system in its definitively modern form. He notes, however, that during both the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, there was always a persistent tendency to allow abuses of the examination system through the purchase of degrees.

More analytically significant is his general claim that, in the struggles between meritocratic and hereditary institutions and principles, certain material interests of the literati and their rulers had frequently coincided right from the feudal period. In both the feudal and patrimonial periods, the feudal princes and then the Chinese emperors had used non-hereditary officials and administrators in their struggles against feudalisation and later, refeudalisation. In the patrimonial period, the interests of the literati in monopolising political office through the institution of the examination system had also coincided with the interests of

emperors in curbing centrifugal and even feudalistic tendencies of the literati themselves:

" From the emperor's standpoint, the examination system corresponded entirely to the role which the mjestnitshestvo, a technically heterogeneous means of administration, played for the Russian nobility. The system facilitated a competitive struggle for prebends and offices among the candidates, which stopped them from joining together into a feudal office nobility. "
(p.119)

Fundamental Concepts of Confucian Orthodoxy

Weber's argument therefore is that the scholar officials of the patrimonial period ensured that the orthodox Confucianism became essentially:

"just a tremendous code of political maxims and rules of social propriety for cultivated men of the world."
(p.152)

Confucianism in this period, and indeed in the pre-Ch'in period, took the basic Chinese world-view for granted rather than developing further metaphysical speculation or systems. It was concerned with the detailed regulation of this-worldly conduct. Precise and elaborate norms, amounting to a ritualisation of everyday behaviour, prescribed exactly how cultivated individuals should behave, and society should be governed, in order to maintain the cosmic harmony of the entire universe.

" The "happy" tranquillity of the empire and the equilibrium of the soul should and could be attained only if man fitted himself into the eternally harmonious cosmos. " (p.153)

Confucius himself had drawn authority from tradition in looking back to a golden age of the first Chou rulers and even more historically remote periods in which the world had been ruled in accordance with the Way of Heaven. In turn, the patrimonial scholar-officials looked back, over a period of more than 2,000 years, to an extremely remote traditional authority and to the study of the whole of the Chinese past as a guide to particular forms of conduct that should be emulated or avoided. Throughout this patrimonial period the inner-worldliness of orthodox Confucianism became ever more firmly consolidated as the scholar officials developed

Confucianism as a detailed body of practical ethics and political maxims.

According to Weber, the same innerworldly orientation persisted right through to the modern period when, during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, the Confucian orthodoxy was more firmly established than it had ever been. The absence of correct conduct and correct government would disturb the cosmic harmony and release the wrath of the great spirits.

" The cosmic orders of the world were fixed and inviolate and the orders of society were but a special case of this. The great spirits of the cosmic orders obviously desired only the happiness of the world and especially the happiness of man. The same applied to the orders of society.....If man in the individual case did not succeed, human unreasonableness, and, above all, disorderly leadership of state and society were to be blamed. Thus in a nineteenth century edict the prevalence of bad winds in a province was traced to negligence in certain police duties, namely, in surrendering suspects and unduly drawing out trials. This had caused the spirits to become restless. " (p.153)

Weber goes on to examine several fundamental aspects and concepts of this orthodox Confucianism of the patrimonial period and relate them more specifically to the characteristics, orientations, and material and ideal interests, of the literati of this same period. He suggests that the prebendal officials, and hence orthodox Confucianism, sought this-worldly goals rather than resurrection or rebirth in an after-life or a millennial utopia of the kingdom of god on earth.

" the orthodox Confucian Chinese..... performs his rites for the sake of his fate in this world - for long life, children, wealth, and to a very slight degree for the good of the ancestors, but not at all for the sake of his fate in the "hereafter". " (p.144)

For Weber, this "profoundly this-wordly turn of mind" was "far stronger and more principled than is usually the

rule." (p.144) It was closely associated with the persisting, if historically vacillating, doctrinal tendency towards agnostic or even atheistic attitudes towards the concepts of immortal souls or anthropomorphic deities. According to Weber, the prevailing view of orthodox Confucianism in this period, reinforcing and consolidating an attitude which might have been much more tentative amongst Confucius and his contemporaries, was that the human soul evaporated after death or was absorbed into a shapeless primaeval fluid with the consequent extinction of individual personality. (p.145)

He attempts to inject a clearer and more precise historical dimension into this claim by suggesting that the above conception was formulated by Wang Ch'ung, a Confucian of the first century A.D., but that his doctrine was inconsistent and that ambiguities in the Confucian conception of the immortality of human souls and personalised deities persisted until:

" the definitive disappearance of ideas of a personal God and of immortality was attained by the materialist and atheist Chu-Fu-tzu during the twelfth century. "

(p.145)

Even then, he claims, there still emerged from time to time orthodox Confucian philosophers who believed in a personal God. He tends to see these as "orthodox" but not "official" in the sense of not being supported by official imperial decree. In the latter sense, "official" Confucianism retained the materialist and atheistic standpoint articulated for the Ch'ing dynasty by an edict of the seventeenth century emperor, K'ang Hsi (p.145).

Again, he feels that these aspects of Confucianism had

originated with Confucius, his disciples, and the Confucian literati of the pre-Ch'in period, and were consolidated and elaborated during the patrimonial period. Confucianism itself, and the patrimonial scholar-officials, developed historically as integral components of the foundation, consolidation, and maintenance of the Confucian state.

A further aspect of orthodox Confucianism, reflecting material interests in opposing hereditary social strata, was its insistence upon the fundamental religious equality of all human beings and the absence of any religious ideas differentiating a "state of grace" (p.146). This was rooted originally in the opposition of the pre-Ch'in Literati to hereditary feudal strata. The scholar-officials of the patrimonial period, especially during the early and middle empires, had also been involved in constant struggles against feudalistic social strata. In opposition to concepts of superior status determined by birth, Confucians insisted that all human beings are equal at birth. The only difference lies in their capacity to benefit from the cultivation of the personality produced by Confucian education. The superiority of the Confucian "gentleman" is acquired not inherited.

Propriety and Filial Piety

These two fundamental concepts are examined by Weber in a little more detail in the context of his concluding comparisons of Confucianism and Puritanism. Here, he notes that the Confucian interpretation of both of these concepts was rooted in the historical experience of Confucius and

later Confucians of the pre-Ch'in period, and was consolidated by the scholar-officials of the patrimonial period.

Propriety refers to the correct conduct of the cultivated individual in all social situations. In its emphasis upon the public, external expression of graciousness towards inferiors and deference to superiors, propriety is centrally concerned with bearing or deportment, and is produced by behaving in conformity with the traditional status mores.

Propriety relates closely to the concept of filial piety as the basis for correct conduct. All social intercourse should be conducted in the same way as the relationships between parents and children. Within orthodox Confucianism, filial piety was the basic social duty - the cardinal virtue of the cultivated individual from which all other virtues flowed.

Confucius himself had emphasised the concept of filial piety as the key element of the "status honour" of the literati of his own time. Under feudalistic social conditions, the loyalty of the vassal to his lord had been the basis of the status honour of the feudal aristocracy. For Confucius, the commitment and loyalty of the literati official or minister to his princely employer was also a major component of status honour and was closely modelled upon the feudal concept. Weber feels that in the time of Confucius, and even to some extent in the earlier patrimonial period, the relationship between a free official and his monarch (as opposed to that of slave officials in the Middle East and Egypt) retains certain feudal traits, especially in

the oath of loyalty rendered personally by the official to the emperor (p.157).

However, there was a significant difference in the basis of the prince-official relationship as compared with that of the lord-vassal relationship, a difference which Weber refers to as "not a contrast, but a shift of accent" (p.157). The official's relationship to his prince is only a special case of his more general commitment to relationships based upon filial piety:

"Piety (hsiao) toward the feudal lord was enumerated along with piety towards parents, superiors in the hierarchy of office, and office-holders generally, for the identical principle of hsiao applied to all of them." (p.158)

In effect, this constituted an attack upon feudalistic concepts by incorporating loyalty to political superiors within a more inclusive system of social relationships. The basic character of allegiance based upon filial piety was patriarchal rather than feudalistic. It stressed the traditional precedence of bonds of kinship over bonds of feudal vassalage. It also stressed the return to conduct based upon a reverence for familial relationships. Thus a statement of Confucius praises a high official who tolerates abuses because his father had tolerated them when occupying the same position (p.157).

This patriarchal basis of allegiance was transferred to the conditions of a patrimonial state in so far as it became the basis for all relations of subordination and superordination, and hence for all social relationships. If a man displayed filial piety towards his father, i.e. accepted and obeyed unconditionally, then he would make a

good official, accepting and obeying the emperor and his bureaucratic superiors on the basis of filial piety towards them.

" Filial piety was held to provide the test and guarantee of adherence to unconditional discipline, the most important status obligation of bureaucracy. "
(p.158)

Taoism and the Rationalisation of Magic

Weber suggests that during the Han period, when the Confucian literati were seeking an effective monopolisation of prebendal office, Taoism began to take on a characteristic form which persisted into modern times. The "wu" and the "shih", the soothsayers, diviners, spirit-mediums, and purveyors of magical charms who had existed from ancient times, began to proclaim themselves Taoists and to emphasise and systematize the macrobiotic techniques of the philosophical Taoists into a more elaborate system of magically conceived beliefs and practices.

"The purely magical aspect of Lao-tzu's doctrine facilitated and elicited an influx of all the old magicians into the community of the Taoists....Taoism had emerged when the escapist doctrine of intellectuals was fused with the primaeval, this-worldly trade of the magicians." (RoC, p.192)

Moreover, under the influence of Buddhism from about the first century A.D., the older anchoretic tradition of the eremitic sage living in seclusion with a few disciples formed the basis for a more organised withdrawal into monastic communities. This was a marked developmental tendency, even though the majority of Taoists, whom Weber tends to equate from now on with all those who made some kind of economic livelihood from the plying of a magical trade, lived outside the monastic communities.

A similar motive towards monastic organisation came from the attempts of the emerging Taoist community to compete directly with the Confucian literati through the establishment of an inter-communal organisation with an

administrative staff enforcing strict discipline on its members. Attempts were made to establish an ecclesiastical hierarchy with an "hereditary hierarch" at its head. Weber suggests that, in Szechwan, the Taoist organisation managed for a time to create a virtually autonomous church-state of its own in the second and third centuries B.C. (RoC,p.193).

These attempts to establish a politically independent hierocracy and even a form of Taoist state, brought them into direct competition and confrontation with the Confucian literati. This culminated in an armed rebellion which was eventually quashed, but only at the price of ceding a degree of legitimacy and official tolerance to the Taoist organisation.

" The (Taoist) church-state was denounced in the year 184 by an apostate and was outlawed and persecuted by the Han. This church-state, a typical organisation of the South against the North, maintained itself against the government by the so-called "rebellion of the yellow kerchiefs", a ferocious religious war (the first of its kind). This lasted until the hereditary hierarch thought it prudent to submit as a princely tributary to General Wei. " (RoC,p.193)

Although the degree of tolerance was thereafter, in the long term development of the patrimonial empire, extended only so long as the Taoists were not seen as constituting a serious threat to the Confucian state, and although persecution and rebellion recurred constantly, it stabilised over time as the Confucian literati gradually ensured their social and political dominance. Weber is in fact concerned less with Taoism as a religious organisation than with its influence upon the popular religion in China, and its contribution to:

"the specifically Chinese " image of the world," created jointly by the orthodox and the heterodox" (RoC,p.195).

The Systematic Rationalisation of Magic

As noted above, Weber emphasises the Confucian tolerance of magic in the interests of social control, and because the charismatic legitimacy of the Confucian state depended upon the maintenance of a generally diffused magical conception of the need to preserve cosmic harmony through good rulership and administration. He examines the magical presuppositions of Confucianism in his concluding chapter; but his account of the historical development of Chinese religions also accords considerable significance to the limitations to the persecution of Taoism as heterodoxy, imposed by commonly held cosmological assumptions.

Although the pre-Ch'in Confucians had developed aspects of the Chinese world-view which sustained and legitimated their own material interests, their opposition to the early Taoists had been moderated by elements within it held in common by both schools. In the same way, the prebendal Confucians of the Han and later periods sought to preserve a balance between their material interests in creating a Confucian state and monopolising administrative office within it, and their ideal interests in maintaining the fundamental cosmological assumptions of their own status ethic.

"The very ineradicability of Taoism rested upon the fact that the victorious Confucians themselves never seriously aimed at uprooting magic in general and Taoist magic in particular. They only sought to monopolise office prebends." (RoC, p.194)

The result of this relationship between the material and ideal interests of the dominant stratum was firstly, the toleration of magical systems by the literati, and secondly, their "positive cultivation" by the Taoists. In one passage

in particular, Weber relates the material interests of both Confucians and Taoists to his often neglected analysis of the historical development of religious conceptions in China. He suggests that the latitude accorded to the Taoists resulted in a systematic rationalisation of magic, as popular Taoists sought to profit from the articulation of a magical pseudo-science in which they claimed a special expertise. The result was the progressive submergence of an earlier, empirically based craft technology beneath a body of magical beliefs and practices which was directly antithetical to modern rationalism.

"Thus a superstructure of magically "rational" science, survivals of which we find everywhere, cloaked the simple empirical skills of early times as well as considerable technical endowments, as is evident from the "inventions". This super-structure consisted of chronometry, chronomancy, geomancy, meteoromancy, annalistics, ethics, medicine, and classical mantically-determined statecraft. In these the magician's position among the people was foremost and his profit interests were often practically predominant (hence heterodoxy). The caste of the literati in their turn, though, took a decisive part in this rationalisation....This Chinese "universist" philosophy and cosmogony transformed the world into a magic garden". (pp.199-200)

For Weber, therefore, the originally philosophical Taoism was transformed into a heterodox religion which, unlike Confucianism, did offer a type of redemption from suffering for the masses. His account of the more specifically economic significance of Taoism, other than its failing to prevent a sustained and serious challenge to the patrimonial state, tends to be subsumed within his concluding comparisons of Confucianism and Puritanism. He sees it as an integral aspect of the more generally traditionalistic character of both orthodox and heterodox ethics.

This latter point is covered adequately in the principal commentaries on KuT and will be examined in more detail in

the following chapter. It is important to note at this point, however, that the complex of religious and non-religious phenomena identified above as influencing the development of Confucianism and Taoism, and the influence of both over religious development more generally, is intended by Weber to establish once again the limits to any simplistic idealist explanation of economic or even religious development. In so far as religious conceptions influenced economic development, they did so through a long drawn-out historical process. Moreover, this rationalisation of culture involves the process through which the religious conceptions themselves were formed through a dialectical relationship between material and ideal interests.

This present chapter and the one above have sought to reconstruct, or at least clarify and elaborate upon this analysis in the interests of a dialectical retrieval of Weber's causal problematics for the EE essays. The following chapter returns to the more configurational and consequential levels of analysis articulated by Weber in his own conclusions to KuT.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONFUCIANISM, PURITANISM, AND CAPITALISM

I

The Practical Rationalism of World-adjustment

In his concluding chapter, Weber tries to gain some overall analytical purchase upon all that has gone before by attempting to compare Confucianism and Puritanism as two contrasting types of practical rationalism. He claims that religions can be judged in terms of their "level of rationalisation" and he establishes two inter-related yardsticks by which these levels of rationalisation can be compared (RoC,p.226). The first is the degree to which a religion has divested itself of magic. The second concerns:

"..the degree to which it has systematically unified the relation between God and the World and therewith its own ethical relationship to the world. " (p.226)

This second formulation would not in fact be particularly helpful to Weber had he actually applied it. In so far as it refers to the internal consistency between the doctrinal and ethical elements of religion, Weber's subsequent analysis claims an equal degree of rationality for both Confucianism and Puritanism. He is more concerned with locating the two religions within his emergent typology of world-rejection.

KuT, especially this last chapter, is a further stage in Weber's elaboration of a typological framework for the configurational analysis of the world religions. This typology is in fact only fully elaborated in the

"Zwischenbetrachtung " ("Religious Rejections of the World" - Gerth and Mills) which follows KuT in both the original and revised forms of the EE series. In constructing this typology, Weber addresses himself to two fundamental questions - what are the distinctive features of the practical ethics of the world religions, and how can these be explained by reference to the distinctive features of their metaphysical doctrines ?

In these terms, Weber makes two fundamental distinctions between Confucianism and Puritanism. Firstly, Puritan ethics articulated a state of maximum tension with the world, whilst Confucian ethics reduced tension with the world to an absolute minimum. Secondly, and underpinning this contrast cosmologically, the Protestant tradition in general eradicated magic from its cosmological assumptions and practical ethics more completely than any other of the world religions, whilst Confucianism: "left untouched the significance of magic for redemption" (p.227).

This is not to say that Protestants did not have what we would now call superstitious beliefs about witchcraft and the possibility of magical manipulations. Rather, such practices were regarded as pertaining to the devil, not God, and they had no recourse to such practices themselves. The only conduct that was religiously valuable or legitimate was the following of God's commandments. Confucianism, on the other hand, not only existed alongside a "magic garden" of heterodox (Taoist) beliefs and practices but actually tolerated and preserved it (p.227).

At the most general level, in the RR article, Weber

characterises practical ethics in terms of their relationship to the world, and identifies three pure types: world rejection; world affirmation; and flight from the world. The first rejects the the world's norms and values as ethically wrong and enjoins the individual to live according to an alternative set of ethically valid norms. It involves a state of maximum tension in so far as individuals attempt to seek their own salvation by actively trying to change the world. The second involves a minimal state of tension with the world in so far as individuals accept it and seek to adjust to it. The third type also rejects the world but in a way which involves an intermediate state of tension by seeking to withdraw from the world, leaving it as it is.

In KuT, Weber emphasises the high degree of tension with the world established by Puritanism and the minimal tension of Confucianism. He relates this contrast to his emerging typological apparatus by suggesting that, for any religion, the nature and intensity of tension with the world depends upon the "salvation paths" of the religion as "defined by" its "metaphysical promises" (p.227). He goes on to summarise those metaphysical promises and salvation paths which are fundamental to Confucianism and which help to explain the contrasts with Puritanism.

Weber summarises the Confucian world as a single indivisible cosmos within which the natural world, as we would use this term, and the human world, are integrally related to each other. This cosmos is inherently benevolent because of its natural tendency towards an harmonious equilibrium of the forces of Yin and Yang which constitute and activate the whole cosmos. This natural tendency towards

cosmic harmony is the Tao or "Way" of heaven. The human world is inherently good in so far as human beings are naturally capable of ethical perfection by maintaining patterns of conduct which preserve the cosmic harmony through adjusting their behaviour to it.

Thus, at the level of the individual, human beings are quite capable of maintaining an harmonious balance between Yin and Yang within their own selves. At the level of the collectivity, human beings are capable of preserving the cosmic harmony by maintaining a social order which does nothing to disturb it. The concept of a natural tendency towards cosmic harmony is the fundamental metaphysical promise of Confucianism and the basis for its practical salvation paths.

At this point, Weber re-introduces the notion of magic through his claim that the link between cosmic harmony and human suffering is essentially a magical link. Human misfortunes are the result of disturbing the cosmic harmony. Its basic mechanism can be seen in the belief that natural disturbances such as flood, famine, drought or earthquakes are the result of humanly induced disturbance of the cosmic harmony. As integral elements of an organic world order, human beings can jeopardise the cosmic harmony directly through their own actions. He refers to this as a magical nexus for two main reasons. Firstly, the process is not underpinned by a personalised deity who chooses to act or not act in various ways, and whose actions may be modified only through prayer and supplication. Secondly, it is magical in so far as the mediating agents between the disturbance of the

cosmic harmony and the onset of human misfortune are spirits or demons:

"Such faults, however, and especially the faults of government were the essential reason for all misfortunes since they caused the unrest of the purely magically-conceived spirits." (p.228)

Within the orthodox intellectualised Confucian doctrine, such "spirits" were pre-eminently the "great spirits" of Heaven and Earth, according to Weber; although he is well aware that in more popular understandings of Confucianism, and even in the conceptions of members of the educated stratum, these magically disturbed and magically reacting spirits could be seen as personified natural forces or a host of lesser deities and demons. Whichever precise understanding of the nature of the spirits might be appropriate, the same fundamental implications follow from this magical presupposition of Confucianism:

"The right path to salvation consisted in the adjustment to the eternal and supra-divine orders of the world, Tao, and to the requirements of social life which followed from cosmic harmony." (p.228)

This particular sentence is especially important to Weber's analysis. The societal world relates to the cosmic world in so far as, according to Confucian doctrine, its norms, values and institutions preserve the cosmic harmony in the way that they did in the sanctified past. Confucianism therefore consists largely of an elaborate body of ethical maxims which constitute a normative blueprint for the social order. In so far as the social order conforms to this blueprint, and Confucian maxims govern the conduct of government and its officials, then the social world directly confronts the individual as the best of all possible worlds. It is a world to which the individual can and should adjust.

Hence:

"Confucianism, we have seen, was (in intent) a rational ethic which reduced tension with the world to an absolute minimum." (p.227)

This is the sense in which Confucian ethics, considered as a whole, are intended to adjust individuals to a specifically social world constituted and regulated by the maxims of Confucianism. In this sense the norms of society are the right norms, and the structure of society is the right structure. Even at times when the social order was perceived to be breaking down, as evidenced in terms of popular rebellion and social unrest, the hope of Confucians was always for a re-adjustment and return to a past golden age. In this sense, any tension with the social world was likely to be resolved in a traditional rather than innovative direction.

For Weber, there is a further sense still in which Confucianism can be seen as an ethic of world-adjustment. The type of salvation sought by Confucians was salvation within this world, within this life-time, and through ritually correct conduct in this world. The orthodox Confucian did not seek compensation for misfortunes in this life by looking to an afterlife. There was no cycle of re-birth to compensate for the insufficiencies of one's fate in this life, nor a heaven of everlasting peace or glory. The Confucian sought to escape misfortunes in this life, and the salvation goals were the this-worldly objectives of long life, health, and wealth (RoC,p.228).

Moreover, the means towards salvation were equally this-worldly. Misfortune was to be averted, and good fortune

sought, through conformity to the traditional social norms, by maintaining ceremonial propriety on ritual occasions, and by investing social intercourse itself with due ceremony and punctiliousness. A classical education in the Confucian literature was the indispensable means of salvation in this respect, for only the proper and prolonged study of Confucianism allowed one to appreciate fully the correct external forms of behaviour and their correct internal meaning. Similarly, only long, consistent, and diligent practice of the correct forms of behaviour gave one the self-control and dignity of bearing to suppress unseemly passions which might threaten the individual's equilibrium.

Weber emphasises this typological characterisation and analysis of the Confucian ethic of world adjustment through a series of observations on differences between Confucianism and other religions.

"Asceticism and contemplation, mortification and escape from the world were not only unknown in Confucianism but were despised as parasitism." (p.229)

Similarly, he notes that although Confucianism can certainly be regarded as a world religion in his own terms, its pre-occupation with the practical, here-and-now world of social life and human relationships de-emphasised any elements of escape from the world associated with more conventional religions:

"All forms of congregational and redemptory religiosity were either directly persecuted and eradicated, or were considered a private affair and little esteemed, as were the orphic priests by the noble Hellenic men of classical times." (p.229)

Even more significantly for his presentation of this ethic of world adjustment, Weber notes the absence of particular features which, in other religions, were associated with ethical

tensions with the world:

"Like for truly Hellenic man, all transcendental anchorage of ethics, all tension between the imperatives of a supra-mundane God and a creatural world, all orientation towards a goal in the beyond, and all conception of radical evil, were absent. " (p.228)

The Confucian Presupposition of Magic

Thus, the practical ethics of Confucianism neither devalued the world nor rejected it, in the sense of seeking a passive withdrawal from the world or an active reconstruction of it. This brings Weber back to the relationship between magic and Confucianism. He has already noted that, in general, the degree of magical disenchantment and the state of ethical tension with the world, are inter-related in many ways. He goes on to examine their specific inter-relationship within Confucianism by examining the sense in which it can be said that:

"This (Confucian) ethic of unconditional affirmation and adjustment to the world presupposes the unbroken and continued existence of purely magical religion."
(RoC, p.229)

Within Confucianism itself, good conduct, at both the individual and the governmental level, is good in so far as it accords with the fundamental requirement of maintaining cosmic harmony. What constitutes good conduct more specifically is laid down in the classics of the Confucian canon, which specify a whole range of behavioural norms which become traditions and conventions regulating individual behaviour, inter-personal relations, and the actions of governments. Bad conduct consists in the violation of these norms, but it is not bad simply because it is a transgression against tradition and convention. It is also magically precarious in the terms of the magical nexus of Confucianism: a disturbance of the cosmic harmony results in misfortunes mediated by the magically conceived spirits.

For Weber, this is the fundamental nexus within Confucianism, as an integral part of its doctrine which affects its salvation paths and practical ethics. However, difficulties enter into Weber's exposition, and attempts to clarify it, for two principal reasons.

Firstly, as Weber recognises, Confucians themselves were capable of a high degree of scepticism about the existence of personalised spirits and their magical intervention, in contrast to the mass of the Chinese people whose way of life was profoundly influenced by Confucianism but who were not Confucians themselves.

"Like the educated Hellene, the educated Confucian adhered to magical conceptions with a mixture of scepticism while occasionally submitting to demonology. But the mass of the Chinese, whose way of life was influenced by Confucianism, lived in these conceptions with unbroken faith." (RoC, p.229)

Thus, although Weber's account of the magical nexus within Confucianism assigns a clear role to the "spirits" as the agents of misfortune, he appreciates the fact that an educated Confucian could interpret these "spirits" in terms of the interaction of Heaven and Earth, and the forces of Yin and Yang, as a purely impersonal, quasi-mechanical nexus.

