

BIBLE STORIES HIDDEN IN CHINESE CHARACTERS

A JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE



人	+	一	+	口	=	合
humanity		one		language		unite
合	+	土	+	艹	=	塔
unite		dirt		grass		
		(brick materials)			=	tower

Did a distant memory of the Tower of Babel prompt ancient Chinese scribes to use these associations to build up the character for "tower?"

by Timothy D. Boyle

Chinese characters, or "kanji" (漢字) as they are referred to in Japanese, are often made up of combinations of simpler characters that in themselves have meaning. As ancient Chinese scribes developed more and more pictographs to symbolize words in their spoken language, it is clear that they were making associations that in themselves told a story of some sort. They left no record to indicate what they specifically had in mind, and so we who live some 4000 years after the fact can only speculate as to what was in their minds. It is truly amazing, however, to see how so many of the associations they used make perfect sense if we use as a working assumption that they still had oral traditions handing down stories similar to what we find in Genesis.

This book details numerous basic characters that would have been among the first developed. These characters tell stories through their internal associations that are amazingly similar to those we find in the early chapters of Genesis. Numerous other characters that would appear to have no direct connection with any specific story in Genesis nevertheless tell stories that are remarkably consistent with biblical themes. They all, however, point to the hand of God somehow directing the ancient Chinese to make these associations. This book is designed to provide readers with tools to make the Scripture and its timeless truths come alive in a new way to those people who still use the descendants of these ancient characters in their writing systems today, namely the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans.

義

羊 + 我 = 義
lamb (sheep) + self (ego) = righteousness

Putting one's ego (我) under the Lamb (of God) (羊) is the essence of the biblical meaning of righteousness (義).

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2. 靈(靈) [𩇑] (REI, tama = spirit)
3. 造 [𩇑] (ZŌ, tsuku(ru) = construct, make)
4. 土 [土] (TO, DO, tsuchi = soil, dirt)
5. 生 [𩇑] (SHŌ, SEI, iki(ru), u(mu) = life, exist, be born)
6. 告 [𩇑] (KOKU, tsu(geru) = tell, inform)
7. 气 [𩇑] (KI = vapor)
8. 風 [𩇑] (FŪ, kaze = wind)
9. 神 [𩇑] (JIN, SHIN, kami = god, deity)
10. 丁 [丁] (TEI, CHŌ = adult male)
11. 印 [印] (IN, shirushi = seal, imprint, symbol)
12. 天 [天] (TEN, ama = sky, heavens, Heaven)
13. 大 [大] (TAI, DAI, ōki(i) = large, great)
14. 父 [父] (FU, chichi, tō = father)
15. 甫 [甫] (HO, hajime = beginning, father, field)
16. 卣 [卣] (saketsubo = vessel (for sake))
17. 若 [若] (JAKU, waka(i) = young, similarity)
18. 參(参)[參] (SAN, mai(ru) = visiting (a shrine))

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19. 福 [福] (FUKU = blessing, happiness)

- 20. 富 [富] (FŪ, tomi = wealth, abundance)
- 21. 家 [家] (KA, KE, ie = home, household)
- 22. 園 [園] (EN, sono = garden, park)
- 23. 泉 [泉] (SEN, izumi = spring, fountain)
- 24. 西 [西] (SEI, nishi = west)
- 25. 要 [要] (YŌ, i (ru) = necessity, requirement)
- 26. 里 [里] (RI, sato = village, parents' home)
- 27. 肉 [肉] (NIKU = flesh, meat)
- 28. 孝 [孝] (KŌ = filial piety)
- 29. 夾 [夾] (KYŌ, hasa(mu) = to hold tight, near)

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- 30. 山 [山] (SAN, yama = mountain)
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- 34. 陞 [陞] (HEI = stairway)
- 35. 降 [降] (KŌ, fu(ru), o(riru) = descend)
- 36. 声 [声] (SEI, koe = voice, sound)
- 37. 祉 [祉] (SHI = happiness)
- 38. 留 [留] (RYŪ, RU, todo(maru) = stay, remain)

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- 39. 元 [元] (GAN, GEN, moto = origin, foundation)
- 40. 完 (KAN = completion)
- 41. 祖 [祖] (SO = ancestor)
- 42. 族 [族] (ZOKU = family, tribe)
- 43. 氏 [氏] (SHI, uji = family, clan)
- 44. 昏 [昏] (KON = dark, dusk, bride)
- 45. 身 [身] (SHIN, mi, karada = body, person)
- 46. 旦 [旦] (TAN = dawn, morning)
- 47. 火 [火] (KA, hi = fire)
- 48. 赤 [赤] (SEKI, aka = red)
- 49. 文 [文] (MON, BUN, fumi = literature, civilization)

50. 會(会)[會] (KAI, a(u) = meet, assemble)
 51. 見 [見] (KEN, mi(ru), mami(eru) = see, have audience with)

Chapter 6: The Radiant Couple

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輝いている二人

52. 榮(栄)[榮] (EI, saka(e) = glory, splendor)
 53. 光 [光] (KŌ, hikari = light, radiance)
 54. 塋 (EI = grave)
 55. 勞(劳) (RŌ = labor, toil)
 56. 談 (DAN, dan(jiru) = converse, discuss)
 57. 營(営) (EI, itona(mi) = encampment, operation)
 58. 宮 [宮] (KU, KYŪ, GŪ, miya = palace)
 59. 宗 [宗] (SHŪ, SŌ = religion, head person, revere)
 60. 宅 [宅] (TAKU = residence)
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62. 弔 [弔] (CHŌ, tomura(u) = mourning)
 63. 弗 [弗] (FUTSU, doru = negate, dollar)
 64. 夷 [夷] (I, ebisu = barbarian, kill)
 65. 弘 [弘] (KŌ, hiro(i) = broad, wide)
 66. 鬼 [鬼] (KI, oni = devil, demon)
 67. 魔 [魔] (MA = demon, evil spirit)
 68. 魅 [魅] (MI, baka(su) = bewitch, enchant)
 69. 魂 [魂] (KON, tamashii, tama = soul, spirit)
 70. 媿 [媿] (haji = shame)
 71. 畏 [畏] (I, osore(ru) = fear, reverence)
 72. 蛇 [蛇] (DA, JA, hebi = snake)
 73. 死 [死] (SHI, shi(nu) = death)
 74. 好 [好] (KŌ, kono(mu), su(ku) = good, like)

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常に見ておられる神

75. 示 [示] (JI, SHI, shime(su) = reveal, indicate)
 76. 禁 [禁] (KIN, kin(jiru) = prohibit, forbid)

- 77. 婪 [𡇗] (RAN = covet)
- 78. 令 [令] (REI = command, order)
- 79. 命 [命] (MEI, mei(jiru), inochi = command, life)
- 80. 旨 [旨] (SHI, mune = will, instructions)
- 81. 始 [始] (SHI, haji(mari) = beginning)
- 82. 杜 [杜] (TO, fusa(gu) = prevent, bar)
- 83. 視 (SHI, mi(ru) = look at)
- 84. 省 [省] (SHŌ, kaeri(miru), habu(ku) = watch over, omit)
- 85. 躲 (TA, kawa(su) = escape, hide)

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- 86. 衣 [衣] (I, koromo = garment, robe)
- 87. 裸 [裸] (RA, hadaka = nakedness)
- 88. 被 [被] (HI, kabu(ru), o(u) = cover, conceal)
- 89. 補 [補] (HO, ogina(u) = assistant, supplement)
- 90. 初 [初] (SHO, hatsu, haji(maru) = beginning, first)
- 91. 美 [美] (BI, utsuku(shii) = beauty)
- 92. 義 [義] (GI = righteousness)

