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Confucius Revealed the Clue

For more than 4,000 years the reigning emperors of China traveled annually to the border of their country or to the imperial city. There, on an outdoor altar, they sacrificed and burned young unblemished bullocks to their God, *ShangDi* (上帝), whose name means literally the *God 帝 above 上*, or *Supreme God*.

The Border Sacrifice (郊祀), as this ceremony came to be called, was a ceremony conducted in continuous sequence ever since the legendary period of Chinese history, before the first dynastic rule which began in 2205 B.C. Unfortunately, the Border Sacrifice became closely identified with the rulership of China, for the emperor himself, acting as high priest, was the chief participant in the ceremony. Consequently, when the Manchus were deposed in 1911 of our own century, not only did the dynastic reign end forever, but so did China's longest celebrated and most colorful sacrifice: the Border Sacrifice. So important to the mind of the great philosopher Confucius

(551-479 B.C.) was this Border Sacrifice that he compared a comprehension of the ritual to the efficient ruling of the Chinese empire.

He who understands the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth . . . would find the government of a kingdom as easy as to look into his palm!

Why did Confucius attach so much significance to this ancient Border Sacrifice? You will find the answer to this question as you read on!

One of the earliest accounts of the Border Sacrifice is found in the *Shu Jing (Book of History)*,² compiled by Confucius himself, where it is recorded of Emperor Shun (c. 2230 B.C.) that "he sacrificed to ShangDi."³ From an early date, the Chinese were already offering sacrifices to ShangDi on an altar of earth on the top of Mount Tai in Shan-Dong, at the eastern border of China. A border sacrifice at an eastern locale is most significant, as we shall subsequently learn.

In the 15th century A.D., this important sacrifice was moved to the southern part of Beijing, where an extensive Altar of Heaven complex came to quarter three main sacred edifices. Each is laid out on a north-south axis, joined by a paved way. The northernmost structure, the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, was originally built in 1420, then rebuilt in the late 19th century after lightning caused it to be burned. Its circular hall with three layers of eaves rises upwards in its cone-shaped tiered roof, its deep blue tiles mirroring the sky above. The terrace it stands on consists of three circular levels of marble, each bounded with carved balustrades.

To the south is a second, smaller building, called the Impe-

rial Vault of Heaven. Built in 1530, its architectural plan is similar to the Hall of Prayer, raised also upon a marble stone foundation with balustrades. Inside this edifice resides no religious images. A tablet on the north wall (also found in the Hall of Prayer) is inscribed with the characters 皇天上帝 (*Heavenly Sovereign ShangDi*), clearly indicating that ShangDi was the God they worshiped in the Border Sacrifice.

In a straight line, yet farther south, is the altar of sacrifice itself. This great, triple-tiered, white marble Altar of Heaven, 75 meters (250 feet) in diameter, again surrounded on each level by balustrades, is an imposing structure. The uppermost level can be reached by a series of steps on each of four sides. A monumental undertaking, construction of it was completed in 1539.

Transport yourself back in time to observe firsthand the events surrounding ancient China's most sacred site and rite. As the winter solstice (about December 22) approaches, the supporting cast taking part in this ceremony readies itself for the glorious ritual. Singers prepare their colorful silken robes; musicians dust off their racks of suspended bronze bells, varying-sized drums, cymbals, flutes, and stringed instruments, dedicated exclusively for use in this annual event.

On the morning before the winter solstice, the emperor, the "Son of Heaven," in gorgeous array passes through the front gate of the Imperial Palace (the Forbidden City) and makes his way in a procession to the Altar of Heaven complex. An impressive retinue of princes and high officials follows. The streets of Beijing are silent, as all residents are required to remain hidden behind shuttered windows.



"Heavenly Sovereign ShangDi." Inscription in the Imperial Vault (Temple of Heaven), and in the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests.



Who Is ShangDi?

Do you ever wonder where you came from? Most people do. Some even have a well-kept family record of ancestors, covering many generations. Regardless of whether or not you know who your ancestors were, do you have any idea how humanity and all life on earth came into being or who the very first human beings were?

Some scientists today tell us that humanity has evolved through countless ages from lower forms of life. They say people emerged as upright creatures, descendants of an apelike animal. However, did you know that the ancient teachings of the Chinese reveal that the first man and woman on earth were stately, intelligent, specially created beings? They even resembled their great Creator God, ShangDi. According to the Chinese, ShangDi (上帝) made not only people, but the earth and all life in it, as well as the entire universe.

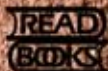
In This Book You Will Learn About:

- **ShangDi** The name ShangDi literally means the "God above," or the Most High God. From the beginning of their history, the ancient Chinese worshipped ShangDi as the Creator.
- **The Border Sacrifice** For more than 4,000 years the Chinese emperors annually sacrificed a bull to ShangDi. This ceremony pointed to a coming Savior.
- **Oracle Bone Characters** In this book, the authors show that the inventor of the original Chinese characters, inscribed on tortoise shells and bones, knew and believed in an identical account of creation and earth's beginnings as found in the Hebrew sacred Scriptures. For example:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{木} & + & \text{女} & = & \text{𡗗} \\ \text{trees} & & \text{woman} & & \text{desire, covet} \end{array}$$

Compare this character 𡗗 with the book of Genesis in the Hebrew sacred Scriptures:

The tree of life [was] also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired [covetable]..., she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat... (Genesis 2:9; 3:6)



Read Books Publisher
1054 Meadowlark Rd.
Dunlap, TN 37327

Printed in U.S.A.

ISBN 0-937869-01-5



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