The second difficulty stems from Weber's characteristic attempts to pursue his analysis on configurational and causal levels simultaneously. Thus, as well as their role as an integral and fundamental element of Confucian doctrine, these magical presuppositions can also be seen in the fact that the magical nexus within Confucianism itself can only be sustained through its congruence with a more diffuse magical world-view which assumed many specific forms and manifestations.

In this way, Weber's account of the magical presuppositions of Confucianism leads him to relate them to the forms of magical belief and practice in the cult of ancestors and in the official and popular cults; the ways in which these specific manifestations of magic underpinned the fundamental magical nexus within Confucianism itself; and the ways in which the Confucian literati sought to preserve the popular forms of magical belief, despite their own scepticism, in the pursuit of their own material and ideal interests. Moreover, he emphasises frequently the ways in which this whole complex of mutually reinforcing magic similarly reinforced the structural dominance of the literati carriers of Confucianism. (RoC, pp.229-30)

The causal analysis is similarly re-introduced here in Weber's claim that Confucianism itself, and the Chinese world-view more generally, remained immersed in magic in so far as their fundamental nexus remained unbroken. It might have been broken, as typically it was elsewhere, by the development of new religious movements which systematised magical beliefs and practices towards the conception of a supreme deity who raised ethical demands in opposition to traditional norms. However, he claims that such a process had never developed significant momentum in China, and this in turn can be related to the intervention of the Confucian literati in pursuit of their material and ideal interests. They had tended to suppress religious movements which threatened their own dominant position by attempting to create an alternative hierarchy or an alternative vision of the state and society to that offered by Confucianism.

Thus, the major element in Weber's analysis of the

Confucian ethic of world-adjustment concerns the persistence of these fundamental magical conceptions. He claims that Confucianism itself is a profoundly magical religion in so far as norms and conventions, which might more usually be regarded as non-ritual behaviour, are here invested with the same magical significance. Again, the Confucian minimisation of tension with the world is a product of the magical sanctification of the universe in general, and the traditional norms and institutions of the social world in particular.

The Cultural Diffusion of Confucianism

Weber's analysis of the practical ethics of Confucianism is coloured by his perception of its structural location in Chinese society. Unlike Puritanism, it was the religion of a dominant minority whose position of economic privilege allowed them access to a specialised education in Confucian doctrine and the detailed external forms of Confucian behaviour. This position of economic privilege, especially its associated freedom from manual labour, was essential for the maintenance of correct propriety in ritual, social ceremony and etiquette, and the conduct of daily life in conformity with the normative minutiae regulating the dignified, balanced demeanour of the gentlemanly ideal. The illiterate mass of the Chinese people could not properly be regarded as Confucians in this sense.

"First, local, and above all, social differences in education were enormous. The traditionalist, and until modern times, strongly subsistence oriented pattern of consumption among the poorer strata of the people was maintained by an almost incredible virtuosity in thrift (in consumption matters), which has nowhere been surpassed and which precluded any intimate relations to the gentleman ideals of Confucianism." (RoC,p.230)

In his concluding chapter Weber attempts to take account of this particular disjunction by examining the more general cultural diffusion of Confucianism. He ventures into the realm of what might be termed culturology, by identifying a series of cultural traits which he claims were generally characteristic of the Chinese people and largely attributable to the influence of Confucianism. He dismisses contemporary assumptions that they could be thought of as "racial" traits

and claims that pre-Confucian China had a culture much more similar to that of the West (RoC,pp.231-2). He suggests that the influence of Confucianism over such cultural traits was probably exercised in an essentially negative fashion, through its elimination of ecstatic and orgiastic elements from the original peasant cults and its blocking of prophetic religiosity and consequent retention of a magical world-view.

For a depiction of the traits themselves, Weber relies partly upon the rather unsatisfactory "literature of missionaries", which he claims is "relatively the most authentic" (RoC,p.231). He groups these traits within three related fields, each of which he suggests is characterised by internal contrasts related to the diffusion of Confucianism and the retention of a magical world-view in particular. At the same time he tries to establish contrasts between these cultural traits of the Chinese and the practical and economic ethics of Puritanism.

Weber's analysis is distinctly confused in this section. He never seems particularly clear in his own mind whether he is making a consistent distinction between Confucianism and the general Chinese "way of life", and tends to use the terms "Confucian" and "Chinese" interchangeably in this context. Similarly, he is never clear whether he is comparing Chinese culture as influenced by Confucianism with early Western culture as influenced by Puritanism. More frequently he restricts his comments on Puritanism in this particular context to his typological, configurational contrast. That is to say, he attempts to extend his comparative, configurational analysis of Confucianism and Puritanism to

emphasise distinctive elements of the former and its putative influence upon Chinese culture in general.

1. General attitudes to magic and tradition.

In the first place, Weber attempts to identify a set of attitudes which seem to him to constitute a "coherent and plausible unit" (RoC,p.231), characterised by a contrast between sceptical sobriety on the one hand and magical credulity on the other. At their core, is an attitude which Weber depicts in a way one is tempted to describe as a sort of peasant earthiness. Weber remarks upon missionaries' observations of the calmness and sobriety of the ordinary Chinese - their patience and politeness; their tolerance of routine; capacity for hard, monotonous work; their suspicion of anything not immediately useful or practical; the attachment to habit and tradition and the associated horror of the new, the unknown, and the unfamiliar. Alongside these traits, however, there is a remarkable credulity about the magical and miraculous, and even a readiness to be swindled by the sorts of magical confidence trick one might have expected to be given short shrift by the paragon of fundamental common-sense just depicted.

2. Personal relations.

Weber points to another contrast in cultural traits between the close-knit cohesion within kinship and other Chinese forms of social association, and the actually cool temper of personal relationships. The former seems to

indicate the enormous importance attached to personal relationships, as does the respect, obedience, and ceremonious piety of the Chinese towards their parents. However, this appears to contrast with the lack of general warmth and sympathy towards others, which extends into a distrust and suspicion which the Chinese typically have for one another. He suggests that in the sphere of business relations in particular, the Chinese have been depicted as marked by an "incomparable dishonesty". Even the few exceptions to this general trait, in the sense of the "obviously remarkable reliability of merchants in big business" was a pragmatic response to the exigencies of a particular interest situation (RoC,p.232). This assumed lack of trust and honesty is particularly significant for Weber because it contrasts with the Puritan's reputation for commercial probity.

3. The concept of personality

Finally, Weber considers that the Chinese way of life in general is regulated by innumerable conventions which impinge upon the individual Chinese as a system of fixed and discrete norms. The behaviour of individual Chinese thus seems to suggest a high level of behavioural consistency which might be seen as the outward expression of a well-integrated, inner-directed personality. However, these consistencies in detailed external behaviour are seen by Weber as emanating from "outside " the personality rather than from "within". They are the product of conformity to a complex of discrete norms without any internalised commitment to an integrated value position (RoC,pp.232-4).

Weber attempts to explain the contrasts in these three areas of cultural traits by suggesting that they might be attributed to the direct or indirect diffusion of Confucianism. The general sobriety and pragmatism of the Chinese might be explained partly as a result of the Confucian suppression of ecstatic elements from the popular religion, whilst the contrasting magical credulity might be attributed to the resistance of the Confucians to any prophetic rationalisation of religious belief.

This Confucian-influenced retention of magic is also taken by Weber to help explain the lack of human sympathy as contrasted with the apparent cohesion of social organisation based on personal relationships. He suggests that individual misfortunes were seen as the result of individuals' own actions in disturbing the spirits. Similarly, the contrast between courteousness and coldness comes from the fact that human relationships are governed by a mass of conventions and ceremonial which are adhered to, not out of genuine consideration for others, but because their transgression would attract magical negative sanctions (RoC,p.233).

This discussion represents only one theme in Weber's characterisation of Chinese personal relationships. He also suggests that, in the absence of any ethical innovation from prophetic religiosity, familial piety was the strongest motive influencing human conduct in Confucianism and Chinese culture more generally. Whereas the Puritan prophecy had introduced a radical tension between the given world and a world re-created in God's image, the Chinese were motivated by a requirement to conform to elaborate but discrete sets of

norms applied to given social relationships. Thus, the social behaviour of the Confucian-influenced Chinese was not the outward expression of an inwardly unified personality oriented towards a transcendent goal, as was the case with the Puritan. Hence, there was no ethically-inspired leverage for influencing conduct through inner forces freed from tradition and convention (RoC,p.235).

IV

The Economic Ethics of Confucianism and Puritanism

Having broached the subject of the economic significance of religious ethics in his discussion of the limitations to business confidence imposed by the Chinese distrust of all those not connected to them directly by kinship or by some extension of the personalist principle, Weber goes on to consider the relationship between religious ethics and the problem of capitalism more centrally. He does so by noting a paradox of unintended consequences which becomes the dominant theme for the remainder of his analysis.

A notable aspect of Confucianism, Confucian mentality, and the Chinese mentality more generally (he increasingly uses these terms interchangeably) was the deification of "wealth". Weber notes a general exaltation of material welfare as a "supreme good" (p.237) in the long tradition of Chinese political economy. In this tradition, the accumulation of wealth by the state and by individuals is held to be extremely useful. It can help the state to ensure the welfare of its subjects and hence prevent social unrest. For the Confucian individual it allows cultivation of the personality to proceed without unseemly distractions arising from the need to secure an income. Weber also suggests that the Chinese state never adopted any consistent policies of opposition to mercantile activities and interests, or at least to no greater extent than was the case in the West.

" In no other civilised country has material welfare ever been so exalted as the supreme good.....The oldest document of Chinese political economy is a tract by the Confucian Ssu-ma Ch'ien on the " balance of trade " in which the usefulness of wealth, including commercial profit, is emphasized. Economic policy was not deliberately anti-chrematistic. The merchants of the occidental Middle ages were and are "despised" by German literati just as in China. " (p.237))

This observation leads Weber to formulate a particular paradox of unintended consequences and attempt to resolve it, to some extent at least, through the contrasts he notes between Confucianism and Puritanism, and what he sees as their different implications for the development of economic mentalities. There is, however, a high degree of ambivalence in these final dozen or so pages of KuT which only makes sense in relation to the rest of the essay as a whole, and to the fact that these conclusions were originally written some time before Weber added the later Sociological Foundations which came to comprise part one of KuT.

The paradox of unintended consequences which Weber attempts to resolve lies in the fact that modern rational capitalism did not emerge in China despite the intense acquisitiveness, this-worldliness, and commitment to wealth accumulation which was apparent in the culture of the Chinese people, the economic policies of the Chinese state, and within Confucianism itself. However, modern rational capitalism did emerge in the West at about the same time as a Puritan religion which expressly devalued this-worldly activity and the pursuit of material wealth for its own sake.

Weber appears to resolve this paradox by emphasising the impetus to rational capitalism produced by Puritanism as a practical ethic of world-mastery, and the inhibition of

capitalism produced by Confucianism as a practical ethic of world-adjustment. Having done this, however, Weber's ambivalence is revealed very clearly in the tentative nature of the conclusions he draws in the final two sentences of KuT:

"To be sure the basic characteristics of the "mentality", in this case the practical attitudes towards the world, were deeply co-determined by political and economic destinies. Yet in view of their autonomous laws, one can hardly fail to ascribe to these attitudes effects strongly counteractive to capitalist development." (RoC, p.249)

In these terms Weber claims only that the relationships between religious ethics and economic mentalities are capable of exerting an autonomous influence over economic development. This is the same sort of claim which he makes in a slightly earlier passage of these final few pages when, having suggested that differences did exist in the "economic mentalities" of late Imperial China and early modern Europe, he claims that:

"These differences did not alone result from the autonomy of the laws of political structures." (RoC, p.241)

Thus, Weber is attempting only to make out a case for two inter-related propositions which do not constitute, severally or together, an idealist explanation of the problem of capitalism. Firstly, he claims that the relationships between religious ethics and economic mentalities are capable of exerting an autonomous influence upon economic development. Secondly, he claims that religious ethics did indeed have an autonomous inhibiting influence upon the development of capitalism in China. This is hardly the strong version of the idealist thesis attributed to Weber by Yang or Elvin, for example, to the effect that Confucianism created a

particular form of economic mentality and that this economic mentality was the decisive and principal cause for the absence of capitalism from China.

In fact, Weber's own comparisons between Confucianism and Puritanism continue his own concern with constructing a comparative typology of religious ethics and examining the relationship between doctrine and ethics within the religious complex. In these terms, his discussion of the two systems in *KuT* is concerned primarily with the implications for practical ethics of the differences accorded to magical conceptions in their fundamental cosmological assumptions.

For Weber, both Confucianism and Puritanism were equally rational in the sense of their internal consistency between religious doctrines and practical ethics. However, their different cosmological assumptions produced different types of practical rationalism. Although both ethical systems had irrational anchorages in the sense of embracing non-scientific cosmological conceptions, the fundamental difference was that Confucianism remained anchored in magic and Puritanism did not. (RoC,p.240)

Having already attempted to specify the fundamental magical nexus within Confucianism, Weber's analysis of Puritanism in *KuT* turns upon its contrasting eradication of magic as a significant element of its promises of salvation and redemption. He claims that Puritanism had eradicated magic through its insistence upon the absence of any quasi-mechanical nexus linking God with the world of his earthly creatures. This forms the basis of Weber's characterisation of Puritanism in *KuT*, appropriately enough given his major concern with distinguishing it from Confucianism.

Thus, the fundamental premiss of Puritanism is non-magical in so far as God does not intervene in the world, either through his own agency or through lesser supernatural beings or a sanctified priesthood. It must be remembered that Puritanism was a product of the Protestant rejection of the more magical world-view of mediaeval catholicism (cf. K.Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1971). Catholic magic manifested itself in an enormous variety of beliefs and practices related to the notion that human destiny in this world and the next could be improved through the efficacy of prayer, good works, alms giving, candle-burning, the granting and purchase of pardons, the practice of regular confession, and the intercession of saints and the priesthood.

In opposition to this elaborate magical nexus through which God could be influenced, or even coerced, the Puritans insisted on the radical separation of God from the world. Nothing that one might do in this world, whether secular or religious in nature, could influence, let alone guarantee, the dispensation of God's free grace. It was assumed, of course, that magical beings and phenomena were active in the world, and this was expressed most dramatically in the witch-trials and "confessions" of the Puritan communities in New (and old) England. However, all magical practices and forces were regarded either as blasphemous superstition, or as pertaining to the Devil;

"the most characteristic forms of Protestantism have liquidated magic most completely. In principle magic was eradicated even in the sublimated form of sacraments and symbols, so much so that the strict Puritan had the corpses of his loved ones dug under without any

formality in order to assure the complete elimination of superstition. That meant, in this context, cutting off all trust in magical manipulations. Nowhere has the complete disenchantment of the world been carried through with greater consistency, but that did not mean freedom from what we would nowadays customarily regard as "superstition". Witch trials also flourished in New England. Still whilst Confucianism left untouched the significance of magic for redemption, Puritanism came to consider all magic as devilish." (RoC,p.226)

Other aspects of Puritan doctrine were closely related to this radical separation of God from the world and the denial of any magical nexus between them. Whilst the Confucian world was the best of all possible worlds, and human beings capable of perfection through education, the Puritan world was a realm of creatural wickedness. All human creatures were inherently sinful, and anything more than the absolutely necessary minimum of human contact was dangerously contaminating. This creatural world was a vale of tears; a transitory prelude to everlasting salvation or damnation in the hereafter. It was thus to be endured, not enjoyed, and one's fate in the next life, not this one, was the predominant concern of the Puritan. For Weber, all these aspects of Puritan doctrine are polar opposites of Confucian doctrine (RoC,p.238-9).

At the same time, God had a purpose in creating such a world, inscrutable though that purpose might be. Even more significantly, God expected his human creatures to work for his greater glory whilst enduring their earthly existence, and they should do this by ordering their whole life in accordance with God's ethical commandments. In this sense, the rationally organised conduct of the monk was to be translated into everyday activity, and Weber accords particular significance to the impetus this gave to the wider

diffusion of economic rationality (cf. GEH, part IV; also Collins, 1986a, ch.4)

Thus, every single thought and action, from waking to sleeping, should be methodically and systematically related to the overall plan of fulfilling God's commandments. Moreover, the supervision and regulation of one's conduct should be primarily the responsibility of each individual, not the responsibility of priestly intermediaries. In effect all Puritans were enjoined to be the diligent and systematic book-keepers of their own soul's spiritual progress, keeping a daily inventory of the extent to which their conduct accorded with God's divine will for his creation.

A keystone of Weber's characterisation of Puritanism lies, of course, in his analysis of the doctrine of predestination and its equivalents. It was this particular doctrine more than any other which distinguished the Puritan from other Protestants, and which carried through the demagification of the world to its most radical conclusion. Some of the Puritan sects were less radical than others in this respect (p.239), but Weber feels that these variations were less significant than the fundamental demagification in the doctrine that salvation was a product of the free grace of God, and not something which could be influenced, let alone guaranteed, by any amount of virtuous conduct. Hence the only way to alleviate one's salvation anxiety was to "enjoy" in this world the feeling that one's life was sanctified through its rational and systematic application of God's will. (RoC, pp.239-40). For Weber, this radical separation between God and the world, entailed in the

doctrine of predestination, is what gives ascetic Protestantism its particularly dynamic orientation towards the rationalism of world-mastery, and makes it contrast so strongly with the Confucian rationalism of world-adjustment.

The particular significance of this contrast for the development of economic rationalism in the West can be seen in the techniques for world-mastery applied by the Puritans. Whilst the Confucian was enjoined to understand and apply the magical nexus of the way of Heaven, the Puritan was enjoined to understand and apply only that which was empirically given to the senses. Weber notes the intimate connection between Puritanism and the advancement of natural science in the West:

"Useful and naturalist knowledge, especially empirical knowledge of natural sciences, geographical orientation as well as the sober clarity of a realist mind and specialist expert knowledge were first cultivated as planned educational ends by Puritans - in Germany particularly by Pietist circles" (RoC,p.246).

Thus the Puritan's task was to work God's will in worldly activity by coming to understand the workings of the world, on the assumption that neither tradition nor magical belief and practice were effective for this purpose. The Puritan's mission was to understand and change the world through observation, precise measurement, and rational calculation, and it was this form of rationalism which influenced a profound transformation in the sphere of economic activity.

This is the point at which Weber tends to obscure his distinction between the economic ethics of Puritanism and the spirit of capitalism rather more cavalierly than he does in the PESC, or the Einleitung/Introduction to the Economic

Ethics series, or at other points in KuT itself. The elision of the distinction comes in only one particular passage of KuT, but it can be misleading:

"The indispensable ethical qualities of the modern capitalist entrepreneur were: radical concentration on God-ordained purposes; the relentless and practical rationalism of the asceticist ethic; a methodical conception of matter-of-factness in business management; a horror of illegal, political, booty and monopoly types of capitalism which depended on the favour of princes and men as against the strict legality and the harnessed rational energy of routine enterprise; the rational calculation of the technically best way, of practical solidity and expediency ...The relentlessly and religiously systematized utilitarianism peculiar to rational asceticism, to live "in" the world and yet not be "of" it has helped to produce superior rational aptitudes and therewith the spirit of the vocational man which, in the last analysis, was denied to Confucianism." (RoC, p.247)

The reference in the first sentence of this passage to the "modern capitalist entrepreneur" seems to suggest that Weber is going beyond his usual more cautious position of positing elective affinities between the economic ethics of particular religions and particular economic mentalities, without necessarily claiming that the former caused the latter. Here he seems to suggest, with an uncharacteristic lack of equivocation, that Protestantism produced the spirit of capitalism, and Confucianism produced a concrete economic mentality that obstructed the development of modern economic rationality.

In fact, this is strongly tempered by Weber's own comments in KuT and elsewhere and the general tenor of his analysis in KuT. Even in the passage just quoted, Weber inserts the rapid qualification that Puritanism "has helped" to produce a modern rational economic orientation rather than being its sole cause and progenitor. He also makes it clear, as suggested above, that whilst the economic ethics of the

world religions can be assumed to contribute to the formation of concrete economic mentalities, these economic mentalities themselves can be seen as only one factor within the much broader complex of social and economic institutions responsible for the course of economic development in any particular society.

That having been said, the overall logic of his analysis becomes more clear. On the one hand, he suggests that, in the West, the economic ethics of Puritanism influenced the economic orientations and behaviour of the early Puritans, and that the Protestant Reformation generally, and its Puritan forms more particularly, stimulated the emergence of an economic orientation which he identifies as the spirit of modern capitalism. In turn, this economic orientation influenced the emergence of a modern capitalist economy and society in the West. On the other hand, he claims that the practical and economic ethics of Confucianism exerted an influence over the course of economic development in China. The nature of its influence can be clarified by a configurational contrast with Puritanism, in order to suggest that Confucianism itself, and the Confucian influenced-culture of the Chinese people:

" were far from representing and far from releasing the "capitalist spirit" in the sense that this is found in the vocational man of the modern economy."
(RoC,p.247)

It should now be apparent, from the analysis and re-interpretation of KuT offered in the previous chapters of this thesis, and from the account of the analytical structure of the Economic Ethics series presented in chapter two above, that for Weber to say this is hardly to subscribe to an

idealist interpretation of Chinese history and economic development. For Weber, a causal "influence" is very different from a monocausal "determination". There is no place in KuT at which Weber makes any claim to the effect that non-religious phenomena in, say, sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe and China were equally favourable to modern capitalism, and that the absence of modern rational capitalism in China can be attributed predominantly, let alone solely or decisively, to the influence of Confucianism.

What Weber does say, time and again in KuT, and especially in the "Sociological Foundations", is that non-religious phenomena in China and the West displayed certain superficial similarities but that a closer analysis reveals their net unfavourability to capitalist development in China. The patrimonial structure of the state, with its non-rational system of law and administration; the nature of the kinship networks and the forms of economic enterprise based upon them; the non-rational orientation of economic activity within the cities; the absence of rational, large-scale commercial agriculture; the agrarian and monetary policies of central governments; the material interests of the dominant stratum and the absence of a reformist or revolutionary stratum effectively mobilised against it; all testify to the absence of the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism and the presence of an institutional complex which militated against modern capitalist development.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

NON-RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA AND THE PROBLEM OF CAPITALISM

I

Introduction

It was argued in chapters two and three above that a principal source of persisting disagreement in the commentaries on KuT concerned the interpretation of Weber's discussion of non-religious phenomena in China. However, it was also suggested that whether Weber was seen as claiming their net neutrality for capitalistic development as compared with the West (e.g. Yang, Parsons, Elvin, Marshall), or their net unfavourability (e.g. Bendix, Turner, Parkin), all of the commentaries tended to neglect Weber's analysis of the influence of non-religious phenomena upon religious development. Even when they emphasised the programmatic importance of this causal problematic (e.g. Antoni, Parsons, Turner, Bendix), they tended not to take it sufficiently into account in assessing the conclusions reached by Weber in KuT itself about the relatively autonomous influence of religious beliefs upon economic development

Moreover, to varying degrees virtually all of the commentaries tend inappropriately to equate Weber's distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena with a dichotomy between ideal and material factors. This again inclines interpretations towards an over-concentration upon a conjunctural, configurational inventory comparing religious and non-religious phenomena in early modern Europe with late imperial China or a sort of timeless construct of "traditional" China. In this way, Weber's longer-term

developmental analysis of non-religious phenomena themselves also comes to be neglected.

Having attempted, therefore, in parts two and three above, to re-capture and re-present the substance of KuT with particular reference to this longer-term developmental analysis, it is necessary to summarise the conclusions reached by Weber and assess their significance for the re-interpretation of KuT. The present chapter will concentrate upon Weber's analysis of the economic significance of non-religious phenomena in China in relation to Weber's analysis of their significance for the emergence of modern capitalism in the West, undertaken in rather different ways in GEH and E+S. The following chapter will summarise Weber's conclusions on the influence of non-religious phenomena upon specifically religious development in China, and conclude the thesis with a re-assessment of KuT in the light of this analysis of non-religious influences upon both economic and religious development.

II

The Uniqueness of Western History

This chapter is concerned primarily with Weber's analysis of the specifically economic significance of non-religious phenomena in China and the West. However, as will be seen, there are points at which religious factors enter dialectically into the analysis. As suggested in chapter six above, the lectures which formed the basis for the GEH crystallize, with a uniquely historical rather than sociological emphasis, what Weber presents and re-presents throughout his work: a comparative analysis of the different courses of historical development discernable over the long *durée* of Oriental and Occidental civilizations. Two assumptions recur throughout his writings on this subject.

(1) The problem of capitalism can only be answered by understanding why, in the long term, the general course of Western history was unique from that of any other culture area. The emergence of modern capitalism in the post-mediaeval period was a culminating product of this unique historical process.

(2) There are two major dimensions of long term historical development in terms of which the uniqueness of Western history may be characterised: the nature of religious world-views and the extent of centralised imperial domination. For Weber, these religious and political dimensions also specify the characteristic similarities of Eastern civilizations, and so import a degree of Orientalism into his analysis.

In terms of these dimensions, Weber sees the long term development of Western history as having been unique in two respects:

(a) The extent to which its development was influenced by the transcendental anthropomorphic monotheism of Judaism and Christianity;

(b) Its relative freedom from centralised imperial domination.