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刑罰を受ける人間

- 93. 遠 [遠] (EN, to(zakaru) = distant, alienated)
- 94. 袁 [袁] (EN = robe)
- 95. 哀 [哀] (AI, awa(re) = pity, grief)
- 96. 喪 [喪] (SŌ, mo = mourning, loss)
- 97. 依 [依] (I, yo(ru) = depend on)
- 98. 卒 [卒] (SOTSU, sos(suru) = die)
- 99. 苦 [苦] (KU, kuru(shii), niga(i) = suffering, pain, bitter)
- 100. 刑 [刑] (KEI = punishment, penalty)
- 101. 荊 [荊] (KEI, ibara = thorn, brier)
- 102. 棘 (KYOKU, toge, odorō = thorn, thicket)
- 103. 束 [束] (SHI, toge = thorn)
- 104. 刺 [刺] (SHI, toge, sa(su) = thorn, pierce)
- 105. 楚 [楚] (SO, ibara = whip, sorrow)
- 106. 束 [束] (SOKU, taba = tie together, restrain)

107. 困 (KON, koma(ru) = to be in trouble)
 108. 因 (IN, china(mu) = cause, to be associated with)

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閉ざされたエデンの門

109. 剣(剣) [剣] (KEN, tsurugi = sword)
 110. 閑 [閑] (KAN = quiet, crossbeam of a gate)
 111. 関 [関] (KAN, seki = barrier, gateway)
 112. 問 [問] (MON, to(u) = question, inquire)
 113. 聞 [聞] (BUN, ki(ku) = hear, listen)
 114. 逆 [逆] (GYAKU, saka(rau) = opposite, rebel)
 115. 徒 [徒] (TO = companions, follower)
 116. 従 [従] (JŪ, shitaga(u) = follow)
 117. 圀 [圀] (kunizakai = border)
 118. 畛 [畛] (sakai = boundary)
 119. 界 [界] (KAI, sakai = world, limits, boundary)
 120. 際 [際] (SAI, kiwa = edge, borderline)
 121. 郊 [郊] (KŌ = suburb, outskirts)

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エデンの外で神を祭る

122. 旅 [旅] (RYO, tabi = journey, trip)
 123. 旋 [旋] (SEN = go around, return)
 124. 祈 [祈] (KI, ino(ru) = pray)
 125. 異 [異] (I, koto(naru) = strange, different)
 126. 祭 [祭] (SAI, matsu(ru) = worship, celebrate)
 127. 祀 [祀] (SHI, matsu(ru) = enshrine, offer sacrifice)
 128. 羔 [羔] (KŌ, kohitsuji = lamb)
 129. 禪(禪) [禪] (ZEN = meditation)
 130. 祭 (EI, matsurinoniwa = place of worship)

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祝福都呪いの分れ道

131. 兄 [兄] (KYŌ, ani = elder brother)
 132. 兇 [兇] (KYŌ = wickedness)
 133. 祝 [祝] (SHUKU, iwa(u) = bless, celebrate)

134. 呪 (JU, majinai, noro(u) = curse, cast a spell over)

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ノアの箱舟と大洪水

135. 船 [船] (SEN, fune = ship, boat)

136. 洪 [洪] (KŌ = flood, vast)

137. 沿 [沿] (EN, so(u) = follow along, pass along)

138. 昔 [昔] (SHAKU, mukashi = long ago)

139. 穴 (KETSU, ana = hole, cave)

140. 空 (KŪ, kara, sora = sky, empty, vacant)

141. 公 [公] (KŌ, oyake = public)

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散らばって行く人間のありさま

142. 塔 (TŌ = tower)

143. 分 [分] (BUN, BU, wake(ru) = divide, part)

144. 四 [四] (SHI, yon = four)

145. 散 [散] (SAN, chi(rasu), bara(su) = scatter, disperse)

146. 遷 [遷] (SEN, utsu(ru) = move, transfer)

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憧れの新しいエデン

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148. 聖 [聖] (SEI, hijiri = holy, sacred)

149. 王 [王] (Ō, kimi = king, ruler)

150. 全 (ZEN, matta(ki), sube(te) = all, complete)

151. 主 (SHU, nushi = lord, owner)

152. 注 (CHŪ, soso(gu) = comment on, pŌr on, anoint)

- 153. 永 (EI, naga(i), towa = long, eternal)
- 154. 主観 (SHUKAN = subjective)
- 155. 客観 (KYAKKAN = objective)

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気になる木

- 156. 来(来) (RAI, ku(ru), ki(taru) = come)
- 157. 休 (KYŪ, yasu(meru) = rest, bring relief)
- 158. 柱 (CHŪ, hashira = pillar, support)
- 159. 様(様) (YŌ, sama = manner, pattern, situation)
- 160. 倣 (HŌ, nara(u) = imitate, emulate)
- 161. 標 [標] (HYŌ, shirushi = signpost, target)

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義なる神の小羊

- 162. 義 (GI = righteousness, justice)
- 163. 儀 (GI = ceremony, ritual)
- 164. 協議 (KYŌGI = consultation, discussion)
- 165. 養 (YŌ, yashina(u) = nurture, bring up)
- 166. 善 [善] (ZEN, yo(i) = goodness, virtue)
- 167. 詳 (SHŌ, kuwa(shii) = detailed, accurate)
- 168. 躰 (shitsuke = discipline, training)

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神を感じる漢字

- 169. 祕 (秘) (HI, hi(meru), hiso(ka) = secret, concealed)
- 170. 宗教 (SHŪKYŌ = religion)
- 171. 困 (KON, koma(ru) = to be in trouble)
- 172. 崇 (SŪ, aga(meru) = worship, revere)
- 173. 祖 (SO = ancestor, founder)
- 174. 助 (JO, tasu(ke) = help, rescue)
- 175. 祟 (SUI, tata(ri) = divine curse)
- 176. 祈 (KI, ino(ru) = pray)
- 177. 禱 (TŌ, ino(ru) = pray)
- 178. 祥 (JŌ, SHŌ, saga = happiness, good omen)
- 179. 祐 (YŪ = help)

180. 禊 (KEI, misogi = Shinto purification ceremony)
 181. 禔 (TEI = happiness)
 182. 禍 (KA, wazawai = calamity, misfortune)

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十字架の上に立つ

183. 十字架 (JŪJIKKA = cross)
 184. 才 [彡] (SAI = ability, talent)
 185. 惡 (悪) (AKU, niku(i) = evil, hate)
 186. 辛 [夊] (SHIN, tsura(i), kara(i) = bitter, harsh)
 187. 幸 [衤] (KŌ, saiwa(i), shiawase = happiness, fortune)
 188. 辜 (KO, tsumi = sin, fault)
 189. 報 [衤] (HŌ, muku(i) = report, reward)
 190. 辭 (辞) (JI, ya(meru) = word, resignation)
 191. 避 (HI, sa(keru) = avoid, evade)
 192. 壁 (HEKI, kabe = wall, fence)
 193. 癖 (HEKI, kuse = habit, trait)
 194. 新 (SHIN, atara(shii), ara(ta) = new, novel)
 195. 親 (SHIN, oya, shita(shii) = parent, intimate, friendly)
 196. 叶 (KYŌ, kana(eru) = grant, answer)
 197. 支 (SHI, sasa(eru) = branch, support, maintain)
 198. 枝 (SHI, eda = branch, limb)
 199. 辻 (tsuji = crossroad)

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犠牲を捧げる礼拝

200. 禮 (礼) (REI = salutation, appreciation)
 201. 拝 [衤] (HAI, oga(mu) = worship, adore)
 202. 奏 [衤] (SŌ, kana(deru) = play (an instrument))
 203. 奉 [衤] (HŌ, tatematsu(ru) = serve, revere, offer)
 204. 捧 (HŌ, sasa(geru) = consecrate, offer)
 205. 献 (KEN, sasa(geru) = dedicate, offer)

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210. 克	(KOKU, ka(tsu) = victory)
211. 皇 [皇]	(KŌ, Ō = emperor)
212. 帝 [帝]	(TEI, mikado = emperor, the creator)
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215. 博	(HAKU, haku(suru) = win acclaim, receive)
216. 仕	(SHI, tsuka(eru) = official, serve)
217. 吉	(KICHI, KITSU, yoshi = good luck, joy)
218. 詰	(KITSU, tsu(meru) = pack, stuff in)
219. 結	(KETSU, musu(bu) = join, unite, tie together)
220. 志	(SHI, kokorozashi = will, intention)
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225. 平和	(HEIWA = peace)
226. 恵	(KEI, E, megu(mi) = grace, blessing)
227. 恩	(ON = debt of gratitude, favor)
228. 忠	(CHŪ = loyalty, fidelity)
229. 交	(KŌ, maji(wari) = association, fellowship)
230. 校	(KŌ = school)