Conversely, Far Eastern civilizations were characterised over the long term by religions outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition and by the historical persistence of centralised imperial domination. Appropriately enough, given its nomenclature, the Middle East occupies a somewhat anomalous position within these civilizational contrasts. The world-view of Islam is appreciably closer to the Judaeo-Christian tradition than it is to that of the Far Eastern religions, but Middle Eastern civilizations are seen by Weber as typically Oriental because of the historical persistence of centralised imperial domination (cf. Turner, 1974). This in itself should be enough to counter those interpretations of Weber which ascribe a decisive world historical role to differences in religious traditions alone.

However, Weber's attempts to relate these broad civilizational contrasts to the problem of capitalism are replete with confusions and ambiguities. Two particularly important problems can be identified. Firstly, in GEH as elsewhere, Weber tends not to distinguish clearly between the historical preconditions and the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism. Secondly, the extent to which Weber succeeds in transcending heuristic, configurational, cross-cultural comparisons with a coherent developmental theory of the emergence of capitalism in the West itself, let alone its non-emergence elsewhere, is very limited. In what follows, I want to suggest that Weber's comparative heuristics for his analysis of the problem of capitalism are best approached through his identification of three relatively discrete configurations of uniquely Western history. These are:

- (a) Fundamental civilizational traits;
- (b) Historically distinctive social institutions;
- (c) The institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism.

Fundamental Civilizational Traits

As suggested above, these are long-enduring religious and political traditions discernable from early periods in the history of civilizations. At times of course East and West resembled each other more closely, as in the domination of the West by the Roman empire at roughly the same time as the imperial domination of China by the Han dynasty. However, these fundamental traits can still be regarded as characteristic of civilizations when one considers long-term tendencies over time-spans of up to 3,000 years.

<u>Political Contrasts in</u>	<u>Religious Contrasts in</u>
<u>Extent of Imperial</u>	<u>Nature of Doctrinal</u>
<u>Domination</u>	<u>Tradition</u>

EAST	High	Impersonal Immanentism (Cosmocentrism)
WEST	Low	Transcendental Anthro- -morphic Monotheism

It must be emphasised that the historical inter-relationships between these fundamental traits are as important for Weber as the traits themselves. The particular combination of religious and political traditions within a given geographical area over a long period of time is what constitutes a distinctive pre-industrial civilization or

culture area. Moreover, their historical interaction underpins and does much to explain the distinctive course of civilizational histories, and the distinctive social institutions formed during more historically specific periods.

Distinctive Social Institutions

At a lower level of historical duration, Weber identifies a number of social institutions which were distinctive to the West. Unlike the fundamental civilizational traits, which characterise the whole course of civilizational history, the distinctively Western social institutions developed during more specific historical periods, all but one of them emerging only in the modern period. They are:

1. The politically autonomous pre-industrial city.

(this refers to the cities of classical antiquity and mediaeval Europe, and is the one distinctively Western institution which Weber locates specifically in the pre-modern period)

2. The legal-rational state.

3. Rational science and technology.

4. A rational ethic for life-conduct.

5. A modern rational economy.

This formulation actually tends to collapse once again into the two main dimensions of political and religious institutions. As will be seen, Weber sees rational technology as an essentially dependent factor, and his discussion of the historical emergence of rational ethics is explored predominantly in terms of religious factors. This leaves the Western city and the legal-rational state as the two

integrally related elements of his longer-term developmental analysis of political citizenship and state formation in the West.

The first four of these distinctive social institutions can be regarded to some extent as the historical preconditions of the fifth; modern capitalism. However, there are some limits to this formulation. Firstly, to regard the rational state, rational science and technology, and a rational ethic, as the historical preconditions of modern capitalism is to imply that they emerged historically in advance of this particular economic system rather than parallel with it as part of the same developing institutional complex. Secondly, a language of historical preconditions can easily be confused with Weber's language of institutional prerequisites. Thus it is more helpful to maintain an analytical distinction between the historically distinctive social institutions identified in this section and the institutional preconditions or prerequisites of modern capitalism discussed in the following section.

The Institutional Prerequisites of Modern Capitalism

In GEH (pp.207-9) and E+S (pp.91-100 and 107-9), Weber identifies the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism as:

1. The appropriation of all physical means of production as the disposable private property of autonomous, privately owned, productive enterprises.
2. The formal freedom of markets for goods and labour.
3. A labour force which is formally free but substantively compelled to sell its labour for wages.
4. A rational, and hence mechanised, technology for industrial production.
5. The commercialisation and monetarisation of economic activity.
6. The rationally calculable and predictable adjudication and administration of law.

As Collins notes, these prerequisites are Weber's institutional transpositions of the analytical construct of a capitalist economy.

"The picture that Weber gives us, then, is of the institutional foundations of the market as viewed by neo-classical economics." (Collins, 1986b, p.24)

As such, the institutional prerequisites derive more directly from the sociological typologies of E+S than from the historical problematics of Weber's attempts to explain the distinctive course of Western history. This is one of the reasons for the difficulties Weber encountered in attempting to incorporate his configurational analyses of:

(i) distinctively Western social institutions and; (ii) the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism; into an integrated developmental analysis.

It can also be forgotten that Weber sees the modern capitalist economy of the West as having existed only from about the middle of the nineteenth century (GEH, p.208). Similarly, its institutional prerequisites existed in their fully developed form only from about the same time. For Weber, this was the case despite the fact that proto-capitalist enterprises, which were rational to some extent,

had existed before this period, as had proto-typical forms of the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism. It is important to remember this as a corrective to the view, which Collins for example sometimes seems to take, that the emergence of the institutional prerequisites can be explained independently of the emergence of the modern capitalist economy itself, almost as though once the former were in place, the latter emerged automatically or inevitably.

Such a "pop-up" conception of the emergence of modern capitalism can easily neglect the crucial roles of both human agency and institutional inter-relationships within historical dynamics. In fact, Weber can be seen as arguing that the institutional prerequisites of a capitalist economic system were created partly as a result of the interests and actions of emerging proto-capitalist entrepreneurs. In some cases, such as technological innovation, and the commercialisation of the economy, they were created largely and directly by emerging capitalist entrepreneurs themselves. Modern capitalist enterprises, the modern capitalist economic system, and the institutional prerequisites of the latter, emerged together as inter-related phenomena within a particular complex of social and economic institutions. Any reconstruction of Weber's attempted explanations must treat them as such.

Developmental Analysis of Modern Capitalism

Problems of interpretation are posed by the fact that Weber never really inter-related these three levels of essentially configurational analysis into a systematic developmental

analysis of the emergence of modern capitalism in the West itself. However, the attempts which Weber makes provide clear indications of the direction in which he was moving, and how these three levels would need to be inter-related. The emergence of the institutional complex characterised by the modern capitalist economic system and its institutional prerequisites is seen by Weber as the product of the unique long-term course of Western history. This course of history was itself crucially influenced by the distinctive long term traits of Western civilization, and the historical interaction between them which produced the distinctive social institutions of the West. The analytical skeleton to Weber's analysis of the emergence of rational capitalism in the West is provided by the developmental relationships between these three uniquely Western institutional configurations.

One especially important strand tying together the configurational analyses of fundamental civilizational traits and distinctive social institutions in the West is to be found in Weber's comparative and developmental analysis of political citizenship and state formation. This relates directly to two of the social institutions identified by Weber as specific to the West: the politically autonomous pre-industrial city and the legal-rational state of the modern period.

For Weber, these distinctively Western social institutions represent successive phases in the historical development of political citizenship. Political citizenship exists when the members of a state are political citizens and not just

political subjects. As such, they enact the laws to which they are subject; are subject only to those laws; the laws are adjudicated and administered predictably and calculably; and no member of the political community is above the rule of law (GEH, ch.28). Political citizenship is central to Weber's ideal type of legal-rational state, the historical development of which is in turn central to his developmental analysis of modern capitalism.

This analytical emphasis stems from the fact that Weber sees political factors as the single most important complex of non-religious factors responsible for the uniquely Western course of historical development which culminated in the emergence of modern capitalism. At its simplest and briefest, he claims that the legal-rational state emerged only in the modern West and that this uniquely high degree of political rationalism was so crucial to the emergence of capitalism that it is difficult to see the latter existing in the absence of the former. Conversely, the fact that China never experienced a comparable degree of political rationalisation is the single most important non-religious factor accounting for the absence of modern capitalism.

However, Weber's argument is not so brief and simple as this. The West had been unique in terms of political citizenship and political rationalisation since the time of its emergence as a distinctive culture area at the time of the ancient Greek city-states and particularly since the time of the Roman empire. However, modern capitalism did not emerge until modern times, and Weber's understanding of why this should be so allows us to appreciate more fully the significance of processes of political production and reproduction to his

analysis of both Western and Chinese history. It raises two central issues: (i) the general relationships between political, legal, and economic rationalisation and: (2) the significance of state formation in early modern Europe for the economic transition from feudalism to capitalism.

III

Political, Legal, and Economic Rationalisation

As noted above, Weber's analysis of the significance of political rationalisation raises the question of why modern capitalism did not emerge at earlier periods of Western history, especially perhaps when there were relatively high degrees of political and legal rationalisation, together with political and economic integration, during the Roman empire. However, in the "Agrarian Sociology of the Ancient Civilisations" (AS, 1974, chs.4-7), Weber concluded that economic development in Western antiquity embraced forms of personal unfreedom, especially slavery, which made impossible the formally free labour force which he sees as an institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism. Moreover, the feudalisation of social, political, and economic organisation which followed the decline of the Roman empire imposed the same sorts of limitations upon formally free labour through the institutions of serfdom. Nonetheless, political and legal development in the mediaeval West was still influenced profoundly by the concepts, institutions, and techniques of political citizenship, rational law, and rational administration developed during the Roman empire. They influenced the sorts of political and legal rationalisation which took place within the mediaeval cities and mediaeval Catholicism and which in turn stimulated and facilitated the eventual emergence of the rationalising nation-states which replaced the feudal kingdoms and other feudal political communities of the mediaeval period. Thus, Weber's comparative analysis of the economic

significance of non-religious phenomena allocates a central historical role to forms of political organisation and processes of political rationalisation and state formation. This developmental analysis is pivotted upon his claim that legal-rational states emerged only in the modern West. For Weber, the major economic consequences of this stem from the fact that it is only a legal-rational state which furnishes and guarantees the formally rational law and administration which he sees as a central institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism. He makes this point clearly in E+S when he refers to "formally rational administration and law" as providing:

"Complete calculability of the functioning of public administration and the legal order and a reliable purely formal guarantee of all contracts." (E+S, p. 162)

Moreover, as presaged by his analysis of the obstacles to capitalist development in Western antiquity, many if not all of the other institutional prerequisites of modern rational capitalism are dependent upon the policies and practices of political authorities.

Firstly, private appropriation of the physical means of production in an economic system necessitates a system of private property which is sanctioned and guaranteed by the state. In a feudal state, individual rights to private property can often be sustained only precariously against the depredations of powerful rulers and feudal lords. In patrimonial states, political rulers may be able de facto, and sometimes de jure, to assert despotic rights over all property, especially land. A commitment to the rule of law, which is central to the ideal-type of legal-rational state,

guarantees private ownership to a degree which is not possible where traditional domination is exercised by political rulers and the members of politically privileged strata. It should be noted, however, that not all types of legal-rational state guarantee the private ownership of the means of production. Modern socialist states are also legal-rational in Weber's sense but here the state itself is the owner of the physical means of production (E+S. pp.109-114 and ch. II passim).

Secondly, formal freedom of labour also implies a particular form of state, in this case a state which expressly proscribes slavery, serfdom, or other forms of personal unfreedom. When all members of a political community are free and equal citizens, individual freedom to sell one's own labour is clearly established. Thirdly, freedom of contract in the markets for goods and income is only fully realised when the state itself guarantees both the freedom and enforcement of contracts. Finally, the rational administration of a legal-rational state typically extends to the maintenance and regulation of monetary systems.

Thus, Weber sees the legal-rational state as a necessary condition for the emergence and maintenance of a rational capitalist economy. However, as suggested by the case of modern socialist societies, not all types of legal-rational state adopt the political role necessary to capitalism. The latter is possible as an economic system only when the state guarantees not just the rational administration of its own laws, but also guarantees private ownership of the means of production, freedom of labour, and freedom of legally enforceable contracts. In this sense, the concept of a

laissez-faire state is something of a misnomer. A market-oriented capitalist economy can only exist when the laissez-faire type of legal-rational state intervenes precisely to guarantee the formal freedoms it requires.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in GEH, KuT, and E+S, Weber's analysis of the implications of non-religious institutions for the problem of capitalism allocates a key role to the historical emergence or non-emergence of different types of state. He sees the emergence of legal-rational states in the West as the culmination of the growth and spread of political citizenship, and their absence elsewhere as a product of specific obstacles to the growth of citizenship.

This is one of the principal ways in which Weber attempts to relate the growth of political citizenship in the West, and its absence elsewhere, to his understanding of fundamental civilisational contrasts between East and West. Thus, in E+S (chs. XII and XIII), he identifies two major types of pre-modern state, the feudal state and the patrimonial state. Both of these are non-rational in the sense that neither is premised upon political citizenship. However the pre-modern cities of classical antiquity and mediaeval Europe were proto-typical forms of legal-rational state. They developed only in the West because only there was it possible for urban residents to:

- (i) develop a sense of communal identity which transcended kinship ties;
- (ii) exercise the military independence which was necessary for their political independence.

Throughout the East, by contrast, these conditions had

generally been absent, and their absence in turn can be related to the persistence of the fundamental traits characterising Eastern civilisations:

(i) military and administrative resources tended to be monopolised by centralised rulers;

(ii) religious traditions inhibited the development of communal solidarity amongst urban residents.

In these terms, Weber sees conditions in mediaeval Europe as presenting a particularly marked contrast with the fundamental civilisational traits of the East. The feudalism of mediaeval Europe, as opposed to the patrimonialism of Eastern empires, restricted the monopolisation of military and administrative power by centralised rulers. At the same time, Christianity provided organisational models and concepts for communal solidarity transcending the kinship ties of mediaeval urbanites.

Why citizenship had emerged in the Graeco-Roman city-states, however, cannot be explained quite so easily in terms of Weber's general East-West contrasts because the impetus provided by Christianity to communal identity had not existed in classical antiquity. Two observations are pertinent here. Firstly, it may be the case that where there was no centralised monopoly of military and administrative resources, there was less need for a communal ideology positively breaking down the barriers of kinship. Secondly, the historically prior existence of a universal political community of equals may well have facilitated the adoption of Christianity, a universal religious community of equals, as the official religion of the Roman empire.

The general significance of these observations for Weber's overall claims about the autonomy of religious influences

upon socio-economic development will be discussed in the following chapter. Here, it is necessary to emphasise once again that Weber's analysis of the specifically economic implications of political rationalisation is rooted in such ideal types of economic action as those outlined in chapter II of E+S, and especially the distinctions he makes in sections 10,11,30, and 31, (E+S, pp.86-100, 161-6).

In terms of these typologies, capitalistic action involves first of all the acquisition of goods and services by peaceful means because, for Weber, the direct use of physical force is not an economic activity. Secondly, capitalism refers to peacefully acquisitive profit-making, as opposed to the earning of wages or salaries. Thus, it involves some sort of capital accounting.

"Capital accounting is the valuation and verification of opportunities for profit and of the success of profit-making activity by means of a valuation of the total assets (goods and money) of the enterprise at the beginning of a profit-making venture, and the comparison of this with a similar valuation of the assets still present and newly acquired, at the end of the process." (E+S, p.91)

However, rational capitalism is then divided further into two main types: market-oriented capitalism and political capitalism.

"Enterprises based on capital accounting may be oriented to the exploitation of opportunities of acquisition afforded by the market, or they may be oriented towards other chances of acquisition such as those based on power relations, as in the case of tax-farming or the sale of offices." (E+S, p.91, cf. pp.164-6)

Thus, a major difference between feudal and patrimonial states on the one hand, and legal-rational states on the other, is that there are far greater opportunities for political capitalism in the former and for market-oriented capitalism in the latter. Weber is clear therefore that a

market-oriented economic system is virtually impossible within either a feudal or patrimonial state. However, it is possible for some enterprises within such states to be oriented towards the capitalistic exploitation of market opportunities to some extent. Such enterprises exist within the interstices, as it were, of a predominantly non-capitalistic economic system, depending ultimately upon the prevailing political conditions. In these terms, the opportunities for what one might term "interstitial capitalism" were greater in feudal Europe than in the patrimonial empires of the East.

This was due to the fact that both political and religious conditions in mediaeval Europe favoured the growth of cities as proto-typical forms of legal-rational state capable of maintaining rational law and administration to an extent which permitted the growth of proto-typical forms of market-oriented capitalism. The interstitial market-oriented capitalism of mediaeval Europe thus developed primarily within these political enclaves.

For Weber, therefore, the growth of political communities of citizens exercising a significant degree of political autonomy was crucial to the emergence of a capitalistic economy in the early modern and modern West. These towns had originally been founded or "protected" by feudal lords as fortified market-centres, and centres of handicraft industrial production. As such, they had originally been economically exploited within the ambit of political capitalism. However, mediaeval urbanites had been able to organise themselves into guilds and through these guilds into

a specifically urban community capable, in the case of the Italian cities in particular, of usurping and exercising complete political and military autonomy. Even where the mediaeval cities remained integral parts of a wider political community, as was more typical in central and northern Europe and England, the urban residents were able to regulate their own economic activity within a framework of rational law and administration favouring the expansion of market-oriented capitalism. The mediaeval urbanites never went so far as to "deregulate" economic activity in the manner of the modern laissez-faire state, but at least they were able to regulate it themselves, in a proto-rational manner, in their own market-oriented interests.

This last point is particularly important in relation to Weber's attempts to capture the complex institutional inter-relationships of mediaeval and early modern Europe. Although it might be said that the modern laissez-faire type of legal-rational state "created" the conditions for a market-oriented capitalistic economy, these states had themselves to be created by historical actors, and the proto-bourgeois stratum of mediaeval burghers was crucial in this respect. As will be seen shortly, this type of state was itself created in large part as a response to the material interests of early political rulers in conjunction with those of emergent bourgeois and rural gentry strata.

Thus, the mediaeval burghers acted simultaneously as agents of legal, political, and economic rationalisation in three analytically distinct ways within a dynamically inter-related process:

(1) In developing the concepts and institutions of political citizenship, they rationalised political organisation and administration to an extent which facilitated the formation of the nation-states which succeeded them. They constructed the proto-types of the modern rational state and their concepts and institutions of political citizenship ultimately prevailed over the absolutist aspirations of the early modern monarchs.

(2) Mediaeval urban residents also constituted the proto-bourgeois class which played such an active role in the subsequent early modern processes of political and economic rationalisation. The urban burghers of the Middle Ages pursued their social and economic goals as political citizens and rational economic actors. These sorts of orientations were made possible by the existence of rationally enacted, adjudicated and administered laws which in turn made possible a considerable degree of capitalistic activity directed towards relatively free markets. The political and economic orientations of the emergent bourgeois class, not to mention their economic resources, were factors which subsequent national rulers had to contend with, accommodate to, and ultimately ally themselves with.

(3) In terms of specifically economic consequences, the proto-rational forms of law and administration operating within the mediaeval cities provided embryonic forms of the predictably calculable law and administration which Weber sees as an institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism. Although the mediaeval guild regulations actually restricted the free market exchange of goods and labour to a considerable extent, they still created embryonic forms of

modern capitalist enterprise, stock companies, and commercial instruments of private and public finance. These could be developed more extensively as law and administration was rationalised further within the nation-states of 16th. to 18th. century Europe.

The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism

Weber's analysis of the emergence of nation-states in pre-industrial Europe, and their significance for economic development, again hinges upon the inter-relationships between political and economic rationalisation. In broad outline, he sees the proto-typical legal-rational states of the early modern West as stimulating and facilitating proto-typical forms of modern capitalist enterprise and its institutional prerequisites to an extent which stimulated in turn the mechanisation of industry and the development of the modern factory system (GEH, pp.224-233). As Collins notes, technology is essentially a dependent factor for Weber as the industrial revolution was effected largely through the efforts of capitalists themselves, in their efforts to cheapen the costs of production for emergent, internal, mass-markets (cf. Collins, 1986b, ch.4). A principal consequence of the revolutionary transformation in productive capacity, wealth, administrative and organisational resources and technique, and the communications infrastructure, was the simultaneous consolidation of the laissez-faire or bourgeois state, together with the modern capitalist economic system and its institutional prerequisites, from about the middle of the nineteenth century (GEH,ibid.).

However, the eighteenth century stimulation of industrial mechanisation can only be explained in relation to the political and economic rationalisation of early modern Europe, the central feature of which was the legal,

administrative and financial rationalisation of the European nation-states themselves. In turn, the starting point for Weber's analysis of this process of state formation is the political and economic rationalisation which took place, at differing rates in different institutional spheres, within the institutional complex of Western feudalism.

As already noted, political, economic, and legal rationalisation in the mediaeval cities created what can be seen as a proto-typical rather than ideal-typical complex of modern rational capitalism and its institutional prerequisites. The principal political beneficiaries of this accumulation and sedimentation of rational expertise and organisational technique were the rulers of the early modern states which superseded and incorporated the cities. In this sense, the mediaeval urbanites acted as their own political, if not necessarily economic, grave-diggers.

At the same time, Weber insists that the rationalisation process was very significantly furthered by mediaeval Catholic organisations. Especially in the earlier phases of the mediaeval period, the Catholic Church was the principal legate and cultural transmitter of the rational law and administration of the Roman empire (GEH, pp.250-52; E+S, ch. VII(Law), esp. pp.809-31). Here, the administrative procedure and indeed economic activities of the Catholic church are just as significant to Weber's analysis as its doctrines.

As these processes of rationalisation took place within the mediaeval Catholic Church and the mediaeval cities, there was a slower but equally significant process of economic rationalisation discernable in the long-term tendency for feudal landlords to commute labour and other feudal dues into

money rents and broaden the scope of their own market-oriented capitalist activities. This affected the internal composition and material interests of the dominant stratum, particularly as they gradually transformed themselves from a stratum of purely feudal landlords into a stratum of landed magnates with increasingly strong interests in the commercialisation of agriculture (GEH, pp.72-96).

For Weber, however, the most fundamental change occurring within mediaeval feudalism, and which was itself affected by these processes, was the development of kingship itself as political rulers sought to consolidate their own, initially patrimonial domination at the expense of their feudal lords. Thus, as with his discussion of the mediaeval cities, Weber's analysis of post-mediaeval phases in the emergence of modern capitalism and its institutional prerequisites is closely interwoven with his analysis of state organisation and state formation. In a process of uneven development and competition between emergent nation-states, which itself stimulated political and economic rationalisation, they came increasingly to resemble the ideal-type of legal-rational state. The following account of Weber's analysis of this process is based primarily upon chapters XIII and XV of E+S. The typical process of rationalising state formation paralleled that which took place in the Western cities. The growth of political citizenship had been stimulated by the need for urban residents to act in concert if they were to exert and maintain independent control over their social and specifically economic activities. Through a process of progressive democratisation, citizenship was successively

extended to subordinate strata when their support was needed by dominant strata (see chapter five above). Similarly, the political rationalisation of the Western nation-states took place as part of a progressive extension of political citizenship to less wealthy and powerful social strata, so extending an increasingly rational system of law and administration within each political community.

On the one hand, the rulers of feudal kingdoms and other feudal states attempted initially to strengthen and expand patrimonial as opposed to feudal systems of administration. Feudal monarchs sought to extend their household administration into a patrimonial bureaucracy capable of exerting their domination over the political community at the expense of the power and privileges of the feudal lords. This was opposed by the feudal lords who sought to maintain their pre-eminence through monopolising administrative offices and, to varying degrees, through the creation of parliamentary or estate forms of government.

One of the principal ways in which rulers attempted to further their own interests within this social and political complex was to enlist the support of social strata opposed to the feudal lords and the powerful landed magnates who succeeded them as the institutions of fiefdom, vassalage, and serfdom were progressively eroded. The natural allies of the Crown against the landed magnates were originally the mediaeval burghers and the lesser aristocracy: in England for example the "knights of the shires" and later the rural gentry. The price paid by the Crown for the support of such strata in its struggles for political, military, and economic independence from the landed magnates, was an extension of

political citizenship. This was typically achieved through the extension of an increasingly rational system of royal law and administration at the expense of the juridical and administrative prerogatives of the landed magnates.

At the same time, especially in the later mediaeval and early modern periods, the processes of political, legal, and administrative rationalisation were closely interwoven with processes of economic rationalisation and other more general social and economic changes. As part of their administrative rationalisation, the emergent nation states increasingly rationalised their own systems of public finance and pursued recognisable economic policies to an extent which was beyond the capability of non-rational states. Weber sees mercantilism, and the attempts of early modern rulers to create royal monopolies and licenses for trade and industry, as the first real expressions of modern rational economic policy.

Thus, the increased administrative, legal, and economic rationality of the early modern states provided a favourable institutional context for the further development of the proto-typical forms of modern capitalistic enterprise developed in the mediaeval cities. In particular, it stimulated the transition of the mediaeval burghers, as proto-typical forms of modern capitalistic entrepreneurs, into an emergent national bourgeois class. This emergent class frequently allied itself with political rulers to provide the financial and administrative resources and expertise necessary to the furtherance of the rulers' interests in creating national political communities subject

to centralised monarchical domination. Once again, this was achieved at the expense of the political, economic, and administrative prerogatives of the landed magnates.

However, at various points in the history of the Western nation-states, there arose typical situations in which the interests of the emergent bourgeoisie in seeing political citizenship being extended to its own class more widely and effectively, and in curbing the traditional economic and administrative prerogatives of both the Crown and landed magnates, conflicted with the interests of both of the latter. The result was the series of political revolutions which, for Weber, were decisive in shaping the subsequent development of the West. With the possible exception of the Italian uprisings against external rulers, which occurred before the formation of nation-states in the early modern period, the typical and most economically significant political revolution was that of the English civil war.

For Weber, this was the final prolonged military confrontation in England between the traditional forces of royal and aristocratically privileged strata on the one hand and the political and economic interests of the emergent bourgeoisie on the other. It crystallised as a struggle against the extension of royal absolutism, the outcome of which set the process of subsequent state formation decisively on the road to the parliamentary democratic version of the legal-rational state, rather than a system of monarchical domination through a patrimonial bureaucracy.

This typical political revolution occurred at roughly the same time in the Netherlands and rather later, although even more spectacularly, in France. It also occurred in America,

and to some extent, although later still, in the rest of Europe. The implications of the relative lateness of these bourgeois revolutions in the rest of Europe, and the persistence in Germany of monarchical domination through a bureaucratic administration dominated by traditional landed interests, had profound implications for the shaping of the twentieth century which Weber was struggling to understand throughout his life.

Thus, the process of state formation in mediaeval, early modern, and eighteenth century Europe is crucial to Weber's account of the emergence of modern capitalism and its institutional prerequisites. In this period, and especially after the decline of feudalism, the inter-relationships of political rulers, landed magnates, rural gentry, urban bourgeoisie and, ultimately, an emergent proletariat, formed the basis of shifting coalitions of interest which in turn provided the dynamic thrust towards the emergence of the legal-rational state and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of the institutional prerequisites of the nineteenth century capitalist economy. Administrative rationalisation had proceeded within an inter-related process of legal, economic, commercial, and financial rationalisation which had progressively extended the other institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism and the scope and operations of market-oriented capitalistic enterprises. Weber's attempts to identify the chronological development of market-oriented capitalism and its institutional prerequisites, and to explain the historical interaction between the agents and spheres of rationalisation within

successive institutional complexes of Western history are understandably confused and confusing. Here, an attempt has been made to examine the major dimensions of Weber's analysis of the significance of state formation for the emergence of modern capitalism. His discussion of the processes of state formation in China, and his analysis of the administrative system of the patrimonial empire in particular, is virtually meaningless when not related to his understanding of the historical relationships between state formation and economic development in the West. In the Sociological Foundations to KuT, Weber's discussion of the economic significance of non-religious phenomena is similarly focussed upon configurational, consequential and causal analyses of the Chinese state.

The Problem of Chinese Capitalism

Weber's configurational heuristics of fundamental civilizational contrasts, distinctive social institutions, and institutional prerequisites is deployed constantly, albeit with characteristic opacity, in the Sociological Foundations to KuT. However, in KuT Weber was still trying to clarify his own understanding of Western development and his comparative, world-historical style of analysis both facilitates and obstructs his discussion of socio-economic development in China. Its strength lies precisely in the sharpness and perceptiveness of his configurational contrasts as heuristic orientations for the historical analysis of socio-economic development in China. This, after all, is precisely what Weber understood as the central task for his own version of sociology. However, its weakness lies in the difficulty of translating these heuristic orientations into developmental theories of economic history. Weber strives hard to do this, but severe problems are posed by the complexity of the long historical processes with which he concerns himself, and his own unwillingness, and perhaps inability, to move from sociological to historical analysis as effectively as he might have wished.

Nonetheless, the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT must be interpreted in terms of Weber's attempts to move between configurational and developmental analyses of the problem of capitalism. This encapsulates and transcends any attempts which he made to compare non-religious phenomena at

particular conjunctures in Chinese and Western history as a "test" of the net neutrality hypothesis. This latter problematic is ultimately subordinated to his attempts to understand their long-term historical divergence as a product of the combined, dialectical influence of fundamental civilisational traits.

Thus, in SF as in GEH, Weber's analysis operates at configurational, causal and consequential levels of analysis. His starting point in both cases is configurational, i.e. his understanding of the three distinctive configurations of Western history noted above: fundamental civilisational traits, distinctive social institutions, and the institutional prerequisites of modern rational capitalism. In KuT, just as in GEH, his attempts to clarify the developmental linkages between civilisational traits, social institutions, and economic development lack coherence and systematisation. However, the best way to summarise Weber's analysis is through his own initial, heuristic attempts to compare Chinese non-religious social institutions with those of the West, in terms of their implications for economic development. This allows a relatively clear identification of the configurational, causal, and consequential analysis of social institutions and the ways in which these analytical levels cut across each other in the Sociological Foundations to KuT. Weber's discussion of the Chinese monetary system specifies the problem of Chinese capitalism which forms his starting point in KuT. Even at the time he was writing, China was still a predominantly agrarian society with the majority of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture. He felt that the absence of a fully developed money economy could be

seen in the under-developed state of the monetary system for most of China's history. However, the persisting inadequacies in the quantity and quality of metallic currencies were alleviated considerably from about the sixteenth century onwards, as increased supplies of precious metals increased. In this modern period, there was also an enormous increase in population.

This leads Weber to the general conclusion that despite the under-developed state of monetary systems for much of China's history, which in turn can be related to a more general traditionalism especially in the economic policies and administrative limitations of traditional central governments, they had reached a stage of development by the later Imperial period which meant that they were no less likely to inhibit the development of a capitalistic money economy than they had been in the early modern West.

Thus, Weber begins his discussion of the problem of Chinese capitalism with a comparison between later imperial China and the West. He suggests that the monetary system at this time was no less favourable to capitalistic development in China than it had been in the early modern West. In the West, however, increased supplies of precious metals, monetary rationalisation, and rapid population increase had stimulated modern capitalistic development whereas similar innovations in China had been associated with an expansion and intensification of traditional economic activity. He also points out in GEH that similar stabilisation of monetary systems and rapid population growth had occurred in India but again it was only in the West that such conditions had

stimulated the development of modern capitalism (GEH, pp.258-60). These broader comparisons between India, China, and the West reinforce the conclusion he draws in KuT. The crucial contrast between China and India on the one hand, and the West on the other, lies in the fact that capitalistic relations of production were already significantly more advanced in the West during the similar historical periods in which all three culture areas experienced population growth and the strengthening of monetary systems associated with increased supplies of precious metals.

Thus, the problem of Chinese capitalism which occupies a central place in the Sociological Foundations becomes the question of why capitalistic social relations were generally less developed in China than they were in the West. More specifically, to what extent did economic phenomena in China display this lack of capitalistic development, and to what extent were non-economic phenomena responsible for this? Although continually underscored by more long-term developmental analysis, this conjunctural focus upon the later Imperial period can be seen as a dominant theme of Weber's discussion of non-religious phenomena in the Sociological Foundations.

However, the elements of causal analysis in Weber's discussion of Chinese monetary development are just as significant. In general, he suggests that the reasons for China's divergence from the Western course of economic development must be sought first of all in the different institutional complexes within which population increase and monetary rationalisation had taken place, and particularly in the economic significance of Chinese political

traditionalism. This is why he emphasises the fact that central governments failed consistently in their attempts to rationalise monetary systems, most spectacularly in relation to paper money, despite their political advantages and the early invention of printing in China. Weber sees these political advantages stemming from the fact that central governments had existed in a relatively stable form for much of the patrimonial period. For the last 1,000 years in particular, the Chinese patrimonial empire had enjoyed far more longevity, stability, and even administrative effectiveness than was normally the case with traditional, non-rational states.

Nonetheless, Weber relates the failure of Chinese governments to rationalise monetary systems primarily to political traditionalism. Most importantly, despite its relative advantages when compared with other patrimonial empires, Chinese state organization still lacked effective centralised control over its administrative apparatus. Its officials were able to maintain their own traditional means of economic acquisition through politically oriented capitalism. They used their administrative positions to extract private profits from such activities as exchange dealings, counterfeiting, and the extraction of exorbitant royalties from mining and minting concerns.

Weber suggests moreover that there was no overall conception of the state as an effective, "impartial", rational regulator of monetary systems. Emperors and their officials sought to exploit their political positions to secure profitable advantages from devaluing and debasing currencies and

exploiting the mining and minting industries. This political traditionalism was related to a more general traditionalism apparent in the technological crudities of mining and minting currency metal, and traditional geomantic opposition to the extractive industries. However, Weber appears to assume that these sorts of traditional barriers to monetary rationalisation might have been surmounted, but for the overarching traditionalism of the state itself. In general, the centrality of political organisation to Weber's discussion of the problem of Chinese capitalism, and his configurational, consequential, and causal analyses of other non-religious phenomena is clearly apparent throughout the Sociological Foundations.

The Chinese State, Society, and Economy

Weber's configurational, causal, and consequential analysis of the Chinese cities is intimately connected with his theory of the relationships between urban development, state formation, and political, legal, and economic rationalisation. Configurationally, Chinese cities resembled those of the West in the high concentration of trade and industry within them and the degree of autonomous control over economic life exercised by guild-like associations. However, the crucial difference was the absence of de jure political citizenship in any of its Western manifestations. Causally, Weber's developmental analysis of the historical divergence of Chinese cities from those of the West is based upon his specification of the Chinese variants of his more general East-West contrasts in civilizational traits. Thus, in China, there was a clear and very early establishment of centralised imperial domination, and there were powerful religious sanctions, not least through the cult of ancestors, which restricted the development of communal solidarity outside familial relationships. These fundamental, interacting traits of Chinese civilisation lay at the heart of the network of countervailing powers and influences determining the course of urban development in China.

In the long term, even during the patrimonial period, the imperial administration was never able to exercise regular and intensive control over the whole of the imperial territory. It was always opposed by local associations based primarily upon religiously sanctioned and articulated kinship groupings - the lineages and sublineages to which all

individuals belonged. Imperial domination was exercised more effectively in the cities than in the countryside, because officials were resident in cities. Even here, however, imperial domination was resisted by kinship associations.

A third factor entered the urban equation in the form of the Chinese guilds. Weber suggests that Chinese occupational associations originated partly from an earlier monopolisation of particular crafts and craft secrets by particular lineages or ethnic groupings in particular regions, and partly from early attempts by central governments to make particular occupational groups responsible for particular leitururgical provisions. From about the eighth century onwards, these were joined by occupational associations of merchants who resided and traded in cities which were not native to them, rather like the merchants of the Hanseatic League. The historical interaction and development of urban occupational associations into the modern period saw them come to adopt similar forms of guild-like organisation and practice. By the modern period, the occupational associations, which were no longer based primarily on kinship, controlled the economic life of their members to a very high degree, and through them the economic life of the cities.

However, the network of countervailing powers within the cities was such that imperial domination was sufficient to prevent the military independence which had been the basis of political independence for the Western urbanites. Similarly, the development of communal solidarity uniting urban residents was inhibited by religious traditions. Thus, although imperial governments were not strong enough to

prevent a high degree of de facto autonomous control over economic life in the cities, they were strong enough to prevent any de jure institutionalisation of political autonomy.

In terms of its consequential implications for economic development therefore, the Chinese course of urban development was such that even in the cities of the late Imperial period, rationally calculable law and administration was present to a lesser extent than it had been in the cities of mediaeval Europe. In turn, this absence of even a prototypical form of the crucial institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism helps to explain the absence of emergent and developing capitalist forms of enterprise and social relations. These latter had existed from mediaeval times in the West and had been even more developed when monetary rationalisation and population increase occurred in the early modern period.

Moreover, given that modern rational capitalism did not develop to its fullest extent until the nation states of early modern Europe began to extend rational law and administration over larger territories, the consequences of urban development for state formation in China were at least as significant as they were for specifically economic development. Chinese urban residents did not create an alternative and oppositional form of state organisation to that of the patrimonial Empire.

Thus, the course of urban development in China, underpinned by the obstacles to the development of political citizenship constituted by its typically Oriental fundamental civilizational traits, helps to explain the course of

political and economic development more generally. It helps to explain why political and economic rationalisation went much further in the West than in China. China lacked the dynamically interactive combination of proto-rational capitalism and proto-rational state organisation present in the West at the time of the mediaeval cities.

The Political Economy of Chinese Prebendalism

Weber's analysis of the Chinese state is concerned at least as much with long-term processes of state formation and state persistence from the beginnings of Chinese history, as with the economic implications of the patrimonial state in the later Imperial period. Moreover, his longer term analyses of the transitions from primitive patriarchialism to feudalism and from feudalism to patrimonialism are concerned primarily with the development of religious beliefs and the dialectical relationships between these phenomena and the development of the Chinese state itself. These inter-relationships will be re-examined in the following chapter.

Weber's more conjunctural analysis of the Chinese patrimonial state is focussed upon the later imperial period and makes two main points. Configurationaly, it had a non-rational administrative system by comparison with the ideal type of legal-rational state. It was significantly less rational in this respect than the emergent nation-states of early modern Europe. Consequentially, this lower degree of administrative and legal rationality, and the associated absence of political citizenship, meant that the Chinese

patrimonial state did not provide the predictably calculable system of law and administration which Weber sees as a vital institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism. Thus, on a straightforward heuristic comparison between forms of state organisation, this particular non-religious phenomenon was far more favourable to capitalist development in the West than it was in China.

There were, of course, certain features of the Chinese state which Weber regarded as potentially favourable to the development of market-oriented capitalism. The patrimonial bureaucracy of the later Chinese empires was technically superior as a means of centralised administration to those of many other large-scale patrimonial empires. However, this meant that the general "paradox of patrimonialism" was even more marked in the case of China. The relative effectiveness of the imperial bureaucracy as a means of non-rational administration had the paradoxical consequence of preserving the unity and essential structure of the patrimonial state, and hence a predominantly non-rational system of law and administration, right into the twentieth century. Had the imperial bureaucracy not been so relatively effective as a means of maintaining centralised political domination, the patrimonial empire might have disintegrated into the competing nation-states which had produced the impetus to genuinely rational administration in early modern Europe. The patrimonial bureaucracy in China was sufficiently extensive and effective to preserve the unity of the Empire, but the legal and administrative system it preserved was still non-rational.

However, Weber's configurational and consequential

comparisons also provide an heuristic orientation towards his more causal and developmental analysis of the Chinese patrimonial state. The re-unification of the empire under the Sung dynasty (960-1279) consolidated earlier forms of patrimonialism into an administrative system which retained its essential features for almost 1,000 years during the following three successive dynastic periods (Yuan, 1279-1368; Ming, 1368-1644; Ch'ing, 1644-1911). Weber's causal analysis was therefore directed towards the question of why the Chinese patrimonial state, unlike the initially patrimonial states of early modern Europe, remained a patrimonial state for such an immensely long period of time. Initially, his causal analysis of this question attempts to identify a particular constellation of material interests, rooted in the political economy of Chinese prebendalism, which operated to preserve the patrimonial state.

The material interests at the centre of this analysis are those of the patrimonial rulers, the patrimonial officials, and the sub-elite of literate gentry who were the principal aspirants to patrimonial office. He makes it quite clear that both the officials and the broader literati stratum as a whole also had ideal interests, rooted in the doctrines of Confucianism in particular, which reinforced their material interests in the preservation of the patrimonial state. However, although he sees constellations of material and ideal interests as inextricably interwoven in the course of actual historical process, he distinguishes between them for analytical purposes and concentrates in the SF on the consequences of material interests for the preservation of

the patrimonial state.

In the first place, he notes the conflicting interests of patrimonial rulers in exercising their domination through an administrative staff of prebendary officials whilst simultaneously attempting to curb its inherently centrifugal tendencies, especially when an empire extended over large geographical territories with only pre-modern systems of communication and control. The administrative devices used by Chinese emperors to curb the political and economic independence of their own officials were noted in chapter seven above, and are seen by Weber as typical of all large patrimonial states. The specifically Chinese addition was the high degree of bureaucratisation associated with the selection and training of officials through an examination system which was well established by the time of the later empires.

The emperors' interests in asserting effective centralised domination through rationalising the administrative system were thus brought into conflict with their interests in restricting the power of the administrative officials. These interests of the Chinese political rulers militated against the rationalisation of law and administration. At the same time, the interests of the officials were always directed towards opposing the sorts of reforms which might have brought administrative rationalisation and centralisation at the expense of their own independence. Their own opportunities for wealth accumulation and local political and social dominance were best served by a resolute opposition to more effective centralised control.

The interests of the Chinese bureaucrats in opposing

administrative rationalisation were not markedly different from those of all patrimonial officials. However, Weber lays great emphasis on the particular complex of social strata whose interests affected state formation in China as compared with the West. In the West, as suggested above, a diversity of interest groups had been harnessed and mobilised against each other in pursuit of the ruler's interests in administrative control. Most significantly, certain of these sectional interests, at what became particularly decisive points in the process of state formation in the West, were strong enough to effect a violent political change at precisely the point at which monarchical rulers attempted to extend their patrimonial power in ways which might have inhibited the formation of legal-rational states.

In China, however, there were fewer social strata combining the capacity with the material motivation to challenge the prevailing political system. In China there were no "strong and independent forces" with whom the monarchical power could ally itself in the pursuit of administrative rationalisation. In particular, partly as a result of the system of bureaucratic competition for political office, and the precarious and relatively short-lived careers of individual officials, the literati stratum which comprised the only substantial sub-elite beneath the officials were as implacably opposed to administrative reform and political rationalisation as the officials themselves. As aspirants for administrative office for themselves or their relatives they had no reason for seeking to change a political system which offered the best opportunities for themselves. Similarly,

their membership of the same privileged social stratum as the officials gave them a local power and prestige which any radical change of the system could well have destroyed.

For Weber, the transition from feudal-patrimonial to legal-rational states in the West, effected violently at times, had been a major factor in the eventual emergence of modern capitalism. In China, by contrast, there were neither oppositional social strata with the capacity and will to effect political change from within, nor was there an external stimulus to political rationalisation in the shape of international competition between nation-states. The political economy of prebendalism in the Chinese patrimonial state generated powerful material interests against political rationalisation. In turn, these material interests exerted a particularly significant influence upon the preservation of the patrimonial state as the pivotal sphere of a Chinese institutional complex unfavourable as a whole to the development of modern capitalism.

The same complex of material interests is central to Weber's more specific discussion of why the sorts of specifically economic changes which had stimulated capitalism in the early modern West had not done so in China's own "modern times". In general, the structure of the state and its influence upon society was such as to:

- (i) maintain the political and social dominance of administrative officials, potential officials, and the gentry stratum with official aspirations, pretensions, and contacts;
- (ii) present this stratum with income opportunities from political capitalism - the economic exploitation of office-holding and official contacts - that were more favourable than those offered by market-oriented capitalism.

This latter fact is related of course to the ways in which

market-oriented capitalism was inhibited by the absence of rational law and administration in general, and more specifically by the ways in which all government officials up to the Emperor himself, were prone to use their political power to restrict or exploit such market-oriented enterprise as did exist.

Thus, the economic change and growth of modern times took place within a general institutional context which was still more favourable to political than to market-oriented capitalism. More particularly, the rationalisation of the patrimonial system of tax-quotas meant that, in the Ch'ing period, the traditional sources of revenue from political capitalism were even more available and attractive than before. In this period, the patrimonial state was as effectively non-rational, in the language of the paradox of patrimonialism, as it had ever been.

Weber's attempts to transcend his initial configurational and consequential heuristics through articulating a clearer understanding of the longevity of the Chinese patrimonial empire, continue through a more detailed dialectical analysis of the historical relationships between the state and other institutional spheres. In the West these sorts of institutional inter-relationships produced successive societal formations culminating in the emergence of modern rational states, a modern capitalist economy and its institutional prerequisites. The interdependencies between the agents and spheres of rationalisation in the West are so complex, and Weber's attempts to identify them and explain them so partial, that it is hardly surprising that his attempts to unravel analogous complexities in Chinese history

are even more confused and confusing. Nevertheless Weber does make clear attempts in this direction, by going on to examine in particular the inter-relationships between the Chinese patrimonial state, agrarian social relations, and the kinship system, and the consequences of these institutional inter-relationships for the absence of modern capitalism and its institutional prerequisites.

The influence of patrimonial administration in preserving precisely those aspects of the non-political institutions which in turn preserved the patrimonial state itself is a central theme in Weber's discussion of these institutional inter-relationships. This is particularly so in the analysis of agrarian social relations in China with which Weber followed his discussion of the Chinese state per se. Weber's discussion of agrarian society is directed in large part towards the problem of why there were no oppositional social strata with the resources and the material interests to effect administrative reform or even the sorts of revolutionary change which had been crucial for the destiny of the early modern West. In the absence of an external stimulus to political rationalisation from international competition, Weber sees such "internal forces" as the one possible source of the political change which he felt would have been necessary for the emergence of modern capitalism in China. Leaving aside the specific non-religious institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism, this emphasis of Weber's upon the need for political change indicates very clearly that the Chinese patrimonial state was, if not the decisive, then certainly the most important single non-religious social institution in relation to the problem of Chinese capitalism.

Agrarian Social Relations

The influence of the patrimonial state was extended to the institutional sphere of agrarian social relations through agrarian policies designed to maintain a peasantry free from feudalistic or purely economic subservience to wealthy landed strata. Such policies reflected the material interests of central governments in monopolising the extraction of wealth and labour from the peasantry, and curbing centrifugal tendencies towards the accumulation of wealth and power by local landed strata. These agrarian policies helped to restrict any large-scale commercialisation of agriculture comparable to that of the West in the early modern period, and they also restricted the extent to which powerful, locally based landed magnates were able to accumulate large estates worked by peasants over whom they exerted an essentially feudal form of economic and political dominance. Thus, although such tendencies towards re-feudalisation in particular were ever-present throughout the patrimonial period, Weber sees the absence of a stratum of either feudalistic or capitalistic landed magnates as a highly significant factor in the preservation of the patrimonial state and the consequent absence of a rational system of law and administration. In the West, by contrast, powerful landed interests of both types had, at various times, been effective as the instigators of political change and hence political and administrative rationalisation, especially in the late mediaeval and early modern phases of state formation.

Thus, Weber's analysis of agrarian social relations in China operates again through configurational, causal, and

consequential contrasts with the West. Configurationally, Weber attempts to articulate a degree of historicity by distinguishing between the feudal and patrimonial periods. For much of the former period, in association with the political feudalism of the Warring States, serfdom had been widespread and a significant degree of manorial organisation bound the serfs to the feudal aristocracy. By contrast, for much of the patrimonial period, and certainly during the later empires, there was a formally free peasantry the majority of whom eked out a subsistence from tiny holdings of land. There was a high degree of indebtedness to minority strata of rich peasants and rural notables but these latter did not constitute a stratum of large individual landholders, still less a class of capitalistic agricultural producers. Weber identifies a series of causes for this situation, stemming primarily from the influence of the state in combination with that of the kinship system. In addition to the periodic redistributions of land associated with agrarian policies, central governments frequently restricted the free sale and purchase of land. As a result of these and related policies, individual landlordism was institutionally precarious. At the same time, larger accumulations of land were typically owned by lineages rather than individuals. These lineages, as well as central governments, restricted the extent to which individual families and households could alienate land away from their own lineage. The accumulation of large consolidated estates was also inhibited by the custom of partible inheritance. Weber sees indirect implications of these agrarian social relations for the problem of capitalism, in their

consequences for the preservation of the patrimonial state, as indicated above. In more specific and directly economic terms, he sees the precariousness of individual landholding in patrimonial China as an expression of the absence of another of the institutional prerequisites of capitalism: the private appropriation of all physical means of production. This restricted any commercialisation of agriculture on the scale which played a significant role in the emergence of capitalism in the West, not least through the release of a surplus agricultural labour force for work in the developing urban centres of capitalist industry. The economic significance of this fact is sharpened further by Weber's identification of such a labour force, which was formally free but substantively compelled to sell its labour, as another institutional prerequisite of the modern capitalist economy which developed in the West but not in China. In this way, Weber's analysis operates again through the identification of institutional inter-relationships. Moreover, both the state and the kinship system were doctrinally and organisationally underpinned by religious institutions. Weber's conclusions to the Sociological Foundations pursue this analysis by examining the combined influence of the state and the kinship system upon those forms of Chinese economic enterprise which did appear to display some degree of at least proto-capitalistic organisation.

The Non-religious Context of Economic Enterprise

The first three chapters of the Sociological Foundations are dominated in one way or another by Weber's analysis of the Chinese state. In particular, he is concerned with the historical reasons for its persistence in a non-rational form and the mutually reinforcing relationships between state formation and the development of urban and agrarian social relations. In the final chapter of the SF Weber focusses more precisely on the implications of the institutional complex of late Imperial China for the development and character of economically acquisitive enterprises. Again, the combined influence of the state and the kinship system is central to Weber's analysis of the specifically economic consequences of the Chinese institutional complex, and he sees both the state and the kinship system as doctrinally and organisationally integrated with religious institutions.

The strength of the rural lineages was a further reinforcing factor in the preservation of traditional state and social organisation in China. The rural lineages, organised around the cult of ancestors, were even more effective than the urban lineages and the urban guilds in resisting the administrative domination of central governments. The rural lineages were articulated with village organisation in so far as the senior members of the more prosperous lineages acted as the effective leaders of self-governing rural communities. This articulation between lineage and village organisation constituted a particularly monolithic form of resistance to the centralised control of the rural areas by the imperial bureaucracy. As such, the kinship system, underpinned by the

ancestral cult, presented a further obstacle to the rationalisation of law and administration which Weber sees as an institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism.