231. 偽	(GI, itsuwa(ri) = lie, deception)
232. 甦	(SO, yomigae(ru) = resurrect, revive)
233. 罪	(ZAI, tsumi = sin, crime)
234. 危機	(KIKI = crisis)
235. 人間	(NINGEN = human being)
仲間	(NAKAMA = comrade)
世間	(SEKEN = the world, society)
時間	(JIKAN = time)
空間	(KŪKAN = space)

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Forward to the English Edition

This book was originally published in Japanese in 1994 under the title of 漢字に秘められた聖書物語 (Kanji Ni Himerareta Seisho Monogatari—Bible Stories Hidden In Chinese Characters). The process of putting together this compilation of "messages" that flow quite naturally out of the associations between the various parts that make up a particular character and its overall meaning began over 30 years ago. My interest in Chinese characters, however, dates back to 1967, when as a junior in college, I began to study Japanese at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. Though the Japanese later developed their own "alphabet" (which consists of greatly simplified symbols based mostly on Chinese characters), the characters they imported from China are still central to their writing system. Thus, the study of "kanji" has been a central part of my study of the language.

While pastoring Christ United Methodist Church, a mostly Japanese-American congregation in Santa Maria, California, I ran across a book entitled, "The Discovery of Genesis" (by C.H. Kang and Ethel R. Nelson, 1979, Concordia). This book (and sequels entitled, "Mysteries Confucius Couldn't Solve" by Nelson and Richard Broadberry, 1986, and "God's Promise to the Chinese" by Nelson, Broadberry and Ginger Tong Chock, 1997, both by Read Books, Dunlap, TN) really piqued my interest in researching the origins of Chinese characters and using them as a tool to communicate biblical truths. I owe a great deal to these books, though I take a considerably different approach to the subject. I have added numerous characters and details not found in any of them (while eliminating ones I thought in error or that I could not corroborate). Likewise, I distance myself from the "young-earth creationist" interpretation given in these books — not only because I disagree with that but also because I feel such speculation is an unnatural imposition on the evidence we actually have concerning the development of these characters. I am not compiling this book as a definitive or scholarly study of the origin of Chinese characters and what the first scribes who put them together had in mind. This book simply lists those characters that serve the purpose of illustrating various biblical truths and that can serve as bridges in tying together

those truths with the oriental cultures that utilize characters in their writing systems (specifically, Chinese, Japanese and Korean).

After my wife, Yuko "Juji," and I came back to Japan as missionaries in 1982, I began experimenting with biblical interpretations that can be given to many characters, and generally have had a very positive reception. The only negative reaction I've received was from a Japanese scholar with some expertise in the mainstream etymological study of Chinese characters when a colleague suggested I have him read over my preliminary manuscript. The first attempt at assigning an explanation to the origins of Chinese characters was that of a Chinese scholar named Hsu Shen 許慎 (Kyoshin in the Japanese reading) in about 100 AD. Since that time, mainstream scholarship in that field has been based on his system of interpretations. Needless to say, connecting the association of the composition and meanings of any particular character with biblical thought was not a part of that system. Thus, this particular scholar that I showed my manuscript to was not at all receptive to the idea. After all, who was I, as a foreign non-expert, to suggest that the traditional understandings of the development of even one Chinese character might be in error? I was "tested" to see if I knew some obscure fact that only a scholar in the field would know. When I admitted ignorance of that, he took it to mean I had no right to say anything on the subject. I had not "paid my scholastic dues." As he even went so far as to call my manuscript "dangerous," it was clear that he had a strong, emotional vested interest in the traditionally held views. This is a common occurrence in any field, as people who have invested a large portion of their lives into a particular theory frequently find it hard to be open to contrary evidence and the competing theories they engender.

This experience reflects the fact that Japanese scholarship in general tries to downplay any religious significance in the origin of Chinese characters. This flies in the face of the widely accepted anthropological principle that early writing systems and religion are intimately related. In the section entitled, "Summary of Part I" (see pages 124-128), I go into more detail concerning this, but I think it is important to note this in the preface. The Japanese are certainly not the only ethnic group to rewrite history for their own cultural, political or nationalistic goals, but

this denial of the religious origins of the writing system they adopted and modified goes hand in hand with the creation of a national identity that sets the Japanese apart from the rest of Asia. Numerous scholars have documented the relatively recent and reactionary creation of a Japanese identity, with much of the impetus for its construction coming from a negative reaction against Christianity. Nevertheless, Japan did emulate the West in one sense, and that was to become a colonizer. Thus, Japan set itself apart from the rest of Asia, and in a modified form, it has tried to maintain this aloofness with its continued emphasis on "uniqueness," as is exemplified in the popularity of "Nihonjinron" (日本人論, meaning a theory of Japanese (uniqueness)). Language is a key part of this "unique" Japanese identity, which according to "Nihonjinron" makes everything Japanese — from people's brain structure to cultural sensibilities — somehow different from that of any other people. (Of course, in one sense, every ethnic group is by definition "unique," but "Nihonjinron" means this in a stronger sense, not unique within the diversity of mankind, but unique apart from the rest of mankind.) This has resulted in a kind of "taboo" on linking the Japanese language with any other Asian language. The denial of any but the most mundane significance to the origin of characters fits this overall strategy.

I do not have the expertise to delve into this further, but I feel it is important to point out the obvious relationship between Japanese identity and the denial of the apparent (though not directly provable) relationship I am detailing in this book between character origins and religious concepts. It needs to be stressed that I am not writing this book from the position of a recognized scholar in the field. I am an outsider, and my main interest lies in the obvious illustrative power so many characters have in communicating biblical truths. I do, however, make numerous references to mainstream scholarly works, most of which, in fact, actually lend support to the interpretations I am giving. I also point out that this entire field is by its very nature extremely subjective, with no direct evidence whatsoever to back up any interpretation of the origins of at least the earlier characters. The ancient Chinese scribes who created new characters by combining already existing characters left no record of their intent, and therefore

the only evidence available that can serve as a basis for any particular interpretation is strictly circumstantial. Thus, even if the interpretation I give to a particular character does not in fact agree with the original etymology of the character (which is usually unknowable anyway), as long as it serves my purpose as a communication tool for the biblical story, then I will not hesitate to use it. In fact, a few of the characters I present here are analyzed from a purely "word association game" perspective, and the twist I give to them quite obviously has little if anything to do with the original association of meanings. I make note of this where appropriate, but again, since my objective is to provide illustrative tools for communicating biblical stories and truths, I have included such characters in this work.

I have grouped characters together into chapters related to various themes, and although I have added several additional characters not found in the original Japanese version, I have maintained the same chapter divisions. (The second edition in Japanese, however, has a section added with most of these additional characters.) The numbers attached to the various characters, however, will not exactly correspond to the original. I have also made a number of changes from the original Japanese, including adding additional explanation where it would be helpful to a non-Japanese audience. Thus, this is not strictly a translation of my earlier work, but rather a rewriting of the entire work using English as the language of communication.

For those unfamiliar with the Japanese language, I will include a brief explanation of the "romaji" used to write the Japanese words in western script. Japanese has only 5 vowel sounds, with an "a" always being pronounced like the "a" in "father," an "i" like the vowel sound in "beat," a "u" as in "boot," an "e" as in "bet" and an "o" as in "boat." There is also, however, a clear distinction made in the length of both the "o" and "u" sounds, as they sometimes are chopped off short while at other times are drawn out in length. The most common way of indicating that with a horizontal line over the "o" or "u" (ō and ū) to indicate the lengthened-out sound. In the original print version, my word processing software didn't give me that option, and so I simply transliterated directly from the Japanese system. Written by themselves, the "o" (お) and "u" (う) are the shortened versions. The

drawn-out versions (おう and うう) were thus represented by "ou" and "uu." There are a few words where the lengthened "o" is written おお ("oo"), but the pronunciation is still the same — just a lengthened "o" sound. In this electronic version (along with the hard copies made from it), however, I have taken the time to convert to the ō and ū forms. Consonant sounds are essentially the same as in English, except for the "r." The Japanese sound is actually much closer to an "l" than an "r," but as the accepted convention is to represent that sound with an "r," I have (reluctantly) followed suit.

Unlike Chinese, which assigns only one reading (pronunciation) to a character, there are usually at least two readings in Japanese. When the Japanese imported characters from China, they adapted the Chinese reading to their own phonetic system and used that reading for the most part in compound words. They also, however, assigned the words they already had in their spoken language to the characters with the same meaning, and thus there are typically two readings to each character. The modified Chinese reading is referred to as the "ON" (pronounced "own") reading, while the original Japanese is referred to as the "kun" (pronounced "coon") reading. When giving the readings of a particular character, I will put the "ON" readings in capitals and the "kun" readings in lower case, such as in 告 (KOKU, tsu(geru)), with the "(geru)" representing the part of the "kun" reading that requires the "hiragana" syllabic "alphabet" symbols (the part of the word that changes with verb tenses, etc.). When referring to a Japanese word in the ordinary text, however, I will not maintain that distinction and use only lower case letters. Likewise, as some characters have more than one "ON" and/or "kun" reading, I will usually only list the most common reading of each.

While most of the characters analyzed in this book are commonly used, I have also included a few that have gone out of general use and are unknown to the average Japanese. The reason I have included them is that with a little explanation, they can still make great illustrations, and they also add to the weight of evidence supporting the hypothesis that the ancient Chinese based many of the earliest characters on stories that were at least similar to those found in Genesis. I have indicated in the text when a particular character is not among the "Tōyō

Kanji" 当用漢字 (official list of 1800 characters recognized by the Japanese government). Likewise, I make note of the occasional change in meaning or usage that one finds between the way the Japanese use a particular character and the original Chinese meaning. With the writing reforms that took place after World War II, a few of the characters analyzed here were simplified somewhat. I will be using the older forms (which are still used in Taiwan), but I have indicated the simplified form now used in Japan in parentheses afterwards. For instance, 榮 (sakae, glory) is now written 荣. (In mainland China, many of the characters are even further simplified.)

Another problem that arises in the process of describing the origin of Chinese characters in English is the terminology used to translate various specialized terms. Dictionaries dealing with this subject include descriptions of the various stages of development of a character in addition to categorizing the character as to type and describing its usage. As it is necessary to include this type of information, I make reference to the technical terms used for this purpose, giving an approximate English equivalent. First of all, there are six basic categories characters are put into depending on their make-up. "Shōkei moji" 象形文字 are characters derived directly from a pictographic representation of the object in mind. For instance, the modern character for a fish 魚 (sakana) is directly descended from a drawing of a fish 𩺰. These were the first characters to be developed. The term I use to refer to these characters as "pictographs."

As the need to communicate more complicated thoughts in writing increased, two or more of these "shōkei moji" were sometimes combined to make new characters. This category is called "kaii moji" 会意文字, meaning that the association of the two or more character parts (usually termed "radicals") is what gives the meaning of a combined character. As an English translation of this term, I will use "meaning-association character." An example of a purely "kaii moji" is the character for festival 祭 (matsuri) (#126, p.108), which is made up of the now simplified characters for meat 肉 (niku) → 夕 plus hand 手 (te), which was originally written 𠂇 and in this character is reduced to 𠂇, plus god (altar) 示 (shimesu, which is used now to mean "reveal" or "show"), which together yield 祭. In other words, it is derived from a pictograph

describing the action of placing a meat offering on the altar in worship, and the original Chinese pronunciation given to it is not related to any of its "radicals" (parts of the character).

Most characters, however, are included in the third basic type, the "keisei moji" 形成文字. These characters are composed of two basic parts, one that puts the character into a very general category of meaning and the other that gives it its pronunciation. An example of this category is the character with which we begin our journey. In 犧 (gi, sacrifice), the left side 牛 (ushi = cow, ox) puts this character into a general category, while the right side, 義 (gi, righteousness) gives it its sound. The English translation I use for this category is "sound-association character."

Occasionally among "keisei" characters, there is also a significant association of meanings of the various parts in relation to the meaning as a whole, thus making it a combination of both the "kaii" and "keisei" categories. This category is referred to in Japanese as "kaii ni koe wo kasaneta ji" 会意に声を重ねた字. As this is a combination of the previous two categories, I refer to it as a "meaning/sound-association character." This category is technically not one of the original six "rikusho" 六書 (literally, "six writings") referred to by Hsu Shen. For our purposes, however, it is very important, and as one of the original six is not clearly understood and has gone out of use, this has in effect replaced it. Mainstream scholarship considers the number of characters in this category to be rather few, but it is my contention that a number of the characters that are traditionally put in the category of pure "keisei," with no reference to the association of meaning, do in fact fit into this category — at least to some extent. 犧 (gi) is referred to in Japanese kanji dictionaries as a simple "keisei" character. In other words, the meaning of 義 (gi), righteousness, is not thought to have any bearing on the meaning of 犧 (gi), sacrifice, as a whole. From a purely "keisei" perspective, the choice of 義 (gi) to get the proper sound (for the already existing spoken word in the original Chinese) was strictly arbitrary. Thus, according to this view, any other character with the same pronunciation as the targeted spoken word this new character was to represent would have been just as likely a candidate.

The majority of "keisei" characters do seem to fit this pattern, as

there would appear to be no rationale for the radical chosen for the pronunciation. For instance, in the character 慘 (san), which means "cruel" or "wretched," the left side, which is a reduced form of 心 (kokoro), heart, puts it into a category having to do with the emotions. There would, however, appear to be no association intended with the meaning of 参 (san), which originally meant to visit a shrine (#18, p. 44). It seems to have been a strictly arbitrary choice for its sound alone. My own hypothesis is that whenever the ancient Chinese scribes contrived a new character in this fashion to represent a spoken word, they would choose from among characters with the proper sound the one that made the most sense from the association of meanings. When no good candidate was available, then the choice would be more or less arbitrary, and since that was often the case, most "keisei" characters appear to have no "kaii" aspect to them. As you will see from the analysis of "sacrifice" 犧 (gi), however (as well as a number of other characters I analyze), it seems highly probable that the associations of meanings of each of the parts was intentional and meaningful.

The last two categories are not particularly important for our study, but for completeness, I mention them briefly. "Shiji moji" 指事文字 are not very numerous and consist of "shōkei moji" pictographs with a dot or line added to give it a different meaning. An example is the character for "blade" 刃 (ha), which is simply a sword 刀 (katana) with a "slash" across it to represent that which cuts.

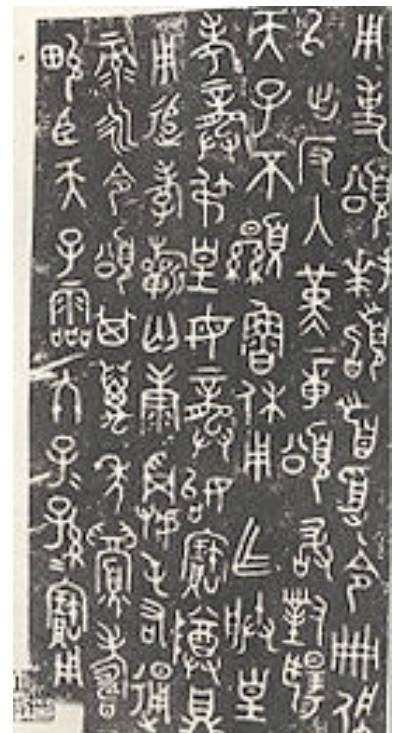
The last of the six categories is not really a different type from the standpoint of the makeup of the character, but from the character's actual usage. Called "kasha" 仮借 (also "shakuyō" 借用), this "borrowed usage" refers to the common practice of using a character to express a concept unrelated to the character's basic meaning. The distinction, then, is determined by context.