Moreover, Weber suggests that kinship affiliations protected their members against a proletarian form of subjection to capitalistic labour relations. This inhibited yet further the development of another institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism: the emergence of a labour force which was formally free but physically compelled to sell its labour to capitalistic employers in order to survive.

Weber claims that throughout the patrimonial period, including the economic expansion, tax and monetary reforms, and population increase of the later imperial period, those forms of acquisitive enterprise which transcended individual households, and were oriented to trade, agricultural production or industrial production, did not display the organisational forms and labour relations typically associated with modern capitalistic enterprise. Thus, even in later Imperial China, acquisitive enterprises were less rationally oriented and organised than they had been in the mediaeval Western cities, especially those of Italy.

In China, wealth was pursued by familial acquisitive communities which superficially resembled those of the mediaeval Western cities. However, the persistence of the traditional patrimonial state and the strength of the lineages were crucial features of the institutional context of wealth acquisition. In the absence of the rational law and administration which encouraged the development of rational market-oriented capitalism in the West, the greatest opportunities for wealth accumulation in China remained those

which were presented by the education of members of wealthy lineages as a preparation for literati status and aspirations of an official career.

More directly, the traditional organisation of the Chinese state and society, and the opportunities for wealth, power, and status which it presented for anyone even remotely connected with officialdom, meant that it was more rational for wealthy families to invest income from rents in the education of lineage members and the maintenance of literati life-styles, than to engage in forms of market-oriented capitalism. These latter forms of economic acquisition could be sustained only precariously in the absence of legal guarantees for the stable and predictable ownership and control of economic enterprises by private individuals. In the face of arbitrary intervention, depredation, sequestration and the constant extortion of official and unofficial levies by the ever-predatory officials, the institutional context faced by wealthy social strata with income potentially available for investment led these strata to engage in forms of internal booty capitalism and politically oriented capitalism rather than modern rational capitalism.

VII

Conclusions

In relation to the configurational heuristics identified and discussed at the beginning of the present chapter, the absence of a modern capitalist economy can be explained in terms of the absence of any one of its institutional prerequisites. To the extent that Weber's analysis of non-religious phenomena demonstrates the absence of all these institutional prerequisites, his analysis of religious doctrines and ethics might be said to possess the kinds of redundancies attributed to it, in their rather different ways, by Turner or Elvin. However, the foregoing discussion has tried to demonstrate that Weber goes further than these sorts of comparative, conjunctural, configurational inventories without however losing sight of their importance for his problem of capitalism.

Weber himself is less prone than many of the commentators on his work to forget that distinctions between religious and non-religious phenomena are much clearer analytically, as the starting points of research, than they are in the course of actual historical process. Thus, for Weber, the fact that the Chinese state and the Chinese kinship system might well be seen as the key institutions of a later imperial conjunctural complex which did not furnish the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism should not obscure the fact that religious institutions were an historically integral component of this complex. He does not have to subscribe to a proto- or neo-functionalism in emphasising as he does the significance of religious beliefs for the reproduction of

non-religious phenomena, by postulating a concretely existing, socially regulating "value" or "cultural" or "ideal" sphere or even "world-view" of which non-religious phenomena are the products or emanations. To say that the "world-views" constituted by religious beliefs can generate and direct material and ideal interests is not to credit them with analytical primacy in this sort of way.

As was argued in chapter two above, Weber's interests in "concrete" meaning systems are primarily with those of specific institutional spheres which can, and usually do, display different forms and degrees of rationalism even within the same historical conjuncture. Any characterisations he offers of the distinctive forms of rationalism of cultural formations as a whole is premised upon the limitations this assumption places upon such an even more heuristic, historically artificial, and analytically selective representation of the phenomenal world. This is the sense in which it might be argued (as Turner does - see ch. three above) that commentators over-emphasise the importance attached by Weber to his heuristic characterisation of the economic ethics of the world religions by equating them too readily with "concrete" economic orientations determining economic activity and courses of economic development. Such economic ethics may well influence economic orientations, and even do so "autonomously" but the latter are not to be seen as exclusively or even primarily constituted by the economic ethics associated with religious doctrines.

For Weber, as indicated in the sorts of relationships outlined in fig.2.3 above (end of ch. 2), the ideal and material interests which constitute the subjective

orientations and motivations for social action are generated by a complex of both religious and non-religious phenomena, each of which can and do influence concrete economic orientations. In this sense, religious orientations can influence economic orientations in so far as religious meaning systems influence the reproduction of non-religious phenomena. Thus, whilst it would be inappropriate to regard the economic ethics of Chinese religions as the "decisive" factors inhibiting the development of modern capitalism, it would be equally inappropriate to extract the patrimonial state analytically from the conjunctural institutional complex and take this particular institutional complex of meaning systems and material practice to be itself the "decisive" factor differentiating the Western and Chinese courses of economic development.

Similarly, Weber's discussion of the economic significance of political rationalisation and state formation in China and the West singles out political factors as the crucial non-religious dimension in his comparisons of fundamental civilizational traits, culminating in the unique emergence of the bourgeois legal-rational state in the early modern West. However, given that both religious and non-religious phenomena were either favourable or unfavourable to modern capitalistic development in The West and China respectively, it would be equally inappropriate, in Weber's own terms, to identify these political factors as in themselves decisive for the long-term rationalisation of cultures. Weber's own argument and conclusion would be that however immediately or conjuncturally important might be the economic significance

of the Western as compared with the Chinese state, their processes of political rationalisation might well have been other than what they were had there not been an equally significant fundamental civilizational contrast in their religious traditions. The issues raised in these conclusions from Weber's analysis of non-religious phenomena, and their implications for the extent to which Weber eventually succeeds in demonstrating such a thesis after his examination of Chinese non-religious phenomena in KuT, form the principal focus of the following, concluding chapter.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF RELIGION

I

The Causal Analysis of Chinese Religion

In SPWR, Weber identifies both internal and external determinants of religious doctrines and ethics and claims that the former provide religious development with a degree of relative autonomy from the latter. In general terms, the external determinants are the non-religious phenomena which generate the material interests influencing religious development, and also such interest-free conditions as those of physical and political geography. The specifically religious, internal determinants are the ideal interests in religious salvation generated by a combination of:

1. a pre-existing world-view specifying the ends and means of religious salvation;
2. the persistent, theodical attempts of religious intellectuals to systematize and refine these doctrines in order to reconcile their salvation promises with the fact that, in a religiously imperfect world, the wicked still appear to prosper and the virtuous or innocent to suffer.

In these terms, as was argued in chapters two and three above, Weber's conception of the relatively autonomous development of religious doctrines always adopts an essentially dialectical perspective upon the process of religious transformation. On the one hand, he acknowledges the frequent and often profound influence of external determinants upon religious development by attempting to establish which particular external determinants influenced which particular religious innovations at which particular periods. On the other hand, he insists that all such

innovations always take place within an pre-existing doctrinal context. Thus, however profound the influence of external determinants, the resultant doctrinal innovations would have been other than what they were if the pre-existing doctrinal context had been different.

In exploring the internal and external determinants of religious doctrines and ethics, Weber's causal analysis concentrates upon internal and external elective affinities. As Schluchter points out (1981, pp.145-7), this is because Weber's causal analyses always operate with the notion of adequate rather than necessary causality. Hence, throughout ch.VI of E+S, for example, and particularly in his discussion of the relationships between asceticism, mysticism and salvation (section x. pp.541-556), Weber claims that certain types of salvation promises, salvation goals and salvation paths have a high level of meaningful affinity with each other and are likely to be historically associated within particular religious traditions. However, these are elective affinities in that they are not necessarily associated with each other. These affinities have been historically created, if not always intentionally, by the acts, decisions, and choices of purposive human actors.

The religious propensities of different social strata for different types of religious doctrines and ethics should be regarded as similarly falling within the ambit of Weber's notion of elective affinities. This applies to the relationships Weber posits and explores between religious beliefs and all their non-religious determinants. The fact that either in a particular case, or typically, certain non-

religious phenomena influence religious beliefs in certain ways, establishes a relationship of elective affinity. There is no necessity or inevitability that the same sorts of non-religious phenomena will always influence religious development in the same sorts of ways. Hence, Weber's causal analysis of Chinese religions explores the co-determining influence of both internal and external elective affinities. To a large extent, Weber's configurational analysis of Chinese religions already sets forth his conclusions about one dimension of the elective affinities within religious traditions themselves. At any given time, practical and economic ethics are determined primarily, if not exclusively, by their doctrinal context. These relationships between the doctrines and ethics of Confucianism and Taoism have been fully explored in the commentaries, as indicated above, and these relationships have attracted no significant exegetical dispute.

However, far less attention has been paid to Weber's longer-term developmental analysis of Chinese religious doctrines themselves. As noted at the beginning of chapter eleven above, Bendix incorporates some of Weber's comments on this issue, and Collins goes further than any other commentator in attempting to clarify this dimension of Weber's analysis more explicitly, but other commentaries have gone little further than noting Weber's programmatic orientation to this problem, in relation to his general claim that religious development is influenced by non-religious phenomena. This aspect of KuT is as much in need of reconstruction as his analysis of the significance of non-religious phenomena in China for specifically economic development.

Schluchter's discussion of the "Religion" chapter of E+S (Schluchter, 1981, pp.148-75) is extremely useful in so far it clarifies Weber's conclusions about the elective affinities between the internal determinants of religious doctrines and ethics. In terms of the four main types of religious rejection of the world, the inner-worldly mysticism of Confucianism produced a practical ethic of world adjustment whilst the inner-worldly asceticism of Puritanism produced a practical ethic of world mastery. Moreover, inner-worldly asceticism was historically unique to the West, and only fully realised in Puritanism itself. The historical uniqueness of this religious orientation, its realisation in Puritanism, and the fact that it did not emerge in the Asian religions, can be explained partly as a result of the religiously internal elective affinities of the theocentric world-view of the West and the different elective affinities of the cosmocentrism of the Asian religions. Similarly, the development of inner-worldly mysticism in Confucianism can be explained partly as a result of the internal elective affinities of cosmocentrism.

However, whilst this helps to explain the fact that inner-worldly asceticism did not emerge in China, or inner-worldly mysticism in the West, it leaves several major questions still unanswered. Why did cosmocentrism itself emerge and persist in China, and why did it take the specific form it did within Confucianism, leading to a rationalism of world-mastery that was characteristic of China but not of cosmocentrism in India? Why did Taoism in China follow a different line of development, resulting in either other-

worldly mysticism or a virtual fusion with the magical techniques of the popular religion? Why, and in what ways, did Confucianism become the dominant religion in China, given that only a privileged elite could be regarded as Confucians in any organised sense? Similar questions, of course, can be addressed to the development of religion in the West. Why did inner-worldly asceticism develop only in the West, and not in the Middle East, in Islam or Judaism, given the theocentrism of the latter? Why was it historically realised only after the Protestant reformation?

All of these questions require a consideration of both the external, non-religious determinants of religion and the internal elective affinities specific to Chinese religions and Christianity. In the absence of such a consideration a certain degree of religious mono-causality can slip back into the analysis in so far as Weber's analysis of elective affinities within theocentric and cosmocentric religious traditions provides only a part of the answer. Schluchter's comments are advanced during his attempt to characterise the distinctiveness of Christianity in relation to Asian religions generally, and to characterise different stages in the direction of Christianity itself. However, he recognises the further need to explore the historical development of Christianity in more detail and to relate successive stages in this development to the influence of non-religious phenomena. In general, as Weber emphasised over and over again, elective affinities between salvation promises, goals and means, only make certain developments more likely than others. They do not in themselves explain:

1. which of the various possibilities and probabilities of religious development were actually realised;
2. when they were realised;
3. why theocentrism and cosmocentrism, and their specific variations, emerged, persisted, or were modified.

Weber himself never really extended this analysis to Christianity and such comments as he makes in E+S tend always to be very fragmentary. Chinese religions are similarly dealt with in E+S and although there are no real inconsistencies between Weber's discussion of Confucianism and Taoism in E+S and KuT, the latter presents a much more comprehensive developmental analysis. Moreover, given the chronologically later writing of the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT, the discussion of non-religious influences upon Chinese religions is very much more extensive than in E+S.

In applying his dialectical perspective to the historical development of Chinese religions, and attempting to explain their historically distinctive characteristics, Weber's analysis begins from the assumptions set out in SPWR and at the beginning of the "Religion" chapter of E+S (pp. 399 - 420). He assumes that all religious development begins from a similar primaeval form of magico-religious system dominated by relatively discrete magical techniques employed in the service of this-worldly goals. In KuT, he notes marked similarities between magico-religious cults of the fertile earth in both China and the Middle East. However, his analysis of the development of Chinese religions as compared with Ancient Judaism emphasises the enormously significant influence of physical and political geography over the origins and early development of religious divergence. This

influence is exerted partly directly, through a symbolic nexus rather than a nexus of interests, and partly indirectly, through their influence upon political development and the religiously influential material interests associated with the latter.

As Collins notes in discussing Weber's "The Agrarian Sociology of the Ancient Civilizations" (AS), a similar perspective is applied there to the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean culture-area (Collins, 1986b). In fact, although, it is difficult to find any clear systematization of this perspective in Weber's work, there is a strong element of geographical determinism in his analyses of the intimately inter-related religious and political development of the early civilizations.

In KuT, Weber attaches particular significance to conditions of physical and political geography and their influence upon the early development of both religious beliefs and political organisation. Physical geography affects the extent to which agricultural fertility and prosperity is dependent upon human intervention over and above the normal processes of ploughing, sowing and reaping. Political geography refers to the spatial relations which affect the "international relations" between political communities.

In the Middle East, especially in Egypt and Mesopotamia, physical geography meant a virtually absolute dependence of agricultural prosperity upon quite elaborately co-ordinated human intervention in the form of irrigation projects. This stimulated the emergence of centralised monarchical domination exercised through a permanent staff of specialised literate administrators. It also facilitated a centralised

monarchical monopolisation of military resources. At the same time, the existence of such a "harvest-creating King" stimulated the isomorphic conception of a transcendent world-creating deity (cf. Swanson, 1966).

In the Far East, and particularly in China, conditions of physical geography were such as to lead to a high but not absolute dependence upon co-ordinated human intervention. Natural conditions were favourable to agricultural prosperity but the latter could be disastrously affected by abnormal conditions of drought, earthquake, or floods. These conditions of physical geography favoured a more cosmocentric world-view focussed upon the notion of nature itself as inherently bountiful and world-creating albeit with a need for abnormal conditions to be averted by centrally co-ordinated human intervention.

In China, these conditions also favoured centralised monarchical domination more than those of the West, or the Near East, or even ancient Palestine. However, the fact that agricultural fertility depended less absolutely upon central co-ordination, as compared with the Middle East, meant there was rather less monopolisation of administrative and military resources by centralised rulers. This helps to explain the fact that "primitive patriarchalism" in China was tempered by de-centralising complexes of feudalistic and familial domination more than it was in the Middle East. Moreover, the agricultural role of central powers primarily involved the construction of defences against the spasmodic disruption of essentially benevolent natural forces.

Both of these situations contrasted markedly with the

conditions of physical geography prevailing in the Near East and the Mediterranean lands. Agricultural prosperity was much less dependent upon the construction of elaborate dykes or canals and this was associated with an absence of centralised monarchical domination and the eventual emergence of city-states. Similarly, military self-equipment prevailed in the absence of centralised monopolisation of military and administrative resources. In short, conditions which Weber claimed were favourable to the emergence of political citizenship already existed in this part of the "West" but not in China or the Middle East.

To a significant extent, ancient Palestine was already suspended somewhat between these various extremes. On the one hand, the relatively low dependence of agricultural fertility upon centrally co-ordinated human intervention was rather untypical of the Middle East and favoured the emergence of the sorts of city-states existing after the Exodus. However, the influence of the "world-creating" kings and deities of the Middle Eastern empires influenced developing conceptions of Yahwe. For Weber, however, the development of Ancient Judaism cannot be understood without reference to conditions of political as well as physical geography and their consequences for the political fate of the ancient Israelites. These geographical differences and their implications for both religious and political development are outlined below. The factors of physical geography are schematised in fig. 14.1.

Fig. 14.1

Factors of Physical Geography

(Pre-eminently, the degree of agricultural dependence upon centrally co-ordinated human intervention)

Absolute	High	Low
Middle East Egypt, Mesopotamia	Far East: India, China	Near East and Med.: Palestine, Greece

Absolute dependency stimulated religious transcendentalism combined with absolute political domination and the monopolisation of military and administrative resources by centralised rulers.

High dependency stimulated a high degree of centralised political domination combined with religious immanentism.

Low dependency stimulated anthropomorphic polytheism in religion and also facilitated the emergence and preservation of independent city-states. The need for the maximum degree of military self-equipment for war also stimulated and preserved citizenship.

Factors of political geography also enter into the analysis in so far as all the early political communities were likely to engage in military struggle with each other in order to obtain plunder and slaves, and ultimately for political survival as independent communities. The outcomes of these struggles were influenced by their relative military strengths. Empires tended to have advantages over city-states because of their administrative superiority in mobilising and equipping large armies. However, the outcomes were also influenced by the spatial relations between political communities. City-states with neighbouring powerful empires were more vulnerable than those without. In the present context, Weber sees these conditions of political geography as especially important for the Chinese, the ancient Israelites, and the ancient Greeks.

The ancient Greek (and "Italian") city-states were less threatened by geographically neighbouring empires than the Ancient Israelites and this served to preserve their city-states and the concepts and institutions of citizenship. They were more frequently and immediately likely to face military threats from each other and this served to reinforce their military self-equipment, communal solidarity and citizenship as well as increasing their resilience when they did encounter military threats from Middle Eastern empires. However, things might have been different if the Greeks had been actually been conquered by the Persians, for example, a theme which continued to fascinate Weber. Although the Greek city states were eventually subjugated by the emergent Roman empire, this latter itself enshrined long traditions of citizenship stemming from much the same geographically

influenced factors. At the same time, the conditions favouring the emergence and persistence of either religious transcendentalism or cosmocentrism were lacking in the Greek and Italian lands. There developed a form of anthropomorphic polytheism in which the behaviour and relationships of the gods was modelled upon the behaviour and relationships of the bronze age war-leader and his warrior aristocracy.

From the time of their very early subjugation and enslavement by the Egyptian empire, however, the ancient Israelites enjoyed only an historically brief period of political independence in the post-Exodus confederations and city-states of ancient Palestine. Ultimately, after the Babylonian exile, they experienced the diaspora and lost even their geographical homelands. Thus, the centralised political dominance of a water-regulating ruler favoured the emergence of religious transcendentalism in the early Middle East generally and Egypt and Mesopotamia in particular. In ancient Palestine itself, however, where rainfall and sunshine were naturally more adequate, and geographical conditions were also originally more favourable to the development of city states, the earliest cults of the ancient Israelites were directed towards Baal-like spirits of the fertile earth. However, the cult of Yahwe was influenced by concepts of transcendentalism, particularly after the Israelites' subjection by the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Transcendentalism was only fully developed, however, by the Israelites themselves, as a result of the political subjugation induced by their vulnerable geo-political situation. The chosen people of Yahwe had been unable to

maintain an independent political community of any sort, let alone an empire, for their God to rule. Without a world-empire, Yahwe could not be seen as the supreme divinity of an eternal world-order, only as the supreme arbiter of international destinies.

Thus, theodical rationalisation of the political subjugation of the ancient Israelites carried transcendental anthropomorphic monotheism to its ultimate extent. Ancient Judaism developed a state of religious tension with the world that was much greater than any other of the early world religions. The world itself was not to be seen as immanently or naturally good. It could never be a good world until the Lord elevated his chosen people to their once-promised supremacy in a Kingdom of God on earth regulated by His ethical commandments. The failure of the Israelites to secure a Kingdom of God on Earth had arisen because they had broken their covenant with Yahwe precisely by failing to obey his ethical commandments. Their future role was to keep this law faithfully until Yahwe redeemed them by changing the world once again. Salvation was thus to be gained through ethical rather than magical means and the latter were expressly forbidden to them as blasphemous.

As in much of the Middle East, Weber sees early religious cults in China as directed towards localised spirits of the fertile earth. However, under normal conditions the forces of nature produced agricultural fertility and were disrupted only by unpredictable natural disasters, and this might well have contributed to the early development in China of the conception of essentially benevolent natural forces. This is highly speculative, but Weber seems to suggest that the early

spirits of the fertile earth were conceptualised less anthropomorphically than in the Middle East although they were also fused with the ancestral spirits of the local community. Just as important, however, for both religious and political development and their reciprocal influence upon each other, was China's geo-political situation. For most of its history, and certainly for the 1,000 and more years of the pre-patrimonial period, hostile political communities were nomadic raiders rather than rival imperial civilizations. In both the early period and in the long term, these conditions of political geography favoured the cultural unity and longevity of the Chinese culture-area as a distinctive civilizational complex and allowed the dialectical development of immanentism, animism, and a distinctively Chinese form of Caesaro-papist political domination.

Dependence upon centralised water regulation was, however, sufficiently high to stimulate the development of centralised political domination during a Chinese variant of a bronze age "Homeric" epoch, and these conditions stimulated the emergence of the distinctively Chinese conceptions of Heaven and Earth as supreme divinities. As local communities and lineages became assimilated into the territorially bounded domains of centralised rulers, so the localised spirits of the fertile earth came to be assimilated with an all-encompassing spirit of the Earth of the Chinese political realm as a whole. At the same time, "Earth" as a supreme divinity remained associated with essentially impersonal but normally benevolent natural forces. At the same time,

"Heaven" emerged as a highly anthropomorphic deity rather like the Homeric Zeus, at the head of pantheon of gods who were less powerful but equally anthropomorphised.

However, Weber sees the historically distinctive world-view of Chinese religion only really emerging with the conquest of the Chinese realm by an alliance of clans headed by the leaders of the Chou clan. The pre-existing conceptions of Heaven and Earth were modified by the early Chou rulers in order to legitimate their conquest of the previously dominant Shang dynasty and the administrative structures they adopted to maintain their political domination. The Chou ruler monopolised to himself the supreme sacrifices to the supreme divinities of Heaven and Earth, and styled himself the "Son of Heaven". This promoted a closer fusion of the supreme divinities of Heaven-and-Earth into a more integrated unity. The Chinese realm, with its scared, benevolent Earth, became "All-under-Heaven". In this way, the Chinese political realm, and its sacred Earth, became subordinate to Heaven and therefore also subordinated to some extent to the semi-divine "Son-of-Heaven".

With these innovations, the doctrine of the "Mandate of Heaven" emerged as an important element of the political legitimacy of the Chou ruler. As "Son-of-Heaven", a Chinese ruler exercised power on the basis of a mandate from Heaven. However, this mandate was always conditional upon the ruler conducting himself and his governance in accordance with the "Way of Heaven." The Shang rulers were held to have forfeited Heaven's mandate by departing from this Way. The fact that Heaven "permitted" the overthrow of the Shang by the Chou "demonstrates" that the latter were empowered by

the Mandate of Heaven.

Weber sees these religious innovations as the basis for subsequent further development of the distinctive world-view of Chinese religions. This saw the ascendancy of an essentially impersonal conception of the "Way of Heaven" rather than the personalised conception of the "Will of God". Weber feels that residues of the early anthropomorphic conception of Heaven persisted throughout the Chou period and even well into the patrimonial period. However, the dominant world-view came increasingly to conceptualise Heaven as the prime mover of an organically integrated cosmos encompassing Heaven and Earth, humans and spirits. This concept of the "Way of Heaven" expresses the providential natural tendency of this organically integrated cosmos towards an harmonious equilibrium, eventually expressed even more explicitly as an harmonious fusion of Yang (heavenly) and Yin (Earthly) forces.

Weber sees these early religious developments in China largely as the products of the distinctive economic and political conditions of early Chinese history but which in turn constituted the basic doctrinal matrix of a distinctively Chinese religious world-view which exerted a considerable influence upon the subsequent course of Chinese history. The Chou innovations were particularly significant in the development of both religious and political institutions and a world-view which encompassed and legitimated a distinctively Chinese form of caesaro-papism. Again, Weber's dialectical perspective upon the historical development of religious doctrines is (fairly) clear.

Significant and influential though the material interests of the Chou rulers might have been, it is quite objectively possible that different religious doctrines might have emerged had the pre-existing conceptions of Heaven and Earth been other than what they were. For Weber, this is as close as the cultural scientist can come to establishing propositions of adequate historical causality. At the same time, the consequential autonomy of religious beliefs can be seen in their influence upon the subsequent development of political and other non-religious phenomena which in turn influenced further religious innovations at later stages of historical development.

Thus, cosmocentric conceptions and institutions of caesaropapism persisted throughout the Chou period despite the decline of Chou hegemony, political feudalisation, and "international" military conflict between the warring states. Given the emergence, even before the time of Confucius, of a distinctively Chinese form of caesaropapism, legitimated by a distinctively Chinese form of cosmocentrism, the religious innovations of Confucius himself, and the other intellectuals of the later Warring States period, can be explained by Weber in terms of the pre-existing doctrines and the material interests of different strata within this particular institutional complex. Cultural unity in the period following the decline of the Chou hegemony was facilitated by the material interests of the feudal rulers in preventing any one of their number from usurping the title of Son-of-Heaven and their ideal interests in feeling that the ritual functions of the Son-of Heaven were indeed important for the maintenance of the Way of Heaven in their own realms.