Another important aspect of the study of Chinese characters is the terminology given to the various styles of writing that were historically used. The earliest examples we have of Chinese writing date to approximately 1500 BC. How much earlier than that the very first characters came into being is uncertain, but it is generally thought to be several centuries earlier than that. There is no way of determining the earliest form of a particular character, but it is thought to have

been fairly close to what is termed the "broneware characters" and the "oracle bone characters" of the second millennium BC. The pictures below show examples of these two styles of writing.

Known as "shōtei moji" 鐘鼎文字, or "kinbun" 金文 in Japan, what we're calling "broneware characters" are found engraved in ceremonial bronze containers. They were formed by carving the characters into the mold into which the molten bronze was poured, and thus they have survived intact.

Bronzeware Characters were molded into containers used in religious ceremonies, often with the characters on the interior.





Examples of Oracle Bone Characters carved into turtle shells. Oracle Bones were used by priests for divination purposes.

The "oracle bone characters," which go by the names "kōkotsu moji" 甲骨文字 and "keibun" 契文, were directly carved into the bones of animals and shells of tortoises. As the English term suggests, they were used in various divination practices.

The materials on which these characters were produced and the method used to create them determined to a certain extent the style they would take. Likewise, as the earliest forms of the characters were drawn by different scribes at different times and locations, there are many variants, and standardization was only gradually introduced. Consider, for instance, the variety of ancient forms found for the modern character 陽 (YŌ = sun, positive) (#32, p.55). Its form in the "oracle bone" style was 𠄎, while the following variants were found among the "bronze ware characters": 𠄎, 𠄎, and 𠄎. As you can see, one carver has it reversed, but during this age when standardization had not yet developed, this happened fairly often.

The next major stage in the development of "kanji" came with the development of the "seal" 篆文 (tenbun) characters during the middle part of the first millennium BC. These characters are still used today in

official seals, but went out of general use as the modern, more abstract forms of characters were developed for ease in writing. The following example shows how this development took place for 降 (KŌ, fu(ru), o (riru) = descend) (#35, p. 57):

 →  → 降

"oracle bone" → seal → modern form

Preface to the Japanese Original

Prior to my junior year in college, my knowledge of the Orient was like most Americans — practically non-existent. While the number of high schools, colleges and universities offering courses in Japanese language has skyrocketed in recent years, when my odyssey with Japanese began in 1967, the study of oriental languages in the United States was not at all widespread. Like the vast majority of other universities, my school, Arizona State University, did not offer any courses at all in Japanese, Chinese or any other oriental language.

As a first step towards resolving this deficiency, the U.S. government-sponsored East-West Center (which is attached to the University of Hawaii) began a Junior Year Program, in which 30 students from around the U.S. were selected, with 15 each in the Japanese and Chinese programs. Being able to study in beautiful Hawaii on a full scholarship certainly was a factor, but I also decided to apply with the goal of broadening my horizons and being able to utilize future language ability in scientific exchange (since I was majoring in physics).

The total program was for 15 months, with the first 12 being in Hawaii studying Japanese at an accelerated pace. The first summer was intensive, with language study during the regular school year being done in conjunction with work in one's main field of study. All told, we received the equivalent of 4 years of credits at the regular pace in that one year. The final 3 months, then, was spent studying in Japan.

I returned to Arizona with a growing fascination with Japanese culture and its language, and continued to study on my own while finishing up my physics degree. I was then accepted on a full National Science

Foundation fellowship to Florida State University to get my Ph.D. in meteorology, but after only one year of study there, the same government that was paying my way drafted me into the military and I was forced to quit.

Needless to say, at the time I was very disappointed in that turn of events, but in hindsight, I can clearly see the mysterious hand of God leading through all of that. I won't go through the complicated details, but eventually things worked out so that I didn't have to serve in the military and the way opened up for me to return to Japan as a short-term missionary. After spending 3 years in Sapporo, I returned to the U.S. to enter seminary and become a minister. Thus, instead of studying the physical weather, I began to study the "spiritual weather" of the human heart.

When I first began studying Japanese, the daunting prospect of trying to memorize almost 2000 Chinese characters looked monumental, but as I got into the subject, it became very interesting and even enjoyable. Japanese children generally memorize characters by rote, but as an adult trying to learn these characters, I needed a different approach. Thus, I often made it into a kind of word association game, wondering what on earth the originators of these characters had in mind.

It is logical to assume that when the ancient Chinese scribes began to express their spoken language through a writing system, they made associations with objects and stories that were a part of their everyday experience. We who live some three to four thousands years later, of course, have no way to know specifically what was in the minds of the scribes when they first designed a new character. For the past 1900 years, scholars have tried to trace the origins of specific characters and have come up with many plausible explanations. It is quite common, however, to have competing theories for how a specific character came about, and this is particularly so with the "keisei moji" (sound-association characters). It is not my purpose in writing this book to make arguments as to the proper theory of origin of any specific character. I am not a credentialed scholar in the field and thus am not qualified to do that. Likewise, I feel that rather than spinning one's wheels trying to determine which theory of origin is correct, it is more important to utilize such study to make the characters easier to

remember and to make the language come more alive. Thus, I see no problem in using whichever association is most meaningful to oneself.

In learning Japanese as an adult, I always made an effort to learn the characters for each new word I learned. As an aid, I would often try to imagine what sort of association the ancient Chinese had in mind or just simply dream up one of my own to make it easier to remember. For instance, when I learned the character for "lake" 湖 (mizūmi), I remembered it as something made out of last month's 月 old 古 water 水(𠬞). I rather doubt that was the original association the Chinese had in mind, but it did make it easier to learn that character.

There were, however, a few instances in which it seemed to me that the natural association of the constituent parts of a character meant the exact opposite of the character itself. For instance, the character for hunting, 狩 (kari) is made up of the radical derived from dog 犬 (犳 "kemono hen" — "hen" being the Japanese term for a "radical" on the left side of a character) added together with the character for "protect" 守 (mamo(ru)). Somehow, "protecting an animal" doesn't quite seem to fit in with the idea of "hunting." Likewise, the character for "vow" 誓 (chikai) is made up of the characters for "break" 折 (o (reru)) and "word" 言 (kotoba). Again, "breaking one's word" doesn't seem to go hand in hand with taking a vow (unless you're a politician, of course!). But my Chinese friend said that since the character for "break" 折 is made up of "hand" 手 (te, simplified to 扌 as a radical) and "axe" 斤 (ono), the image that came to his mind was that of holding an axe in one's hand to threaten someone into keeping his promise.

Likewise, among the compound words I was learning, I found a few that seemed to make no sense. For instance, the word for "apologize," 謝罪 (shazai) was to me a very strange combination indeed. It seemed to literally mean giving thanks 謝 for sin 罪. "Thanking someone for sinning? Hmmm!" But as I looked further into the matter, I realized that this is a good example of a fundamental difference between occidental and oriental cultures. The same character 謝 is used in expressions related to showing appreciation — example: 謝する (shasuru) (also, in Chinese, "thank you" is 謝謝 (sheshe)— remember, "e" is as in "bet") as well as expressions meaning apology — example: 謝る (ayama(ru)). These, however, are two concepts that people from a western cultural

background would never mix. One would never use an expression having to do with apology when expressing gratitude.

In Japanese, there are, of course, expressions that clearly distinguish between these two concepts. For instance, one would not say "gomen nasai" (excuse me) in place of "arigatō" (thank you). An expression such as "sumimasen," however, can be used in either context. It literally means "(my obligation) doesn't come to an end," and would be something like "much obliged" in English. But it is used both when apologizing for something as well as when expressing thanks for something. Even the word 謝する (shasuru) can, according to the dictionary, be used for expressing thanks as well as making an excuse. Likewise, I learned that this character's original meaning was that found in the word 謝絶 (shazetsu), meaning to refuse or decline (an offer). This all made me wonder if this wasn't somehow related to the "strange" (at least from western eyes anyway) custom of first refusing something that is offered even though the person really does want it. It is considered good etiquette to first refuse something and then accept it when it's offered the second or third time. At any rate, a great deal can be learned about culture from the dictionary.