In this respect, the contribution of this pre-Confucian form of cosmocentrism was similar to the contribution made by mediaeval Catholicism to the cultural unity of feudal Europe. Moreover, in this same pre-Confucian period, the materialist interests of the feudal rulers in expanding their territories by conquest and extending patrimonial domination over them at the expense of the traditional feudal aristocracy increased their demand for ministers and administrators skilled in both the technical and ritual management of the Way of Heaven. In turn, the growth and social location of this pre-Confucian literati stratum, and their own material interests in monopolising ministerial and administrative positions in the emergent proto-patrimonial states coincided with the material interests of the proto-patrimonial rulers.

Within this doctrinal context, Confucius and his followers and interpreters emphasised those aspects of the cosmocentric world-view which had a particular affinity with their material interests in "usurping" the hereditary and militaristic bases of social and political dominance with meritocratic principles stressing the administrative and ritualist indispensability of ministers who had acquired virtue and knowledge through study and propriety. In this period, the development of religious Taoism can be seen as perhaps a more "natural" and even predictable development of the internal elective affinities between cosmocentrism and other-worldly mysticism. The inner-worldly mysticism of Confucianism, by contrast, endowed its adherents with considerably more potential for this-worldly power and influence. At a later, patrimonial stage of development, the

operationalisation of this potential was sufficiently effective to relegate Taoism to heterodox status and so stimulate the "magification" of Taoism under the influence of the material rewards to be gained by the purveying of magical technique to the masses.

There was no necessity, however, that Confucianism would even survive as a distinctive doctrinal tradition, let alone become dominant in subsequent Chinese history. The fact that it did has again to be explained in terms of non-religious influences related particularly to the establishment of the patrimonial empire and to the subsequent development of patrimonialism. The subsequent rise of an inextricably inter-related Confucian stratum, state, and society, and the influence of the Confucian orthodoxy upon the development of Chinese religions more generally, has been traced in more detail above (see chapter eleven).

Weber does not suggest or imply that the existence and development of Confucianism made patrimonialism inevitable, or even that it was actively encouraged by Chou Confucianism. The latter was oriented towards more traditional, feudalistic forms of society, and the later congruence between this doctrine of the scholars and the patrimonial state was effected by the later orthodox Confucian idealisations of the High Chou and even earlier legendary periods. The patrimonial empire itself was created by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, who was virulently opposed to the Confucians and their contemporary opposition to authoritarian political domination. However, the fact that a Confucian literati stratum already existed, with administrative skills and a political philosophy which could legitimate patrimonialism, made it the most attractive

and viable alternative for the Han rulers. In a real sense, the latter imposed upon the Confucians the status of prebendal officials but this transition initiated developments in Confucianism itself; in the impact of Confucian policy upon religious development generally; and in the development of the Chinese state and its influence upon the historical development of other social institutions, all of which might have been different if Confucianism had been different.

The long-term outcome was the emergence, consolidation and persistence of not just an orthodox Confucian doctrine but a specifically Confucian form of state and society constituting a distinctively Chinese variant of patrimonialism. This form of patrimonialism helped the Han empire to persist for some four hundred years. Although it collapsed eventually into a period of political disunity which very seriously threatened the social and religious dominance of Confucianism itself, the Confucian variant of patrimonialism remained the one which provided successive emperors with the most effective means of political domination throughout most of the remainder of China's imperial history. Later innovations in Confucian doctrine and practice strengthened the long-term durability of the patrimonial empire, and in this sense Confucian doctrines and the social, political, and specifically economic practices of the Confucian stratum of scholar-gentry, contributed profoundly to the persistence and relative stability of the patrimonial empire in the last 1,000 years of its history in particular.

II

Idealism and Materialism: The end of the Story?

A major burden of this thesis has been the claim that a detailed re-examination of KuT in relation to its sociological and sinological context renders invalid any sort of idealist or "culturalist" interpretation of the essay. As suggested in chapter three, there are stronger and weaker versions of such idealist interpretation. The stronger version can be seen, for example, in the interpretations of Yang, Marshall, and Elvin, despite the marked differences of emphasis in their general readings of Weber. It rests upon three main assertions:

(a) religious beliefs were decisive for the non-emergence of modern rational capitalism in China;

(b) this is demonstrated through a comparison with early modern Europe, showing that whilst non-religious phenomena in China and the West were neutral (i.e. neither more nor less favourable on balance) to capitalistic development, religious beliefs stimulated capitalism in the West but inhibited its development in China;

(c) religious beliefs and non-religious phenomena are to be conceptualised as ideal and material factors respectively.

The weaker form of idealist interpretation, represented for example by Parsons's more considered readings of the essay, accepts all three of these propositions but adds the qualification that the ideal factors of religious belief were themselves influenced by material/non-religious, phenomena. Both versions of idealist interpretation, however, can be refuted on the same general grounds:

1. Even if religious beliefs and non-religious phenomena were actually dichotomised by Weber as ideal and material factors, he never asserted in KuT, still less demonstrated, that religious beliefs were decisive for the non-emergence of capitalism in China.

2. Even if Weber had asserted or demonstrated the decisiveness of religious beliefs in this way, this would not constitute an idealist refutation of materialism because he did not regard non-religious phenomena as a general category of material factors.

The second of these points has been argued at some length above, especially in chapters two and three. The principal claim advanced was that Weber himself treated non-religious phenomena as complexes of both ideal and material factors, in the sense of meaning systems and material practice respectively. In *KuT*, Weber himself prefers more substantively specific formulations in terms of religious, economic, political, political-economic, legal, or other substantive factors. He certainly refers at times to material and ideal interests, as one might expect from the arguments advanced in chapter two to the effect that this is the one form of material/ideal dichotomy advanced and applied consistently by Weber in the Economic Ethics essays. However, his analysis in *KuT* clearly recognises the extent to which a non-religious phenomenon such as "the state" can generate both material and ideal interests. Thus, even if Weber had demonstrated the "net neutrality" of non-religious phenomena in the West, this would not amount to a demonstration of the neutrality of non-religious phenomena as "material" factors. This construction of Weber's practice in applying material and ideal dichotomies is of course an interpretive issue upon which not all Weber scholars would necessarily agree. The second refutation of idealist interpretations of *KuT* is, however, rather different. It goes to the heart of the substantive analysis undertaken in *KuT* and admits of far less doubt and controversy than the issue of how precisely Weber conceptualised ideal and material factors. That is to say,

whether or not Weber regarded them as ideal and material factors respectively, does KuT demonstrate the decisiveness of religious beliefs for capitalist development and the net-neutrality of non-religious phenomena when comparing China with the West? This issue is central to all versions of idealist and indeed contra-idealist interpretations of the essay such as Turner's.

It was argued in chapter three that disagreement in the commentaries on KuT hinged upon the issue over whether or not Weber demonstrated the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena in China. Weber's configurational characterisation of Chinese religions and their economic ethics, especially as set out in the concluding chapter of KuT, is very much easier to follow and has correspondingly attracted no such exegetical controversy. The core of the idealist interpretations is Weber's purported assertion and demonstration of the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena for modern capitalist development in comparing China and the West in the early modern period. The foregoing analysis of KuT has attempted to show that no such assertion was ever made, let alone demonstrated, by Weber himself. His own conclusions on this particular issue can be restated and summarised in relation to the major non-religious phenomena discussed in the Sociological Foundations to KuT: money economy and monetary systems; the Chinese cities; the Chinese patrimonial state; the agrarian social structure; forms of petty capitalist economic enterprise; the kinship system; and the legal system.

Of these particular complexes of non-religious phenomena,

the Chinese monetary system is in fact the only one which Weber sees as being in some sense no more or less favourable to modern capitalism in China than it was in the West, at least in the early modern period. Weber's general conclusion is that despite the under-developed state of monetary systems in China throughout much of its history, which in turn can be related to a more general traditionalism especially in the economic policies and administrative limitations of traditional central governments, the monetary systems had reached a stage of development by the later Imperial period which meant that they were no less likely to inhibit the development of a capitalistic money economy than they had been in the early modern West.

Weber notes some superficial similarities between Chinese cities and those of the pre-industrial West, especially the mediaeval European cities. In both areas, cities were the centres of a considerable concentration of trade and industry, and guild-like associations in both areas were enormously influential as wielders of the effective control over urban economic life exercised by the urban residents themselves. However, Weber's principal conclusion is that these similarities were completely outweighed by a fundamental contrast between Chinese and Western cities. The latter were not only quite distinct from Chinese cities, but were unique in world-historical terms. Only in the West were urban residents politically and legally independent citizens of their cities, and only in the mediaeval West did the members of occupational guilds exercise their economic dominance as legally constituted leaders of political citizens. In China, there was never this coincidence of de

facto and de jure power, and this was the fundamental contrast for the development of modern capitalism.

In discussing Chinese patrimonialism, Weber draws a particularly clear and fundamental contrast between state formation in China and the West. Rational law and administration is a vital, perhaps the vital, institutional prerequisite of modern capitalism but the rational forms of state organisation which provided and guaranteed this prerequisite developed only in the West. This clear unfavourability of the Chinese patrimonial state for the development of modern capitalism is central to Weber's discussion of non-religious phenomena in *KuT*.

Moreover, Weber insists that because of the tax-quota system and other phenomena of the later imperial period, the material interests of the prebendal officials and the sub-elite of potential officials, generated by the administrative system itself, were as effectively resistant to administrative rationalisation as they had ever been. The administrative system, and the material interests it generated, meant that the potentially favourable conditions of increased monetary stability and population growth actually re-inforced traditional, non-rational forms of wealth acquisition in later imperial China.

Weber sees no real similarities at all between the agrarian social structure of late imperial China and early modern Europe. In China, there was no large-scale commercialisation of agriculture and no stratum of wealthy landowners farming capitalistically or renting their land to other capitalistic farmers. The "rural notables" of China rented out their land

in dispersed small-holdings worked mainly by impoverished subsistence farmers, and sought to invest their own revenues in the maintenance of literati life-styles and the preparation of family members for official careers. The maximisation of rents from small-holdings, rather than the large-scale commercial exploitation of agricultural produce from consolidated estates was the principal use made of their land by this stratum of rural gentry. Again, at the level of direct comparisons between non-religious phenomena, agrarian social relations were very much more favourable to the development of modern rational capitalism in the West than they were in China.

Similarly, virtually everything which Weber has to say about the Chinese kinship system emphasises its inhibiting effects upon modern capitalist development. China differed from the West in the persistence, cohesion, and socio-economic influence of extended lineage networks and associations. The resistance of kinship associations to centralised administration was a major obstacle to rationalisation of law and the state. The social and economic support provided to individuals by their families protected impoverished individuals from capitalistic exploitation, subjugation, and proletarianisation. In some respects Chinese sub-lineages resembled the acquisitive familial communities of mediaeval Europe, especially those of the Italian cities, but the acquisitive activity of the latter was already more oriented to free-market rather than political capitalism.

Weber suggests therefore that industrial, trading, and other market-oriented enterprises which transcended the individual household in China, actually displayed capitalistic forms of

organisation to an even lesser extent than those which had existed in the mediaeval cities, let alone the nation-states of early modern Europe. There was no significant development of bourgeois and proletarian social classes within them. For Weber, this reflected the institutional complex of non-religious phenomena outlined above, and especially the absence of rational law and administration in China.

A sufficiently close reading and contextualisation of the Sociological Foundations to KuT thus renders unsustainable any idealist or "culturalist" interpretation premised upon the assumption that Weber demonstrated the "net neutrality" for capitalistic development of non-religious phenomena in late imperial China and early modern Europe. This central assumption of both the weaker and stronger versions of the idealist readings of KuT is simply not tenable and has been sustained hitherto only because of the opacity of this section of the essay. There are certainly occasional passages in the Sociological Foundations at which Weber identifies certain aspects of each non-religious institutional sphere which might be regarded as at least as favourable to capitalist development as analogous conditions in the West. Nonetheless, as the more detailed reading and analysis has attempted to show, Weber's discussion of each of these institutional spheres is specifically intended to demonstrate why these were only apparent or superficial similarities. However, as was noted in chapter three above, there are non-idealist and contra-idealist interpretations of KuT in the exegetical literature. This raises the question of the appropriateness of the various alternatives to idealism

discussed above. In particular, if Weber was not subscribing to an "idealist" solution to the problem of Chinese capitalism, in either its stronger or weaker versions, does this mean that in effect he offers some sort of "materialist" solution? Again, it is quite possible to approach this issue initially without becoming involved in the complexities of what exactly is meant by material and ideal factors. The arguments on this point advanced in chapter two do not necessarily have to be accepted. Just as with the discussion of idealist interpretations, it is possible, and quite authentically Weberian, to ask whether KuT demonstrated the decisiveness of non-religious phenomena for the problem of Chinese capitalism.

The question needs to be put in this sort of way partly because of Turner's vigorous case for the claim that differences in state formation are the crucial factors in Weber's comparisons between China and the West and indeed in his comparative analyses of Oriental and Occidental civilisations more generally. Initially, the foregoing analysis of the Sociological Foundations to KuT suggests that Turner's reading is certainly more accurate than the idealist interpretations. Not only does Weber see the Chinese patrimonial state as emphatically unfavourable, and certainly not "neutral", in its implications for capitalistic development, but he also sees it as probably the single most important non-religious factor, and the key institution of the non-religious complex.

Moreover, Turner's account of how precisely Weber sees Chinese prebendalism as inhibiting capitalistic development is particularly clear and accurate. For Turner, the "paradox

of patrimonialism" is that whilst both patrimonialism and feudalism can be seen as types of non-rational state, the former is nonetheless sufficiently rationalised for it to be able to preserve its political unity and traditional systems of law and administration to an extent which inhibits further political or economic rationalisation. As Turner perceives, Weber's analysis of the case of China emphasises its particularly clear manifestation of this paradox, mainly because of the highly bureaucratised form of patrimonial administration in China.

Turner, however, appears to go further than this in seeing these political contrasts as decisive for the problem of capitalism. This is not to say that he attempts some sort of total inversion of the idealist interpretations even though, as suggested in chapter three, there are times when he seems to entertain this possibility. He does not suggest that Weber demonstrated the decisiveness of these political contrasts by, as it were, showing the religious factors to have been neutral in their implications for capitalism. Rather, he suggests that other commentators have exaggerated the influence Weber attributed to the direct impact of religious beliefs upon economic orientations.

Any incipient "materialism" in Turner's interpretation is actually qualified in a way which provides a curious and instructive parallel to Parsons's qualifications about idealist interpretations. Turner suggests that in so far as religious beliefs might have played a causally significant role in the non-development of capitalism in China, they did so through their longer-term influence upon the historical

development of Chinese society. Just like Parsons, however, Turner makes this point about longer term developmental influences at an essentially programmatic level and does not pursue it with a discussion of how Weber developed this analysis at such considerable length in KuT itself. This means that whilst Turner offers a useful corrective to idealist interpretations of KuT he does not consider Weber's analysis of the historical interaction between religious and non-religious phenomena in China in the depth and detail necessary to support his claim that Weber demonstrated the decisiveness of political organisation rather than religious beliefs for the problem of Chinese capitalism. Moreover, as suggested in chapter 13 above, Weber's analysis of the historical inter-relationships between religious and non-religious phenomena in the production and reproduction of the cultural formation places severe limitations on any attempt to single out one particular institutional sphere as individually decisive for the process of socio-economic development.

Thus, if one rejects both the stronger and weaker versions of idealist interpretation of KuT, and remains sceptical about a claim that Weber actually saw the Chinese state as decisively influential for the problem of Chinese capitalism, one might be pushed towards an interpretation of the essay which comes somewhere between these two extremes. That is to say, one might be inclined to favour the sorts of "interactionist" interpretation typified by Parkin or Bendix.

As was shown in chapter three, Parkin tends to adopt an idealist reading of KuT itself, using an institutional/normative form of material/ideal dichotomy. In

this respect, his reading of the essay itself is subject to the same arguments against idealist interpretations as those considered earlier in this chapter. However, Parkin also insists that KuT must be considered in relation to Weber's other work and that Weber appears to contradict the position he adopted in KuT by insisting elsewhere, especially in GEH, on the fundamental institutional differences between Eastern and Western civilisations. This leads Parkin to feel that Weber actually ended up with a rather inconclusive form of normative/institutional interactionism amounting to the "mouse of a conclusion" that the non-development of modern capitalism in China can be attributed to a combination of both sets of factors.

The analysis of KuT presented above, however, leads one to suggest that Parkin's account of Weber on China is ultimately no more satisfactory than either the idealist or "materialist" readings just considered. Firstly, there is actually no substantial contradiction between KuT and Weber's general perspective on Eastern and Western civilisations, especially the summary form of this perspective presented in GEH. The Sociological Foundations to KuT itself shows that in the case of China:

"Virtually every institution that falls under Weber's scrutiny is shown to have an entirely different form and function in the east compared with the west." (Parkin, 1982, p.67)

Secondly, KuT does not stop at the "mouse of a conclusion" that both religious and non-religious phenomena were unfavourable to capitalistic development in China. Rather, Weber tries to understand why both sets of phenomena were as they were, by the time of the later empires. Parkin's

interpretation of Weber may possess the advantage of avoiding either "idealist" or materialist" readings, but it still only scratches at the surface, in a rather mousey sort of way itself, at Weber's developmental vision of Chinese history. It would not be entirely fair to come to the same conclusions about Bendix. Although he too sees KuT as concluding that both religious and non-religious phenomena were unfavourable for modern capitalism, Bendix can never be accused of only scratching at the surface of the the essay's "Sociological Foundations". Unlike most other commentators, Bendix eschews general material/ideal dichotomies in reading KuT, preferring Weber's own more substantively specific vocabularies of religious and non-religious phenomena. Secondly, unlike Parkin and other commentators, Bendix's conscientious labours on the "Sociological Foundations" leave him under no misapprehensions about Weber's having ascertained their net-neutrality for modern capitalism in the course of KuT itself. Thirdly, Bendix assembles more of the pieces to the jig-saw puzzle presented by the essay than any other commentator, and he shows a more acute appreciation of the longer-term institutional inter-relationships producing the conjunctural unfavourability for modern capitalism of both religious and non-religious phenomena in late traditional China. However, even Bendix can be seen as suggesting that the story is ended with some sort of configurational inventory of the capitalistic propensities of religious and non-religious phenomena in China as compared with the West. Up to a point, of course, there is some justification for this. Some of the questions posed in the PESC, which led Weber to formulate the

"Economic Ethics" project, do come to some sort of an end in KuT, at least in so far as the case of China is concerned. Weber's eventually completed analysis of China made it impossible for him to demonstrate the autonomous influence of the Protestant Ethic for the emergence of modern capitalism in early modern Europe by showing non-religious phenomena to be comparatively neutral to capitalistic development in both China and the West. Hence Weber's own conclusion to KuT, which is more of a plea for religious beliefs to be accorded a degree of autonomously causal influence, on the basis of a prima-facie case, rather than the assertion of a proven case. The problem is that the conclusions offered in this chapter so far, largely through a summary critique of existing interpretations of KuT do not constitute the end of Weber's own story. On the one hand, it might seem as though a solution to the problem of capitalism can be offered by suggesting that modern capitalism emerged in the West because both religious and non-religious phenomena were favourable, and failed to emerge in China because neither were favourable. On the other hand, whilst such a conclusion was undoubtedly reached by Weber in KuT, it creates a further problem by weakening the conjunctural cross-cultural evidence on the autonomous influence of religious beliefs upon economic development.

This indicates that Weber's case is either simply not proven, or is more complex than is assumed by any attempt to end the story with a cross-cultural comparison of religious and non-religious phenomena in general or at particular historical periods. It might still be the case that without the influence of the Protestant ethic, and ultimately the

non-magical universalism of the Christian tradition, modern capitalism might not have developed in the West, even though this case cannot be supported by demonstrating the net neutrality of non-religious phenomena in China and early modern Europe. Similarly, it might still be the case that religious beliefs exerted an autonomously inhibiting influence upon the development of modern capitalism in China, even if this cannot be supported by the same sort of cross-cultural comparisons.

It is argued here that Weber still maintained both of these propositions and that a final re-interpretation of KuT should reflect this. In turn, this entails what Marshall (1982) calls a "genealogical" rather than a teleological approach to the problems of interpreting Weber. Rather than assuming that Weber formulated a clear, unequivocal thesis about the influence of religious beliefs early in his work, and that all his subsequent studies were teleologically directed towards its validation, it makes more sense to take account of Weber's developing formulations and understanding of his own general assumptions about the relative autonomy of religion.

In relation to this genealogical approach, the precise dating of the Weberian texts, and the significance of their sequencing for the thematic unity of Weber's work, has been a central issue in recent Weberian scholarship, especially in Germany. Scholars such as Bendix, Roth, and Schluchter have emphasised the over-arching centrality of E+S, but this has been criticised by Tenbruck, for example, and to some extent by Kalberg (Kalberg, 1979, 1980; Tenbruck, 1980).

Tenbruck, in particular, argues that the encyclopaedic, almost casuistical typologising of E+S, tends to deflect Weber from his ultimate purpose of explaining historically specific courses of cultural rationalisation. His arguments resemble those of Collins (1986a, and chapter six above), but Tenbruck emphasises the centrality and importance of the EE essays rather than GEH. He points out that whilst most of E+S was written before the 1914-18 war, at about the same time as the first essays of the EE series (SPWR, KuT, RR), only the latter were fully revised by Weber shortly before his death. Tenbruck claims that the EE essays are ultimately closer to the core of the Weberian enterprise and represent the most advanced, and latest available form of Weber's thinking.

On these grounds, Tenbruck criticises Bendix in particular (Tenbruck, 1980, pp.322-6) for an attempted reconstruction of Weber's rationalisation thesis which relies almost entirely on the earlier, unrevised part of E+S. Tenbruck claims that Bendix treats the EE essays purely as contrast cases to the PESC and fails to see that in their own unity, the EE essays establish the internal dynamic of religious rationalisation as the central dynamic of the rationalisation process in general.

My own view is that Tenbruck overstates his case somewhat, especially in his de-emphasis upon Weber's exploration of the rationalisation process within the E+S chapters on Law, Political Communities, Feudalism, Patrimonialism, Bureaucracy, and The City (E+S, 1968, chs.VIII-XVI) drawn upon in chapter thirteen above. Nonetheless, as Tenbruck claims, and as was argued in chapter three above, Bendix does not disentangle sufficiently the main problematics of the EE

essays, or re-integrate them closely enough with Weber's more general analysis of cultural rationalisation in the non-religious sphere.

These sorts of issues are crucial to a re-interpretation of KuT after the retrieval of its substantive content attempted in parts two and three above. They are particularly germane, given the textual anomalies of KuT itself. The first version of KuT, which originally consisted only of the four chapters on Chinese religion which now constitute the final four chapters of RoC, stand almost exactly halfway, chronologically and analytically, between PESC and the Sociological Foundations (SF) to KuT. There is a discursive re-emphasis, if not exactly a discursive hiatus, between PESC and the first version of KuT on the one hand, and the SF, GEH, and the eventually revised first part of E+S on the other. All of these were written (or in the case of GEH delivered as lectures) towards the very end of Weber's life. The discursive re-emphasis lies in the fact that, in PESC and the first versions of SPWR, KuT, and RR, Weber constructed a prima facie case for the autonomous influence of religious beliefs upon the problem of capitalism primarily by identifying configurational contrasts in religious doctrines and their practical and economic ethics. These contrasts led him to suggest that only the economic ethics of Christianity, and pre-eminently ascetic Protestantism, were favourable to the development of modern rational capitalism. However, in the slightly later (1916-17) and eventually unrevised essays on the Indian religions and Ancient Judaism, Weber gradually moves towards a further exploration of this

prima facie case by considering in more detail non-religious influences upon both religious and economic development, drawing upon his work for the (also eventually unrevised) second part of E+S on political, legal, and other non-religious phenomena. In this context, the SF to KuT carries the process yet further. Together with GEH and the revised part one of E+S, it represents the last version that we have of Weber's attempts to consider the implications of these non-religious phenomena and influences for his prima facie case by substituting an increasingly long-term and developmental analysis of the implications of both religious and economic development for his earlier configurational and conjunctural modes of analysis (see chapter two above). It is suggested here that Weber's own intellectual trajectory eventually brought him to a point at which the relatively autonomous influence of religious beliefs for specifically economic development became increasingly difficult to demonstrate and perhaps even to sustain.

Thus, in KuT Weber sought to extend his prima facie case by examining both religious and non-religious phenomena in China and the West. However, one suspects that no-one would have been more surprised than Weber himself to have "discovered" a cultural formation at a particular historical conjuncture in which religious beliefs and more general world-views favoured capitalistic development whilst non-religious phenomena did not. Weber's work is programmatically oriented to the developmental analysis of elective affinities between the two sets of phenomena and their combined influence upon the different directions taken by the rationalisation of both meaning systems and material practice.

Moreover, when the Sociological Foundations to KuT are comprehensively contextualised and clarified, the clearest conclusion to be drawn from KuT is that Weber did indeed find both religious and non-religious phenomena in China to be unfavourable to the development of modern rational capitalism as compared with analogous phenomena in the West. Perhaps the only really puzzling thing about this conclusion is why so many commentators, encompassing some of the more recent sociological and sinological exegesis discussed in chapter three above, should have thought otherwise.

In part this must be attributed to the sociological and sinological complexity of the crucial "Sociological Foundations" to KuT, combined with the essay's lack of an analytical structure and the general difficulties of Weber's style. This is why the present project has taken as one of its principal aims the attempt "simply" to clarify this part of the essay in particular. An attempt has been to to reconstruct and re-present Weber's argument and analysis as comprehensively as space allows in order to assist the future sociological and sinological re-appraisal of Weber's analysis of China.