The study of kanji can also provide some humorous material for jokes. Take the example of the characters for the now defunct Japanese Railway, 国鉄 (kokutetsu). Up until the time of its privatization a few years ago, "JR" piled up a huge debt that the national government is still paying off. One look at the make-up of the characters convinced me that the ancient Chinese must have been prophets. That is because the character for "iron" 鉄 (tetsu) is made up of two parts, 金 (kane = money, metal) and 失 (ushina(u) = lose). Thus, it seemed to me to be saying, "that which loses the government's money." When I jokingly pointed that out to a friend who worked for JR, he defensively blurted out, "On no! You have it all wrong! 国鉄 Kokutetsu is an abbreviation of 国有鉄道 (kokuyūtetsudō)!" But I wouldn't let him off the hook. 有 (yū) simply means "to own" while 道 (dō) means "way" or "road," and so it is just saying "the way 道 in which the money 金 the government 国 owns 有 is lost 失!"

While that bit of analysis is meant in a light-hearted vein, I want to now move on to the meat of this book and look at a number of

characters in a more serious light. For the past thirty plus years, the study of the development of Chinese characters has been a kind of hobby for me. Even earlier in my study of the language, I had been fascinated by these unwieldy symbols, but what really got me started on this quest was my reading of a book written by a Chinese pastor and an American medical missionary. I will mention more about that book later, but its basic theme was that the makeup of many characters fits in very well with the stories found in the Bible. From this initial exposure, I began to see other characters that likewise fit in surprisingly well with the message and the stories of the Bible. Through that discovery, my study of characters became even more interesting and meaningful, and so I want to share what I have discovered with my readers.

The first half of this book contains those characters that can be easily interpreted within the framework of the stories in Genesis chapters 1 through 11. For a few of them, when taken in isolation, the association may seem a bit contrived, but when seen in light of the large number of characters that fit so perfectly in that framework, I don't think they can simply be written off as an artificial contrivance or simple coincidence. While no direct evidence has yet been found to tie the cultures of the ancient Near East which gave birth to the Bible to the culture of ancient China, a great deal of indirect and circumstantial evidence points to some sort of connection. In Chapter 1, I want to look at how the religious ceremonies and concepts of ancient China were really very similar to those of the Old Testament as we analyze our first character, 犧 = sacrifice).

(Note: Footnotes with an asterisk * beside them contain information other than a mere source reference. All Scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise indicated. I have occasionally used the Today's English Version (TEV) when the NIV wording didn't fit well with my purpose.)

Part I

The Makeup of Chinese Characters and the Genesis Stories

漢字の形成と創世記物語

Kanji no Keisei to Sōseiki Monogatari

Chapter One

The Religious Concepts Of Ancient China

漢字を生み出した古代中国の宗教観

Kanji wo Umidashita Kodai Chūgoku no Shūkyōkan

1. 犧

(犧)

GI

sacrifice

Pronounced "GI" in Japanese and meaning "sacrifice," this character has a very meaningful composition. While animal sacrifice was apparently not very common in ancient Japan, it played a very important role in ancient China, just as it did in the ancient Near East. This can clearly be seen in the makeup of the character for sacrifice, particularly in its older form.

1*

牛	+	羊	+	秀	+	戈	=	犧
ushi		hitsuji		sugu(reru)		hoko		gi
ox		sheep		excel		spear		sacrifice

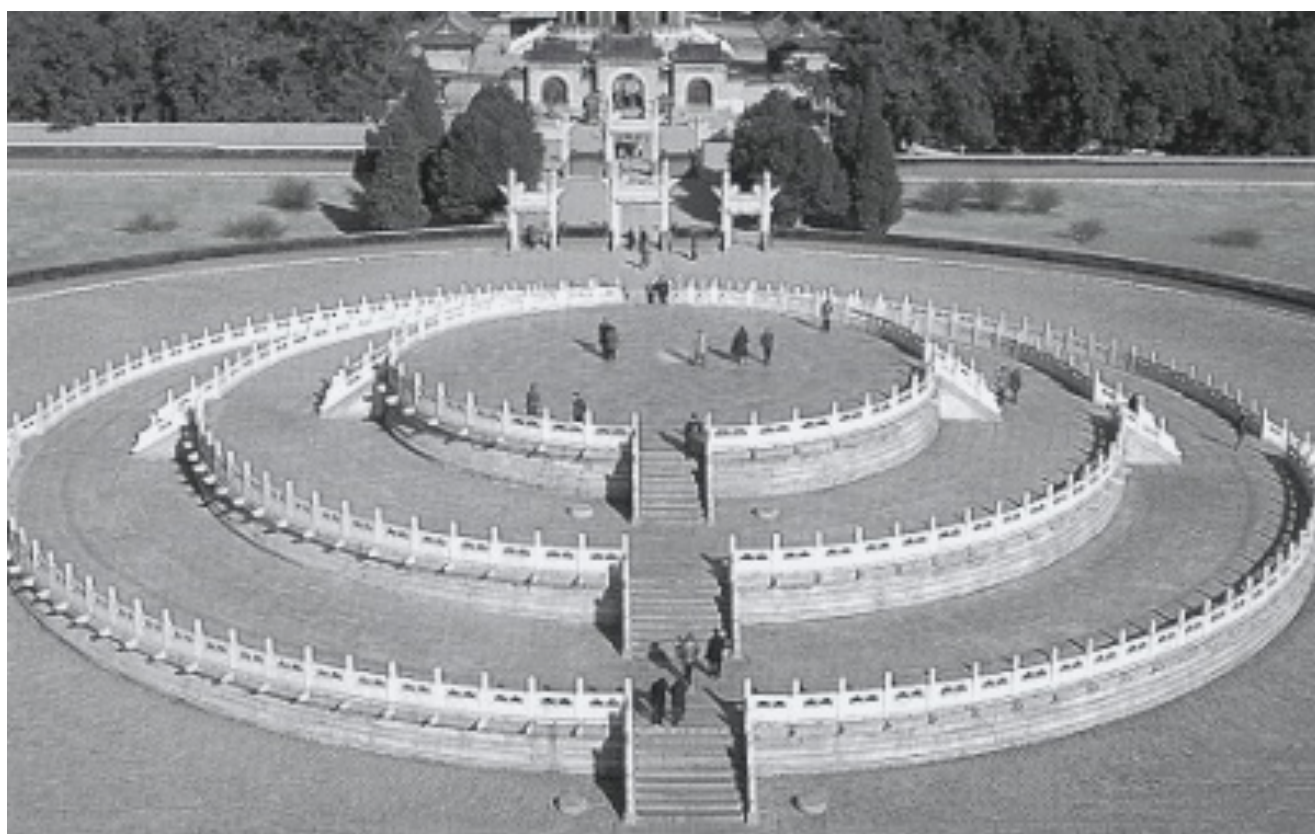
Many of the sacrifices described in the Old Testament required the worshipers to offer a male ox or sheep "without defect," that is, an animal that "excelled."

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: 'If any of you — either an Israelite or an alien living in Israel — presents a gift for a burnt offering to the Lord, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf.'" (Leviticus 22:17-20)

Such an animal was, of course, killed with a sharp instrument of some sort. Hoko 戈 is defined as a "halbert," which is a combination spear and battle-axe. At any rate, the combination of these four elements to make a character for an animal sacrifice is in perfect harmony with the biblical description for such a sacrifice.

With the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, the Chinese emperor system, which had lasted some 4400 years, came to a close. On the morning of the winter solstice (December 22) of 1911, the emperor rode in a special carriage to the "Temple of Heaven" 天殿 (tenden) to offer a male ox as a burnt offering to "Shang Ti" 上帝 (jōtei in Japanese reading). (As this "last emperor" was still a child, he, of course, had help from his court retainers.)

A description of this "Temple of Heaven" from the early 19th Century described it as having no idols or any other representation of God. Likewise, the animal sacrifices were described as taking place not within



the temple itself but on a large stone altar outside the temple.²

This giant stone altar was 75 meters across and resembled a giant three-tiered wedding cake. The Temple of Heaven itself also was three-tiered, and as will become clear later, it would appear that this number three was of special significance in the Chinese understanding of Shang Ti. In between the Temple of Heaven and the "Altar of Heaven" 天壇 (tendan) was a smaller building referred to as the "Temple of Prayer" 祈年殿 (Kinenden) which contained a wooden plaque with the characters

皇天上帝 (nōtenjōtei) written on it. Literally, the four characters mean "emperor," "heaven," "above" and another character meaning "emperor." The first two characters are the same ones used to refer to the Japanese emperor 天皇 (tennō), though in reverse order, and literally mean "heavenly emperor." In the Chinese way of thinking, 天皇 (tennō) and 上帝 (jōtei) would basically have the same meaning, and thus the Chinese emperor was never referred to as 天皇 (tennō). Instead, he was called 天子 (tenshi, the "Child of Heaven"). Thus, it is only natural that both the Chinese and the Koreans never refer to the Japanese emperor 天皇陛下 (tennō heika) using the characters 天皇 (tennō). Instead, they merely refer to him as "King of Japan" 日王 (nichiō).

There are many parallels between the "Temple of Heaven" and the sacrifices that took place on the "Altar of Heaven" with the temple in Jerusalem and the sacrifices that took place there during Old Testament times. These parallels go beyond mere surface-level similarities, as the concepts the ancient Chinese had concerning "Shang Ti" 上帝 appear to have been quite close to the biblical understanding of God.

As evidence for this assertion, let us take a look at three examples from the recorded liturgy for the worship of "Shang Ti." (Note: In the Japanese original, I quoted the original Chinese and then a classical Japanese translation of that done by a Japanese scholar of ancient China, Professor Shunya Nakamura of Tsukuba University. That was then followed by my own translation into modern Japanese from a comparison with the English translation given by James Legge in his 1852 classic, "The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits." Here, I give only the original Chinese and my translation, which reflects both Professor Nakamura's and Legge's translations.)

1. To greet the approach of the Spirit of Shang-Ti

於昔洪荒之初兮、混濛、五行未運兮、兩曜未明、其中挺立兮、
有無容聲、神皇出御兮、始判濁清、立天立地人兮、羣物生生

Of old in the beginning, there was the great chaos, without form and

dark. The five elements (referring to "fire" 火, "water" 水, "wood" 木, "gold" 金, and "soil" 土, the same five characters used to designate the five planets observable with the naked eye) had not begun to revolve, nor the sun and the moon to shine. In the midst thereof there existed neither form nor sound. O Spirit Emperor, You brought them under your control, and for the first time divided the impure parts from the pure. After you made heaven and earth, you made human beings. In that, all living things came into being. ³

2. Upon making an announcement to Shang Ti

帝闢陰陽兮、造化張、神生七政兮、精華光、圓覆方載兮、
兆物康、臣敢祇報兮、拜薦帝曰皇

O Ti, when You separated the Yin and the Yang (i.e. the heavens and the earth), Your creating work proceeded. You produced, O Spirit, the seven heavenly bodies (i.e., the sun, the moon and the five planets that can be seen with the naked eye), and pure and beautiful was their light. The round heaven was like a covering over the square earth, and all things were at peace. I, Your servant, come before You in reverence to report. O Ti, I worship you, calling You "Emperor." ⁴

3. Words said when making a wine offering to Shang Ti:

羣生總總兮、悉蒙始恩、人物盡囿兮、於帝仁、羣生荷德兮、
誰識所從來、於惟皇兮、億兆物之祖真

All the herds of living things were created and exist according to your kindness. O Ti, all humans and all things are under your loving care. All living things bear the mark of your goodness, but who knows from whom their blessings come. You alone, O Emperor, are the true ancestor of all things. ⁵

These three examples show that the concepts the ancient Chinese

had of Shang Ti were really very similar to what the Bible teaches about God. "Of old in the beginning, there was the great chaos, without form and dark" reminds one of the first words of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

Likewise, the "dividing of the impure parts from the pure" and the "separating the Yin and the Yang" (陰 (in) = shadow, darkness, 陽 (yō) = sun, light) resembles the description of God "separating light from darkness" and separating the "waters above from the waters below." Also, the statement that Shang Ti is the "true ancestor" (or "parent") of all life and that all "living things were created and exist according to His kindness" certainly are consistent with biblical teaching.

Scholars generally agree that these ceremonies connected with the worship of Shang Ti (which continued right into the 20th century) have existed from the beginnings of Chinese culture and are far older than Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Thus, it is apparent that prior to the influences of polytheism, the original Chinese religion was monotheistic, focusing on the worship of Shang Ti. Likewise, the evidence points to many similarities between the religious concepts and rituals of ancient Israel recorded in the Old Testament and those of ancient China.

Even though polytheistic concepts influenced Chinese religiosity for a very long time, the original monotheistic forms inherent in the worship of Shang Ti were maintained until the end of the emperor system in 1911. Within the proscribed prayers of the ceremonies, there was a clear distinction made between Shang Ti as the unique God of Heaven and the spirits 神 (shin) that served him. (Note: In Japanese, the character 神 (kami) is used both for God and gods. As there are no "upper case" and "lower case" distinctions like in English, no articles such as "a" or "the," and no consistency in designating singular and plural, 神 (kami) is a very vague and undifferentiated concept.)

Among the prayers the Chinese emperor recited when he came with his own servants to bow down before Shang Ti are included the

following most interesting words:

萬神翌衛兮、而西以東、臣俯伏迎兮、敬瞻帝御、願垂歆鑒兮、拜德曷窮

Translating into English Professor Nakamura's Japanese translation, "Ten thousand spirits (神) accompany You as imperial guards and stretch from the east to the west. O Ti, as we await Your arrival, Your humble servants bow down before You. O Ti, as we worship You in Your infinite goodness, we beseech You to accept these our offerings." Concerning this concept, Legge said, "I wish to call attention to the distinction made between Shang Ti and all the shin, or as I translate the word, spirits. They are His guards or attendants. Just as Jehovah came from Paran with holy myriads (Deut. 33:2) — as He revealed Himself on Sinai among thousands of angels (Ps. 68:17) — so did the ancient Chinese believe that when Shang Ti descended to receive their worship offered by the emperor, He came attended by ten thousand spirits. He is not one of them, though He is 'a spirit.'"⁶

We can thus conclude that the 萬の神 (yoroazu no shin) of China were not considered as "gods" in the sense that the 萬の神 (yoroazu no kami) of Japan are (萬 (万)=10,000). On the contrary, they were thought of as spirits in the same sense that the Bible portrays angels. The verse Legge refers to in Deuteronomy 33:2 reads, "The Lord came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes."

It would appear that the ancient Chinese concept of "shin" as seen in the worship of Shang Ti was consistent with biblical thought. There is only one true God and all other spirits were created by God in the same sense that he created the physical universe. Thus, they are not to be the objects of worship. The essence of Shang Ti and "shin" were originally completely different, but as polytheistic tendencies began to creep in, that distinction became blurred and by the time the Japanese adopted Chinese characters, 神 was applied to the various gods of Shintoism.

Chapter Two

Could The Ancient Chinese Have Known About Eden?

古代中国人はエデンの園の話を知っていたでしょうか？

Kodai Chūgokujin wa Eden no Sono no Hanashi wo Shitte ita Deshō ka?

Characters That Fit the Garden of Eden Story

The origin of Chinese characters roughly coincides with the origin of the Chinese civilization as a whole, and thus many characters had already been formulated before the original worship of Shang Ti was influenced by later polytheistic thinking. A very interesting theory was proposed in a book published in 1979 under the title of "The Discovery of Genesis: How the Truths of Genesis Were Found Hidden in the Chinese Language" by a Chinese pastor, C. H. Kang, and a medical missionary to Thailand, Ethyl R. Nelson. They proposed that the stories found in Genesis 1 through 11, from the creation accounts up through the Tower of Babel, were brought to ancient China along with civilization. According to their hypothesis, the makeup of numerous characters is based on these Genesis stories or at least stories that are very similar.