However, a further reason for the persistent exegetical confusion lies in the fact that Weber undoubtedly wished to sustain his theses about the relatively autonomous influence of religion despite the problems posed for their validation by many aspects of his discussion of non-religious phenomena in both China and the West. To some extent the persistence of "idealist" or "culturalist" interpretations reflects Weber's own tenacity on this point and the lack of explicitness in

his own conclusions from his survey of Chinese non-religious phenomena. The conclusion advanced in the present study is that much of the interpretive controversy stems from the frequent elision of Weber's conjunctural analysis of religious and non-religious phenomena in later imperial China with his analysis of their combined influence upon the long-term development of religious doctrines and ethics. In fact, the analyses have a degree of relative autonomy themselves addressed to rather different, conjunctural and developmental, versions of the Weber thesis. Moreover, what Weber's analysis of Chinese non-religious phenomena takes away from his essentially conjunctural Protestant ethic thesis it actually restores to his long-term developmental thesis on the autonomous socio-economic influence of religious traditions in both China and the West.

Ultimately, Weber's claim is that the elective affinities, and hence shared propensities towards capitalistic development of both religious and non-religious phenomena at particular historical conjunctures in Chinese and Western history, can only be explained by the influence exerted upon the development of conjuncturally specific social institutions by distinctive combinations of fundamental political and religious civilizational traits. In neglecting Weber's analysis of the relatively autonomous development of religious traditions, and their relatively autonomous longer-term influence, at the expense of Weber's configurational and heuristic characterisations of economic ethics, exegesis tends to neglect the most plausible case which Weber constructs. Whether they advance idealist, non-idealist, or contra-idealist interpretations of KuT, the exegetical

battles are thus frequently fought on the wrong terrain. Unfortunately, the one civilizational case which might offer particularly valuable analytical purchase on this problem, that of Islamic society is, with the possible exception of Christianity itself, the least clearly examined by Weber. The one civilizational complex to combine religious transcendentalism with persistent patrimonialism is, as Turner notes (1974) dealt with rather cursorily by Weber. Moreover, Turner's claim that patrimonial state formation is, in effect, the decisive feature to emerge from Weber's civilizational contrasts seems to have at least prima facie validity in so far as the world-view of Islamic doctrines seems to share many of the anti-magical and universalist characteristics which Weber sees as so important in the transcendentalism of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. However, Weber's own discussion of Islam (see particularly E+S, pp. 623-7) insists on seeing it as developing hedonistic, non-ascetic orientations in accordance with the influence of the patrician warriors who were its historical bearers. This reflects a certain tendency on Weber's own part to retreat to the terrain of configurational contrasts between economic ethics when insufficient time was available for him to undertake the necessary long-term developmental analysis of the influence of particular combinations of fundamental civilizational traits upon the emergence of more conjuncturally specific institutional complexes. In turn, this helps to justify some of the interpretive infelicities in the exegetical literature, but it does not necessarily further Weber's own developmental thesis as effectively as

might be possible. It may still be the case, as Turner seems to argue, that when the Weber thesis is driven around the Islamic bloc, as it were, the wheels drop off! However, the fact that Islamic civilization represents an historically unique long-term combination of religious transcendentalism with centralised imperial, patrimonial domination, can just as easily constitute a prima facie case for the Weber thesis that both religious and political traditions had to be favourable in the long-term for the subsequent emergence of modern capitalism. Until the long-term developmental analysis originally intended by Weber has been undertaken in his own terms, the case must remain open.

However, KuT did extend Weber's original prima facie case away from an over-reliance upon configurational contrasts between economic ethics in precisely this sort of way. A final re-interpretation of the essay must attempt to appreciate the implications for Weber's case of not just his conjunctural analysis of Chinese non-religious phenomena but also their influence upon the longer-term development of both specifically economic and specifically religious phenomena. It was noted above that the final version of KuT extends Weber's analysis of the significance of non-religious phenomena for both economic and religious development further than any other of his essays on the world-religions, and further than the "Religion" chapter of E+S. However, a persistent problem posed by this extended study of the Chinese case is that Weber still concludes with a claim that religious beliefs had an autonomous influence upon the course of economic development in China whilst his analysis of non-religious phenomena themselves weakens his conjunctural

demonstration of the adequate causality of this proposition. The strongest possible evidence in support of his conjunctural thesis, in terms of Weber's criteria of objective possibility and adequate causality, would be assembled by demonstrating that non-religious phenomena in China and the West were indeed neutral on balance in their implications for the development of modern rational capitalism, whilst the economic ethics of their respective religious traditions were markedly favourable and unfavourable. Chapter twelve above suggests that, in the first version of KuT, Weber advanced a prima facie case in support of this claim through a configurational contrast between the doctrines and ethics of Chinese religions as compared with ascetic Protestantism in particular, and by adducing some evidence to suggest that economic traditionalism did indeed persist in China whilst modern rational capitalism itself made its most rapid and significant advances only after the Protestant reformation. However, when Weber produced the final, revised version of KuT he showed that non-religious phenomena were, on balance, clearly less favourable conjuncturally to the development of modern capitalism than analogous phenomena in the West. This poses an interpretive problem because Weber clearly felt he had done rather more than explain the non-development of capitalism in China by pointing out the unfavourability for its development of both religious and non-religious phenomena. The way out of this problem must be sought through the more sophisticated conception of the relative autonomy of religious development elaborated in SPWR. He claims in

effect that the consequential autonomy of religious beliefs in relation to economic development is rooted in their developmental autonomy from their external determinants. The problem then becomes: if there can be no conjunctural, cross-cultural demonstration of the autonomous influence of Chinese religions upon the persistence of economic traditionalism in late imperial China, and the autonomous influence of ascetic Protestantism upon the emergence of economic rationalism in the early modern West, has Weber proved his case that the overall institutional complex of these two cultural formations would have been different if the long-term developmental influence of their religious traditions had been different?

The issue has to be addressed in this way given the conclusions to which Weber's increasing emphasis upon the developmental significance of non-religious phenomena led him in the work he completed towards the end of his life. As has been pointed out above, especially in chapter thirteen, Weber never really systematised his work on the economic significance of non-religious phenomena for the problem of capitalism until the GEH and the final revision of the first part of E+S. However, his discussion of this problem emphasises over and again the uniquely favourable propensities for capitalistic development of non-religious phenomena, especially the crucial factors of political rationalisation and state formation, not only in the long term, but at virtually all successive stages in the development of Western culture. Moreover, just as Weber's conjunctural comparisons between China and the West do not provide the strongest possible cross-cultural evidential

support for the PE thesis, neither do they provide the strongest possible intra-cultural evidential support for his original thesis about the latter's relatively autonomous influence upon the emergence of rational economic orientations.

In PESC, Weber insists that both religious and non-religious phenomena had to be favourable to the emergence of economic rationalism and that an analysis of the conjunctural economic significance of non-religious phenomena in the early modern West, and their significance for the development of Protestantism itself, constitute the principal unfinished business from this limited exploration of the meaningful affinities between ascetic Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism (PESC, esp. ffs.118-9. pp.283-4 and pp.182-3). However, when this analysis was eventually undertaken it is difficult to avoid concluding from Weber's remarks that not only were the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism rapidly being created in early modern Europe, but also, as Marshall points out, that one might well expect economic rationalism to have succeeded economic traditionalism on the basis of these non-religious transformations alone (Marshall, 1982, pp.115-8).

Similarly, in looking at Weber's analysis in KuT of the intra-cultural economic implications of non-religious phenomena in late imperial China, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these intra-cultural observations, no less than the cross-cultural, leave Weber more with a plea, rather than a proven case, for the economic ethics of religious doctrines to be accorded a degree of conjuncturally

autonomous influence upon economic orientations. The problem is not that, as Elvin claims, Weber constructed a purely "culturalist" explanation and so failed to see the economic significance of non-religious phenomena in late traditional China. Rather, Weber undertook precisely the sort of analysis of the conjunctural economic significance of non-religious phenomena advocated by Elvin and he came to very similar conclusions about their unfavourability to modern capitalism as those advanced by Elvin himself (1984, pp.379-82).

In terms of these intra-cultural conjunctural comparisons, one is tempted to suggest that certain aspects of Weber's original and persisting commitment to the perspectives of German historical economics tended to predominate a little too strongly over others. On the one hand, his opposition to positivistic economics leads him to the assumption that economic orientations can never be explained purely and simply as the inevitable products of psychologically universal processes of rational calculation. Even in such early studies as the one he undertook of the East-Elbian question (cf. Bendix, 1966 pp.14-23), Weber had been committed to the view that ideal interests, including such non-religious ideal interests as the commitment to personal freedom at the expense of material security evinced by the East-Elbian peasantry, could influence economic orientations and actions in a direction which ran counter to the economically rational calculation of material interests. However, such assumptions may have led Weber himself to over-emphasise the influence of the economic ethics of religions, and indeed the influence of ideal interests derived from other non-economic institutional spheres, at the expense of

the historically specific institutional constraints upon economic behaviour which historical economists would also insist upon as influencing "concrete" economic orientations in specific historical formations.

However, as argued in the conclusions to chapter thirteen, some support for Weber's conjunctural thesis might be marshalled, in so far as his analysis of the unfavourability to market-oriented rational capitalism of the non-religious institutions of the later imperial period in China also emphasises their conjunctural inter-relationships with religious institutions. Whilst Weber argues that the Chinese patrimonial state and the Chinese kinship system can be analysed separately in terms of their inhibiting effects upon the development of the institutional prerequisites of modern capitalism he also attempts to emphasise the ways in which institutional inter-relationships were mutually re-inforcing in their consequences for the reproduction of the institutional complex as a whole, and its implications for specifically economic phenomena.

Similarly, Weber's analysis of both of these non-religious institutional spheres emphasises their complex inter-relationships and inter-dependencies with religious institutions. Both are articulated so closely with the doctrinal Confucian orthodoxy and its quite deliberately intended consequences for the maintenance and legitimation of the state and the kinship system through the state cult, Confucian religious policies, and the cult of ancestors, that it becomes justifiable to argue that the "religious factor" played an effectively and autonomously influential role in

the reproduction of the cultural formation as a whole.

In interpreting Weber thus, one does not have to claim that Confucian doctrines were synonymous with or "concretely" equivalent to, some sort of cohesive value system integrating and controlling the institutional complex. As was argued in chapter two above, one persistently inappropriate tendency in Weberian interpretation has been the drawing of too simplistic an identity between an "ideal factor" of religious beliefs, and whatever general world-view might "concretely" exist as a cultural "ethos" transcending the meaning systems of particular institutional spheres.

As can be seen in Weber's analysis of the Chinese variant of caesaro-papist patrimonialism, political institutions have a meaningful, "ideal" content which can contribute to the production and reproduction of a distinctive civilizational ethos in a way which is relatively autonomous of the contributions made to such an ethos by religious institutions. Moreover, Weber's analysis is perfectly consistent with a view that cultural rationalisation takes place not just within the specifically religious processes of theodical rationalisation, but also in the rationalisation of both meaning systems and material practice in non-religious spheres and in the sorts of sedimentation and accumulation of material practice and technique which contributed so profoundly to the mediaeval and early modern processes of political, legal, administrative, and economic organization in the West.

There is no need therefore to assign analytical primacy to either non-religious or religious phenomena in the contribution made by meaning systems to the reproduction of

cultural formations. On the conjunctural level again, Weber's analysis of China implies that although the economic influence of the Chinese state and kinship system may well have been at least as important for the problem of Chinese capitalism as the specifically economic ethics of Confucianism there is a very real sense in which one would have to speak of a specifically Confucian state and even a specifically Confucian kinship system. This conception of the relatively autonomous economic significance of Confucianism, however, is extremely difficult to explore empirically. One might be able to "think away" the autonomous contribution of Confucianism to the structure and reproduction of the Chinese state but there is no real possibility of observing what might happen or has happened to such a "Confucianless" Chinese state.

One might of course speculate very briefly about what sorts of further research might conceivably illuminate such a conception, given Weber's own comment that:

"The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically been fully developed in the modern culture area." (RoC, p.248)

It is fascinating to re-consider this remark in the light of subsequent economic development in Japan itself and in the Confucian-influenced modern capitalist societies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore (cf. Hamilton, for example, 1984, 1985, 1987 for similar though equally speculative considerations). On the one hand, it might seem from these cases as though the influence of political factors has subsequently been particularly influential. Although it might be argued that neo-Confucian culture in combination

with a non-Confucian state has certain kinds of affinities for modern rational capitalism, the single most important factor explaining the rapid capitalist economic development of these societies would appear to have been the formation of vigorously laissez-faire types of capitalist nation-state of the type to which Weber attached so much importance in the emergence of capitalism in the West. This might suggest that political factors are indeed the "decisive" factors for economic development with the further consideration that the pre-eminence of Japan might be related to its own extremely rapid transition from feudalism to capitalism with little recourse to patrimonialism. However, Weber might well argue again that the capitalist states of South East Asia were hardly created in an international vacuum and that it was also necessary to import modern rational meaning systems for which certain aspects of traditional Chinese meaning systems had a particular elective affinity.

The scope for this sort of speculation, and indeed, further research is endlessly fascinating but necessarily inconclusive in the present attempt to establish more precisely the theses advanced by Weber in KuT and the extent to which the essay itself supported these theses. It has already been suggested that Weber's original Protestant ethic thesis cannot clearly, readily, or strongly be supported by either intra-cultural or cross-cultural conjunctural comparisons between China and the West even though some support might be gained from KuT for a claim that religious doctrines exerted an autonomous effect upon economic phenomena through their relatively autonomous though not

exclusively determining influence upon the reproduction of the non-religious institutional complex of later imperial China.

However, in his later work, Weber is ultimately more concerned to explain why both religious and non-religious phenomena came to be either favourable or unfavourable to modern capitalist development in later historical periods. In these terms, his thesis takes the form of a broader claim that religious beliefs were autonomously influential for the long-term historical development of civilizational complexes. Thus, the eventually "endogenous" emergence of modern capitalism only in the West is to be explained in terms of its unique combination of political citizenship and religious transcendentalism, and their combined, interactive influence upon the long term historical development of the West. Similarly, the unfavourability of both religious and non-religious phenomena to the development of modern capitalism in later imperial China is to be explained by the combination of Chinese cosmocentrism and the long-term persistence of centralised imperial domination. His thesis has to take the form, therefore, of suggesting that if long-term religious traditions had been other than they were in China and the West, then so might have been their subsequent economic development (cf. Turner, 1974, and Marshall, 1982, for example, on the differences between these earlier and later forms of the "Weber thesis").

This later form of the Weber thesis implies that Weber had first to demonstrate the relatively autonomous historical development of religious doctrines themselves and their practical and economic ethics. Chapters ten and eleven above,

and the summary of this causal problematic of KuT in the first section of the present chapter, attempted to suggest that although it requires considerable reconstruction and systematisation, Weber eventually carries through this programmatic orientation in some considerable detail in KuT, and that his analysis of the combined and relative influence of the internal and external determinants of Chinese religion is pursued much more systematically than his analysis of Christianity in the West. Moreover, one would suggest that Weber is able ultimately to present a rather more convincing case for the relatively autonomous historical development of Chinese religions than he is for their relatively autonomous, conjunctural economic consequences.

At historically significant stages in the introduction and institutionalisation of Chinese religions, Weber is able to identify a pre-existing doctrinal context and construct a plausible case for his claim that however influential non-religious phenomena might have been at successive stages of religious development, the resultant religious doctrines might well have been other than what they became if this pre-existing doctrinal context had itself been different. Similarly, Weber constructs a plausible case for his claim that, at each successive historical conjuncture, the religious innovations exerted a relatively autonomous influence upon the subsequent historical development of non-religious phenomena. Three historical stages are particularly important to Weber's analysis.

Firstly, the Chou religious innovations were especially significant for the development of a distinctively Chinese

world-view and a form of caesaro-papist political domination which actually pre-dated the historical development of Confucianism and Taoism themselves. However, these Chou religious innovations might well have been different in the absence of a pre-existing doctrinal context with strongly cosmocentric conceptions. Secondly, the historical persistence of a cosmocentric form of caesaro-papism provided cultural unity during the period of Chou feudalism and stimulated both the emergence of a proto-literati stratum and their distinctive religious conceptions and ideal interests. Again, although Weber tries to identify the external determinants provided by the material interests of both proto-patrimonial rulers and the Chou intellectual stratum itself, he suggests that the historical development of these non-religious phenomena might well have been different within a different pre-existing doctrinal context. Thirdly, although the transition from feudalism to patrimonialism cannot be attributed directly to the influence of Confucianism itself, the pre-existing meaning systems and material practice of Chou Confucians exerted a profound and autonomous influence upon the subsequent development of both Confucianism itself and Chinese patrimonialism, and hence upon the historical development of Chinese religion and society more generally. There were many patrimonial empires in world history but only one was a Confucian state, and this was the one which displayed an historically unique durability. In these terms, KuT presents a reasonably strong case for Weber's claim that the internal determinants of Chinese religious development were relatively autonomous and that they exerted an influence upon the long term rationalisation

of the Chinese cultural formation such that, if Confucianism especially had not been present, then the cultural formation may well have developed differently.

It was argued in the first part of this thesis that a general tendency for commentators to equate Weber's own distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena with a more general and inappropriate dichotomy between "material" and "ideal" factors leads to an over-emphasis upon the claim that Weber's case for the autonomous influence of religion upon economic development has to be sustained primarily through his configurational analysis of their economic ethics. It has been suggested that such interpretive tendencies deflect exegetical attention away from Weber's own central form of material/ideal dichotomy in the EE essays: that between ideal and material interests as internal and external determinants of the historical development of religious doctrines. Thus, even when such commentators as Parsons, Turner, or Schluchter acknowledge Weber's own programmatic concern with this causal and developmental problematic, its significance for Weber's claims about the indirect economic influence of religious beliefs through their influence upon the long-term development of non-religious phenomena, and especially upon the processes of state formation and reproduction, is neglected at the expense of his claims about the putatively direct influence of economic ethics upon "concrete" economic orientations.

Having said that, it must be acknowledged that there is a certain intriguing tension between Weber's dialectical analysis of relatively autonomous religious development at

successive historical conjunctures and his very long-term analysis of the influence of its external determinants. In considering Weber's later analyses of the influence of religious institutions upon the long-term development of the West, one can appreciate his claim that mediaeval Catholicism, as the principal, immediate, and most elaborately organised legatee of the cultural inheritance of the Roman empire, influenced political, legal, and administrative rationalisation in the mediaeval West to the extent that the eventual transition from feudalism to capitalism might conceivably not have taken place in its absence (cf. Holton; 1985, 1986). Similarly, in many respects there were marked similarities between Chinese Chou feudalism and that of mediaeval Europe, and the fact that the West experienced the growth of legal-rational states which crucially influenced the transition to capitalism, whilst China subsequently experienced the transition to a form of patrimonialism whose durability was historically unique, can surely be attributed to the autonomous influence of their different religious traditions and their implications for political rationalisation and state formation.

Nonetheless, Weber also attaches great significance to the long enduring tradition of political citizenship in the West and two points at least must be noted, the implications of which were never explored by Weber quite as fully as they might have been.

Firstly, political citizenship was a distinctive civilizational trait of the West from a much earlier period than was religious transcendentalism. This point is sometimes obscured by references to the Judaeo-Christian tradition

which neglect the historical particularities and contingencies through which the transcendentalism of this tradition became a part of specifically Western culture at a relatively late stage in the latter's historical development. In particular, the fundamental reason why Christianity splintered away from Judaism and eventually became the official religion of the Roman empire might well be explained in terms of the elective affinities between what Weber himself sees as a uniquely universalistic religion of salvation and a political community whose traditions of universalistic citizenship were already much more elaborated than those of any comparable civilization.

Secondly, in the even longer term, although Weber sustains a plausible analysis of the influence exerted by pre-existing religious doctrines upon each successive stage of Chinese religious development at which religious innovation was also influenced by external determinants, the accumulation of these influences might be said to represent some sort of net balance in favour of external determinants, whether these were the material interests of particular social strata or what has been referred to as the essentially interest-free conditions of physical and political geography. Moreover, if as Weber suggests, all religious development begins from a similar, primaeval form of this-worldly magic, then it is difficult to see how else one could ultimately explain eventual religious diversity except by emphasising the cumulative effect of its external determinants.

This sort of argument seems particularly germane given Weber's own insistence upon the importance of geographical

conditions for the inter-related development of both religious and political institutions in the earliest civilisations. Given that religious conceptions can only be "imaginatively" or "analytically" extracted from cultural formations and are in fact inextricably integrated in actual historical process, his arguments might suggest that the historical combination of religious and political characteristics which constitutes a distinctive civilizational complex were jointly established in the earliest civilizations largely as a result of geographical variations. This is not of course to substitute a geographically determined politico-religious form of immanentism for either "idealist" or "materialist" immanentism but again it would draw attention to the factors in ancient Greece, for example, which facilitated the development of political citizenship and established the roots of Western rationalism precisely because there was no early combination of religious transcendentalism with monarchical absolutism, or religious cosmocentrism with centralised political domination, such as characterised the ancient Middle East and Far East respectively. Moreover, these same conditions of physical and political geography, in combination with material interests, are adduced in Weber's analysis precisely to explain the subsequent development and consolidation of religious transcendentalism in ancient Judaism, and religious cosmocentrism in China. Overall, therefore, one might conclude by making two final points. Firstly in reconstructing KuT in relation to its sinological context and to Weber's general historical and sociological perspectives and problematics, it must be

emphasised that in so far as Weber does advance his case for the relatively autonomous influence of religious beliefs in relation to the problem of capitalism, he does so primarily through the long-term developmental analysis that is neglected in virtually all of the commentaries on KuT. To sustain the later version of the Weber thesis implied by this long-term developmental analysis it would still of course be necessary to extend it to the long-term historical development of Christianity itself and its more precise influence upon the historical development of successive cultural formations. However, if one attempted to summarise the position at which Weber eventually arrived in relating KuT to all of his work on the development of the West, as opposed perhaps to the conclusions and claims he formulated explicitly, such a final summary might look something like the following.

On the one hand, Weber's developmental analysis does construct a strong case for the claim that the historically unique characteristics of Christianity made a relatively autonomous contribution to the historically unique pattern of Western history culminating in the emergence of modern rational capitalism. In these terms, the single most important "religious factor" was the absorption and eventually official adoption of Christianity into the Roman empire, given the subsequent influence of mediaeval Catholicism upon the mediaeval and early modern processes of political, legal, and economic rationalisation which in turn stimulated the Protestant reformation itself. On the other hand, the fact that Christianity was so adopted, and itself

came to develop an historically unique combination of non-magical universalism, can only be explained in terms of the even longer tradition in the West of political citizenship and the geo-political factors which produced and fostered it. The second overall conclusion one is tempted to draw, therefore, if such a formulaic summary can be accepted, is that in much the same way as it might be said about Marx that he was far less of an economic determinist than has often been assumed, so Weber was, at heart, more of a philosophically historical materialist than he might have cared to admit in his cautious remarks about being religiously unmusical. Whilst he maintains his claim for the relative autonomy of religious beliefs in KuT and the other EE essays, this is directed against a form of simplistic economic determinism and other attempts to reduce religious beliefs to epiphenomenal status as the reflections of some other institutional sphere. Weber remains committed to this position, but his whole analysis is perfectly compatible with a claim that religious institutions are no less a product of material human practice, in its very broadest sense, than any other social institution, and that however influential pre-existing religious doctrines may be over the development of both religious and non-religious phenomena in the transition from one historical conjuncture to another, religious doctrines themselves are ultimately, and in the very long term, pre-eminently the products of their external determinants.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. O.B. van der Sprenkel. 1963. "Max Weber on China" History and Theory vol. III, p. 348.
2. D.G Macrae, 1974. Weber, London, Fontana/Collins, p.14.
3. Ibid., p.16
4. Ibid., p.14
5. Ibid., p.9.
6. Ibid., p.91.
7. Ibid., p.15.
8. In this essay, I have referred to Weber's works initially by the standard English translation of their title. Thereafter, I have adopted an abbreviated form. See notes 11 and 21 below for a more complete bibliographical reference.
9. cf Bryan Turner's preface to his Weber and Islam, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.
10. The following comments on the bibliographical framework of KuT, and the way in which it might be interpreted, are based upon the English translation of Marianne Weber's: Max Weber: A Biography, 1975, John Wiley and Sons, especially pp 330-3 and p.551. Originally published as: Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild, Tubingen, J.C.B Mohr, 1926.
11. M. Weber 'Konfuzianismus und Taoismus', Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol.41 September and November, 1915. Here referred to as KuT.
12. M. Weber "Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen: Einleitung". This essay first appeared in the Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. 41, September 1915.

It has been translated as "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" in H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills: From Max Weber, London, Routledge paperback, 1970, pp.267-301.
13. M. Weber "Zwischenbetrachtung: Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen religioser Weltablehnung". This essay first appeared in the Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. 41, November 1915. It has been translated as "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions", in Gerth and Mills, op. cit. pp.323-59.

14. Gerth and Mills do point to this bibliographical framework in footnotes, but it is still very easy to see each essay in this anthology as having more autonomy than Weber originally intended them to have.
15. According to Marianne Weber, when these earlier three essays were being published, Weber was already working on the Indian religions though he had still to embark on the religions of the middle and near East. (See note 10 above).
16. M. Weber The Religion of China, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth, New York, MacMillan, 1951. Reprinted 1964 with a new introduction by C.K. Yang. Here referred to as RoC.
17. M. Weber: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie Vol.I, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1922, pp276-536.

This work is referred to here as Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion: CESR.

18. M. Weber: "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus" in Weber op. cit. 1922, pp.17-206. Here referred to as "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism": PESC.

This essay was originally published in the Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Socialpolitik', Vols. XX and XXI, 1904-5.

19. M. Weber: "Die protestantischen Sekten und der Kapitalismus" in Weber op. cit. 1922, pp. 207-236.

This is a much revised and enlarged draft of an article published earlier, firstly in the Frankfurter Zeitung, Easter, 1906, and then under the title "Kirchen und Sekten" in the Christliche Welt 1906, pp.558 ff and 577 ff..

Here the essay is referred to as PSCC - "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism". This is the title of the translation to be found in Gerth and Mills, op. cit., pp.302-322.

20. M. Weber: "Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen: Einleitung", in Weber, op. cit., 1922, pp.237-75.

Here referred to as SPWR - The Social Psychology of the World Religions. See note 12 above.

21. M. Weber: "Konfucianism und Taoism" in Weber op. cit. 1922, pp.276-536. Here referred to as KuT -
- See note 11 above.

22. M. Weber "Zwischenbetrachtung: Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen Religiöser Weltabkehrung" in Weber op. cit. 1922, pp. 536-573. Here referred to as RR - "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions". See note 13 above.
23. M. Weber, op.cit., vol.II, 1922. This essay has been translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and Don Martindale: The Religion of India, Illinois, The Free Press, 1958.
24. M. Weber, op. cit. vol. III, 1922. This essay originally appeared in the 1917-19 issues of the Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialforschung. It has been translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and Don Martindale: Ancient Judaism, Illinois, The Free Press, 1952.
25. Marianne Weber, op. cit, 1975, p.350.
26. Gerth and Mills, op. cit. p.V
27. Ibid., p.VI
28. cf. Macrae op. cit., p.46.
29. M. Weber, KuT, 1922, pp.435-39; RoC, 1964, pp.147-50.
- 29a O.B. van der Sprenkel, op. cit., 1963, p.349 f4.
30. Ibid., p.349.
31. G. Roth, "History and Sociology in the Work of Max Weber", British Journal of Sociology, vol.27, No3, September 1976, pp.306-318.
32. W. Mommsen The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber Oxford, Blackwell, 1974, p.17.
33. Roth op. cit., p.316.
34. cf. Bendix, 1966, especially his footnotes to pages 58-9, where he refers to Weber's own attempts to correct anti-materialist distortions of his views in Max Weber, "Antikritisches Schlusswort zum "Geist des Kapitalismus"", Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft vol.XXXI, 1910, pp.581-2.

cf. also E. Fischhoff, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: The History of a Controversy" in S.N. Eisenstadt ed., The Protestant Ethic and Modernisation, New York, Basic Books, 1968, pp.67-86.
35. M. Weber op. cit., (SPWR), 1970, p.293.
36. Ibid., p.294.

37. M. Weber op. cit., (CESR), 1922, pp.1-16. This is translated as "Authors Introduction" in Parsons's translation of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, London, Allen and Unwin, 1930, pp.13-34. Unfortunately, the impression has too often been gained that this introductory essay relates directly to PESC instead of CESR.

For some highly pertinent observations on this point, see Benjamin Nelson's "Max Weber's "Author's Introduction" (1920): A Master Clue to his Main Aims", Sociological Inquiry, vol.44 1974, pp.269-278, especially pp.269-271.

38. cf. Marianne Weber, op. cit., 1975, pp 331 and 551.

39. M. Weber, op. cit., (SPWR), 1970, p.268.

40. Ibid., pp.280-1.

41. Marianne Weber op. cit., 1975, pp.551-2.

42. Roth, op. cit., p.315.

43. Roth op. cit., p.308. In fact, although Roth insists upon explicating Weber's methodological practice primarily by reference to his substantive work, he points out that it is not essentially in conflict with the positions outlined in the more "philosophical" essays on methodology.

44. Ibid., passim.

45. See, for example:

1) T. Burger, Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1976

2) H.H. Bruyn, Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1972.

3) P. Lassmann, "Max Weber: Method and Reality" (Review Article) Sociology Vol.XI. No.1 January 1977, pp.143-8.

4) S.J. Hekman, Max Weber and Contemporary Social Theory, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1983.

46. cf. Burger, op. cit..

CHAPTER TWO

1. Weber, op. cit., (SPWR), 1970, pp.267-70.
2. Ibid., pp.292-4.
3. Ibid., pp.267-8
4. Ibid., p.227, p.282, p.287.
5. cf. "die praktische Ethik", CESR, 1922, p.239.
6. Op. cit., 1970 (SPWR), P.292.
7. Ibid., p.267.
8. Ibid., p.268.
9. Ibid., p.268.
10. Ibid., p.268.
11. Ibid., p.268.
12. Ibid., p.268.
13. Ibid., p.268.
14. Ibid., p.292.
15. Ibid., p.292.
16. Ibid., p.292.
17. Ibid., p.292.
18. Ibid., p.293.
19. Ibid., p.292-3.
20. Ibid., p.294.
21. Ibid., p.292.
22. Ibid., p.293.
23. Ibid., pp.268-9.
24. Ibid., p.269.
25. Ibid., p.280.
26. Ibid., pp.271-6, and passim.
27. Ibid., p.270.
28. Ibid., p.271.

29. Ibid., pp.281.
30. cf., Tenbruck, 1980.
31. cf. ibid..
32. M.Weber, 1970, op. cit. (SPWR), p.270.
- 33 M. Albrow, 1974, p.185.
34. Although many of these themes are explored principally in chapters 5 and 6 of the essay, they weave in and out of the whole of the essay. It is impossible to give more specific page references.
35. cf. the similar approach adopted in Mary Fulbrook's article "Max Weber's "Interpretive Sociology"; a comparison of conception and practice". British Journal of Sociology, vol,29 No.1 March 1978. pp.71-82.
36. M.Weber, PESC, op. cit., pp.66f.
37. The concepts of adequate causality and objective possibility are examined at some length in the "Logic" and "Objectivity" essays in Weber's collected methodological writings. See M.Weber, 1949, pp.50-112 and pp.113-188.

Secondary commentaries have rarely clarified these conceptions adequately but the discussions by Freund, 1972, pp.71-9, and Schluchter, 1981, pp.145-7, are reliable guides both to Weber's own intentions and the ways in which these concepts are employed throughout the present thesis.

38. cf. Marshall, 1982, p.31; Bendix, 1966, pp.30-41;
39. In this sense, specifically religious ideal interests are those concerned with specifically religious salvation.
40. See T. Burger, 1985, for a perceptive and useful discussion of some of these issues.
41. cf. Roth, 1976, op.cit..
42. M.Weber, (E+S), 1968, pp.26-9.
43. This important point has been somewhat overshadowed by interpretations of Weber which see him trying to build "upwards and outwards", as it were, from types of social action to types of social relationship in which the latter are depicted as primarily or exclusively concerned with face-to-face dyadic or triadic interaction. Freund's discussion of Weber's methodology, whilst rather dated in certain respects, is still one of the few accounts to offer a coherent alternative along the lines suggested here. See Freund, 1972.

44. Again, Freund (ibid.) conveys the importance of seeing Weber's concept of social relationship as a link between "structure" and "agency" as well as any other commentator. Giddens, "The Constitution of Society" eventually arrives at a similar position for himself but encumbers it with rather more ontological baggage than Weber would probably have found useful for the purpose of fruitful substantive analysis.
45. cf. the "Objectivity" essay, M.Weber, 1949, pp. 63-7.

CHAPTER THREE

1. T.Parsons,1963 (SSA), especially pp.510-513, pp.539-542. and chapter XV, pp.539-579, passim.
Yang op. cit., especially pp.XIV-XVIII.
2. T.Parsons, 1966, Introduction to The Sociology of Religion (Max Weber), - refered to here as SR.
3. In a footnote to SSA, Parsons claims that "..Weber does not attempt this systematically." Chapter's ten and eleven of this thesis attempt to demonsrate that Weber does actually attempt this sort of exercise to a much greater extent than Parsons seems prepared to allow.
Parsons, SSA, p.541, f.1.
- 3a. Van der Sprenkel, op. cit.
4. Ibid., op. cit., pp350-1.
- 4a. Bendix, op. cit., pp.98-9.
5. Van der Sprenkel, op. cit., pp.349-50.
6. cf. Butts, 1977, Sahay, 1977, and Cohen, 1975a, 1975b.
7. Marshall, 1982, p.159: referring to Tenbruck, 1980, and Schluchter, 1981.
8. Roth suggests that this notion of "eigengesetzlichkeit", which Weber uses to refer to institutional spheres following their own, relatively autonomous internal logic of development, has "been obscured in most translations". Roth, 1987, p.83.

CHAPTER FOUR - The Money Economy and the Monetary System

1. Yang draws this account of the general significance of money from part one of "Economy and Society", translated by T. Parsons as "The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation", pp. 173-90; 280-308.
2. It should be noted that this distinction between money economy and monetary system is not made explicit in the text of KuT.
3. (no footnote three - printer's error)
4. Weber suggests that this "system" "corresponded to our bank currency as exemplified by the Hamburg Bank", (RoC, p.252,f.3). This implies that the private banking sector played a particularly important role in the regulation of the monetary system and that its own currency was probably more reliable than the state's. See also Weber's "General Economic History", chapter on "Money, Banking and Credit".
5. Thus, "With every earthquake geomantic superstition led to the suppression of mining operations", RoC, p.253, f.6. - "Concerning the impact of the feng-shui see "Varieties Sinologiques No.2 (H.Havret, La Province de Ngan Hei, 1893), p.39". Roc,p.253,f.9. Geomancy is a system of beliefs and practices attributing organic unity and harmony to land-forms. Thus, earthquakes could be "explained" as a result of mining excavations having disturbed the natural balance of the elements united in the land.
6. Weber tells us that:
"Emperor Ch'ien Lung's history of the Ming Dynasty reports tremendous corvees for the exploitation of Gold Mines (Yu tsian tung ki n(sic) kang mu, tr. by Delamarre, Paris, 1865, p.362). In the year 1474, 550,000 (?) people were allegedly regimented for such corvees." RoC, p. 253, f.7.
7. Weber suggests that silver only became important as a currency metal when it was first used for silver coins in the reign of Wu Ti at the end of the 2nd century B.C. (RoC, p.4.).
8. "Only during Chinese rule of farther India (Cambodia, Annam) and Burma, which were rich in silver, did the permanent influx of silver increase". RoC, p..253, f.6.

9. Weber claims that:

(i) During the Han period, the supply of precious metals did increase, though not to the same extent as for the same period in the West. He suggests that Roman coins found in China were probably part of tributes in kind brought to India by the many large, annual, silk caravans of this period.

(ii) "This of course ceased with the end of the Roman Empire and only in the period of the Mongol Empire was the currency situation improved". RoC, p.5.

10. These were the copper "cash" - a circular disc of a single denomination usually cast with a central hole through which a string or leather thong could be threaded. See M. Loewe, "Imperial China", London, Allen and Unwin, 1966, pp.194-8.
11. "The high costs of transporting the copper to the mint in Peking - which sold everything in excess of coinage needs - considerably increased the costs of minting. These costs were tremendous in themselves. In the 8th century (752 according to Ma Tuan-Lin) each of the 99 existing minting plants reportedly produced about 3,330 min (1,000 pieces each) in copper coins annually. Each required 30 labourers for this and utilised 21,200 chin (550 grams each) of copper, 3,700 chin of lead, and 500 of tin. The cost of manufacturing 1,000 pieces amounted to 750 pieces, i.e., 75 per cent. To this must be added an exorbitant minting profit claimed by the monopolised mint, nominally 25%". RoC, p.5.
12. Reference to the Encyclopaedia Britannica's entry on "Coins and Coinage" helps to clarify some of Weber's comments here. Traditionally, historians attribute to King Croesus of Lydia (560 - 646 B.C.) the first official government coinage. Weber's claim that Chinese coins appeared probably in the ninth century B.C. is probably wrong and Loewe suggests the sixth century as more likely (Loewe, op.cit., 1966, p.194). This still means that coins made an early appearance in China. However, as Weber suggests, minting techniques did indeed remain at a very "primitive" level and never developed hand striking techniques during the whole of the Imperial period. Hand striking was used to produce the earliest Greek coins. Molten metal was poured into round moulds and left to cool. It was then re-heated, placed between upper and lower "cold dies", and the upper die was struck with a heavy hammer. In this way, the coinage blanks received obverse and reverse impressions from the upper and lower dies. Up to the 20th century, the Chinese never adopted any of the procedures involved in the striking of coins, and their coins were cast in much the same fashion as that used by the Greeks for producing blanks.

13. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the quality of European coins began to improve very rapidly, as minting techniques began to resemble their modern forms. In particular a rolling mill was used to produce coins of uniform thickness. Weber's point, which accords well with this data seems to be that, even before these improvements, European coins were much more consistent and reliable than those produced by the Chinese.
14. cf. Weber:
 "Obviously the basic evil was the fluctuation of monetary metal. The north, the defence area against the barbarians of the steppes, suffered much more from this than the South, which as the seat of trade was always much better provided with means of circulation. The financing of every war forced monetary reforms, and copper coins were converted to the manufacture of arms (comparable to the use of nickel coins in Germany during World War 1 (sic)). With restoration of peace the country was flooded with copper since the "demobilised" soldiers freely used army property. Any political unrest could close the mines. The shortage or surplus of coinage is reported to have resulted in price fluctuations which are amazing even when we allow for probable exaggeration." Weber, RoC, p.6-7.
 These are themes which Weber elaborates over and over again in the course of a few pages, each time using them in relation to slightly different aspects of the analysis.
15. Weber bases this claim on an article by Biot which in turn is based on Ma Tuan-Lin, a Chinese historian of the thirteenth century. Biot, "Journal Asiatique, 3rd series, vol.6, 1838, p.278". RoC, p.253, f.10.
16. Weber's comments on the survival of "primitive" non-metallic currencies are rather gratuitous and add little to his claim that the monetary system was underdeveloped. Several economic historians have since pointed out, though not in direct opposition to Weber, that the use of non-metallic money was quite common in the West right into recent times.
 See, for example:
- i. P. Einzig, "Primitive Money", 1966.
 - ii. F. Braudel, "Capitalism and Material Life", Fontana, 1973, ch.7.
- Galbraith has pointed out that the early American colonists were able to use such non-metallic currency as tobacco and Indian wampum in the service of a vigorously expanding economy.
 J.K. Galbraith, "Money", 1975, p.17; pp.57-9.
17. Weber, RoC, p.6 and p.255, f.16.

18. Weber, RoC, pp.8-9 and fs.17,18,19, p.255.
Weber suggests, without any clear reference to source, that the artistic use of copper was more profitable than its monetary use during the eighth century as "the minting masters argued that 1,000 units of copper transformed into works of art (vases) were equivalent to 3,600 units" Weber, RoC, p.255.f.19.
19. Weber claims that the melting of coins and hoarding of copper led to a great shortage of money which in turn led to price decline and ended in a barter economy. He also suggests that this happened for the first time in 780. Weber, RoC, p.8 and f.17, p.255.
20. Weber's observations seem to be supported by Eberhard who writes of a cycle of inflation and deflation. When the value of the currency fell, it paid to turn coin into metal implements. This reduced the amount of money in circulation and increased the value of the remaining coinage. After a certain point, it became profitable once more to coin money by melting down metal implements. "Thus, through the whole course of Chinese history the scarcity of metal and the insufficiency of production of metal continually produced extensive fluctuations of the stocks and value of metal, amounting virtually to an economic law in China".
W. Eberhard, "A History of China", London, RKP, 1977, p.15.
21. Weber, RoC, p.9.
Weber illustrates this perennial money shortage in a footnote which refers to no specific source:
"In 817, and often since that time, no more than 5,000 kuan (of 1,000 ch'ien each) were allowed. Time limits on the sale of surplus copper holdings were stipulated according to their size." RoC, f.20,p.256.
22. Weber, RoC, p.9.
23. The Jurchen (Ju-chen), members of the Tungusic linguistic group, were ancestors of the Manchus who moved down from Northern Manchuria from about 1115, overran most of North China and captured the Sung capital of Kaifeng in 1126.
c.f. J.K. Fairbank et al., "East Asia. Tradition and Transformation", London, George Allen and Unwin,1973, ch.7.
24. Weber claims, though not without some internal inconsistency that:
"Paper money of all sorts remained completely suppressed after it was prohibited by the Mings in 1620, a prohibition honoured by the Manchus". Weber, RoC, p.11.
25. The following account of the development of printing in China is based upon Loewe, op.cit., pp.110 - 2.

26. O.B. van der Sprenkel, 1954. sees no sense at all in Weber's reference to the paper industry as having been "imported" since the second century A.D. Reference back to the original suggests that "imported" is indeed the correct translation (cf. "der Entstehung der seit dem 2 Jarhundert nach Chr. importierten Papierindustrie," *KuT.*, p.286). However, it is interesting to note that the substitution of "important" for "imported" here would be more historically acceptable. Could Weber have momentarily been thinking in English, or perhaps transcribing from English sources at this point, leading him to commit a "slip of the pen"?
27. cf. RoC, p.9:
 "The technical prerequisite (of paper money) was the emergence of the paper industry, imported since the second century A.D., and a suitable process of printing wood cuts, especially relief cuts rather than the earlier intaglio process."
 Also Weber's footnote to this sentence, f.21, p.256:
 "Apparently this (the earlier intaglio process) was first used for the official seals. After Shih Huang Ti it became the external mark of the transition from feudalism to the patrimonial state."
28. The following account of the development of Chinese paper money is based largely upon M. Elvin, "The Pattern of the Chinese Past", London, Eyre Methuen, 1973, ch.II.
29. Elvin, *ibid.*, p.155.
 Based, in turn, upon a passage from Ma Tuan-Lin's "Comprehensive Study of Civilisation", (13th century A.D.), translated by Miyazaki Ichisada as "Godoi Soshō no tsuka mondai ", ("The Currency Problem in the Five Dynasties and the Early Sung"), Kyoto: 1943, p.103.
30. Elvin derives this account of the origins of state paper money in Shu (modern Szechwan) from Li Chien-Nung, "Sung-Yuan-Ming ching-chi-shih-kao (Draft Economic History of the Sung, Yuan and Mongol Dynasties)", Peking, 1957, p.116.
31. Elvin suggests, *ibid.*, p.159, that these first few stages were passed through fairly rapidly after 1022.
32. Weber's own discussion of this and many other aspects of the origins of state paper money is extremely confused. He tries, quite correctly, to identify the extent to which the state's initiatives were modelled on those of private enterprise but his dates and other details are very vague. He also tries to deal with the topic in two separate passages which compound the confusion through being inconsistent with each other. Perhaps the best way to clarify this important but dreadfully muddled aspect of the analysis is to quote directly from the two passages and then comment upon them with reference to the historical background provided by Elvin (see above).

Weber, RoC., p.9:

"Early in the ninth century, the state began to remove the profitable exchange opportunities from the traders' hands. At first the principle of an exchange fund of 1/4 to 1/3 was taken over. Notes based on a fiscal monopoly of bank deposits are also to be found later."

Weber, RoC, p.7:

"Following the banks' example, the government first issued means of exchange in 807."

RoC, f.12 (p.254):

"The p'ien ch'ien paper money of the tenth century was redeemed by the treasury."

RoC, f.13 (p.254):

"The heavy iron money in Szechwan, even in the first century, caused the Guild of the Sixteen to issue certificates (ch'ao-tzu), i.e. bank money which later became irredeemable through insolvency."

Several points should be noted here :

- i) Weber's references to the government's first issuing means of exchange in 807 (p.7) or early in the ninth century" (p.9) and his linking these with the tenth century operations of the Guild of Sixteen in Szechwan is very confused. The Chinese government may well have issued "paper money" in 807 but these would have been something like the "flying cash" issued during the T'ang dynasty from the eighth century onwards.
- ii) As indicated above in the account derived from Elvin, the first issues of "genuine" paper money by the state did indeed result from the failures of the "Guild of Sixteen" in Szechwan but this took place in 1022. Weber's footnote 13 can easily give the misleading impression that these activities might be dated to 807. Weber's reference to the "first century" in this footnote is simply incomprehensible unless one assumes that he means that even in the first century of its use i.e. the 11th A.D.), some paper substitute was issued by this particular guild of merchants.
- iii) Weber's historical references in footnote 12 appear to be only marginally related to the text at this point except for Weber's recognition that state paper money was initially stimulated by the need to redeem paper issued by private enterprise.
- iv) Immediate appearances to the contrary, the "exchange" fund of 1/4 to 1/3 seems more likely to have been intended to refer to the ratio between metal reserves and paper issues than to "profitable exchange opportunities" for issuing notes at a premium against deposits of metallic currency. Transactions of this latter sort were indeed profitable but evidence seems to suggest that bankers charged around 20 or 30 cash

per thousand for issuing notes (i.e. 2% or 3% rather than 25% or 33%). This reading would seem to be confirmed by Weber's next sentence in which he claims that "later" paper issues were based on a fiscal monopoly of bank deposits.

33. This paragraph is a paraphrase of the following passage from p.9 together with the footnotes. This extract is reproduced in full because the diversity of Weber's illustrations, and the almost random relationship between the footnotes and the text, leave open the possibility of alternative paraphrases to that offered in the main body of this thesis.

Weber, RoC, pp.9-10, and footnotes, (p.256):

"The notes, which were first reproduced from wood cuts and then from copper engravings, were quickly worn because of the poor quality of the paper. This led to the reduction of coins to the smallest denominations, the repudiation of the illegible paper slips, and the levying of a charge for printing new money for old.²² Above all, it led to the elimination of the metal reserve,²³ or at least made it more difficult to exchange paper money as the place of exchange shifted to the interior.²⁴ At first withdrawal of currency from circulation was spaced over a short period but this was later extended from 22 to 25 years.²⁵ Mostly new notes, often of lower denomination,²⁶ were issued for old ones, which were turned in."

- f.22. Thus in 1155 the Tartarian rulers of North China demanded 1 1/2%.
- f.23. This happened even in 1107. The notes were devalued to one hundredth of their face value by inflation.
- f.24. Thus, in 1111, when paper money was issued for the frontier war.
- f.25. This was the regular form which, initially, had also been recommended by interested traders. These notes were in the nature of treasury bills.
- f.26. Old or worn paper issues occasionally exchanged at only 1/10th to 1/3 of their face value.

34. Weber, RoC, p.256, f.27:

"Even in 1107, because of the war against the Tartars, one half of every payment of sums over 10,000 ch'ien had to be paid in paper. This often happened."

35. This section systematises comments made by Weber at various points throughout the discussion of Chinese money. All the dates and statistics are those presented by Weber.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. The lectures which provided the basis for GEH and the "Sociological Foundations" to KuT were, of course, written at about the same time towards the end of Weber's life. See chapter one above.
2. Knight translates this phrase as: "freedom of the priesthood". I have preferred to translate "von" as "from" as this makes considerably more sense in the context.
3. This would, of course, suggest that the political rather than the religious conditions facilitating the development of citizenship would have to be accorded rather more causal significance.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Like Collins, Schluchter attempts a reconstruction of Weber's theory of Western history although he does so in a completely different way from Collins, casting it within a theoretical system influenced both by the neo-Parsonianism of Niklas Luhmann and Habermas's critique of Luhmann.

See: N Luhmann, 1975; J Habermas 1979; W Schluchter, 1981.

The fact that Collins and Schluchter are able to reconstruct Weber's theory in such markedly different ways is significant in the present context as an indication of the incompleteness of Weber's own essentially heuristic and configurational perspectives.

2. See Turner, 1981, and chapter 3 above for the argument that Weber subscribed to a Western concept of Orientalism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. These are Weber's dates. Modern sinologists more usually divide the Chou Dynasty period (1122?-256), into 3 periods with indeterminate transitional periods between them.

a. Western Chou Era (1122?-777) - the period of genuine political domination by the Chou rulers (sometimes referred to as the High Chou period).

b. Spring and Autumn Era (722-481) - the period of shifting diplomatic alliances and mergers amongst a large number of still quite small statelets.

c. Warring States Period (403 - 221) - the period of open warfare between a small number of independent kingdoms.

2. A particularly clear statement of a position which resembles Webers in the present context can be found in the first part of:

C. Hill, Reformation to Industrial Revolution
Penguin Books, 1969.

Although Marxist and neo-Marxist debates and perspectives on this issue continue to proliferate, it is intriguing to note how frequently a return seems to be made to a position occupied similarly by both Weber and Hill. Cf. the review and discussion of these issues in, for example, R.J. Holton, 1985 and 1986.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Again, one notes the intriguing resemblance of this particular thread of Weber's analysis to Christopher Hill's insistence on the revolutionary political changes which preceded capitalism and eventually industrialisation in early modern England. Cf. f2 above.
2. Cf. Yang's comments in his introduction to RoC, p. xxv.

"Though neglected in Western Literature, historical land reforms received considerable attention in Chinese literature in recent decades (See for example Chen, T-y, Chung-kuo T'u-ti Chi'tu (Chinese Land System), Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1932). But scholars concerned with this issue, Chinese and Western alike, interpreted the historical measures in the light of humanitarianism, egalitarianism, and the stabilization of rural economic and political order. Weber alone put forth the idea that the succession of many land reforms in the past two thousand years contributed to the portioning of land into numerable farms of microscopic size which came to be a characteristic feature of rural economy"

3. Mark Elvin, The Pattern of the Chinese Past Eyre Methuen, London, 1973.

Mark Elvin, "Why China failed to create an endogenous industrial capitalism: A critique of Max Weber's explanation", Theory and Society, 13 (1984) 379-391.

^ C A N T

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