Nelson, with the help of a missionary in Taiwan by the name of Richard E. Broadberry, also put out a sequel to that book in 1986 under the title "Mysteries Confucius Couldn't Solve." Then with the help of Ginger Tong Chock, who has a PhD in the history of Chinese art, additional characters were introduced in the 1997 book, "God's Promise to the Chinese." In addition to looking at many of the older forms of a number of characters, Nelson made the claim that some of the characters traditionally categorized as "keisei moji" (sound-association characters) make much better sense if categorized as "kaii moji" (meaning-association characters). (Note: I am adjusting her terminology to fit the terminology I am using in this book.)

The study of character origin and development, called "setsumongaku" 説文学, has traditionally been based on the work of Hsu Shen 許慎 (Kyoshin in Japanese pronunciation), who published the first "dictionary" of Chinese characters, called 説文解字 (setsumon kaiji), in about 100 AD. Hsu Shen lived over 2000 years after

characters were first developed and the writing styles he was familiar with varied considerably from the originals. He was apparently unaware of the more ancient forms such as the "oracle bone characters" 甲骨文字 (kōkotsu moji) and the "bronze ware characters" 鐘鼎文字 (shōtei moji) that date from around 1500 BC. Thus, since Hsu Shen was unable to look at the original characters and their makeup, it is only natural that he would make mistakes in his analysis of the later character's origins.

Hsu Shen considered the vast majority of characters to be "keisei moji," with one radical giving a general category of meaning and the other giving the character its pronunciation (with no reference to the meaning of that radical). He made little effort, however, to surmise the reason why a particular combination of radicals were used to construct a character with a specific meaning.⁷


We can assume that Hsu Shen was familiar with the ceremonies surrounding the worship of Shang Ti, although it is apparent that he did not understand their true meaning. Even the most famous scholar of ancient China, Confucius 孔子 (Kōshi in Japanese) said that their origin and true meaning were a mystery. James Legge translates a section from Confucius' writings as "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 the palm of his hand!" (明乎郊社之禮、.... 治國其如示諸掌手)⁸

郊社 (Kōsha) refers to the two main sacrifices to Shang Ti, with 郊 (kō) referring to the sacrifice the emperor 天子 (tenshi) offers to Shang Ti on the winter solstice and the 社 (sha) referring to a similar sacrifice offered at the summer solstice. 郊 was considered the most important event, with the emperor making his offering at the Temple of Heaven 天殿 (tenden) located on the south side of the capital in the 郊外 (kōgai, which is presently used to mean "suburbs"). The 社 sacrifice was made at the "Temple of Earth" 地殿 located to the north of the capital. Both events centered around the sacrifice of an animal to Shang Ti, as is clear from the words of Confucius, "The ceremonies of the celestial and terrestrial sacrifices are those by which men serve Shang Ti" (郊社之禮所以事上帝也).⁹

As we have seen, the religious concepts of the ancient Chinese

certainly have many parallels with those of the ancient Hebrews. Thus, as I proceed to analyze a number of characters, I will make comparisons with the Bible. There is, of course, no direct evidence that has yet been found that would specifically show that the ancient Chinese knew the same stories found in Genesis and that they based numerous characters on those stories. The fact, however, that the association of meanings within so many characters fits so naturally into a biblical framework is at least indirect evidence that there is a connection somewhere.

So, let us begin by looking at about 150 characters that can be interpreted from the standpoint of Genesis. This is not to say that these characters can only be analyzed from the standpoint of Genesis, but that they make good sense if one assumes that the ancient Chinese had ancient lore similar to the stories of Genesis and that they based these characters on those associations.

2.  "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2)
- 靈)
REI, tama
spirit

This character has been somewhat simplified in modern Japanese as 霊, but in its original, more complicated form, it consists of three sections, 雨 (ame = rain), three 口 (kuchi = mouth, person), and 巫 (miko), a character now used to refer to a sorcerer or a Shinto shrine maiden.

First, the top part, 雨 has a horizontal line at the top — symbolizing the "heavens" 天 (ten). Just like the rain, the Spirit of God was thought of as coming down from above. 冂 is a radical that in many contexts means "covering," while the rest of the character is an adaptation of 水 (mizu = water). Thus, this part of the character can be interpreted as saying that that which comes from above is covering the waters, which would fit in nicely with the words of Genesis, "and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

Next comes the three "mouths" 口口口. While as a pictograph, 口 is

derived from a simple drawing of an open mouth, it is also used to mean "words" that come from that mouth as well as the "people" who speak them. It is a mystery why the ancient Chinese would have associated three persons with the concept of "Spirit," but this certainly agrees with the biblical concept of the Trinity.^{10*} While Genesis 1:26 does not specifically refer to a trinity of persons, it does use the plural form, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." Likewise, God's creative activity is described in terms of him "speaking" things into being, "And God said, let there be...", and thus the use of three 口 in the character for "Spirit" would certainly be appropriate for expressing the creative activity of the triune God of the Bible.

Finally, the bottom part of the character 巫 can also be interpreted as saying basically the same thing. In analyzing 巫, we can see that it is made up of two "persons" 人 within a character meaning "work" 工 (KU, takumi = craftsman, to make something), and thus would seem to be saying "two people working." However, the character 工 can be further broken down, with the vertical line being interpreted as a simplification of "person" (人 → |). In fact, the Japanese often write 工 as 𠂇, which would seem to be a kind of hybrid of the two. Also, there is an ancient form to the character that includes three slashes 𠂇, again giving the idea of "threeness."¹¹ Putting this all together, 巫 would seem to be saying "three persons" 人|人 "working" 工 under heaven 一 on earth 一.

Another possible interpretation in light of the Bible would be to interpret the 工 in 巫 as itself referring to God's creative activity. Perhaps they associated it with the great "carpenter of heaven" (天の大工 = ten no daiku) creating the first pair 人人 of human beings.

In its present usage, however, 巫 is only used in words such as 巫術 (fujutsu = shamanism) and 巫女 (miko = a shrine maiden, or spiritual medium). From a biblical standpoint, this is the natural result of human beings having turned their backs on the true God. It resulted in replacing the true God with numerous false gods.

Another ancient character with the same meaning that was not adopted by the Japanese is 示. In place of the 巫, there is 示, a character that refers to God. Thus, this character would also be a very appropriate character for describing the Creator God of the Bible.

3~6. 造 𩇛、土 土、生 𠂔、告 𠂔

ZŌ, tsuku(ru)
create, make

DO, tsuchi
soil, dirt

SEI, iki(ru)
life, exist

KOKU, tsu(geru)
tell, inform

The combination 吉 is included in several characters that appear to have a connection with Genesis. The associations in these characters fit together nicely with Genesis 2:7: "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground 土 (adamah) and breathed into his nostrils (or "mouth" 口) the breath of life, and the man (adam) became a living being."

Within the makeup of numerous characters, the stroke 丿, such as in 生, denotes "activity" or "life."¹² When this is added to the combination 吉, it becomes 告. In other words, a living being which can speak. When the "shinnyū" radical 辵, which indicates "walking," is added to 告, the character 造 is created.

The Lord God created 造 man's flesh out of the soil 土 and breathed into his mouth (nostrils) 口 (and through his own "mouth" 口) the breath of life. Thus, man became a living 丿 being. God gave man the gift of speech 告 and made him to walk 辵, thus completing his creation. 造 is the present form of the character, but if we go back to the original forms, we can see that the character 生 in its old form 𠂔 is included within them. The bronze-ware characters of 3500 years ago have several variations of what evolved into the modern day character 造. We can see some rather interesting associations in several old variants 𩇛, 𩇛 and 𩇛,¹³ all of which contain 𠂔(告). (The first two variants dropped out of use, leaving only 𩇛 to evolve into the modern form 造.)

In considering why the ancient scribes would have used such combinations, let's first take a look at this character 𠂔(生). Genesis 1:24 says, "And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so."

In other words, the Lord God made "living creatures" from the soil 土 (土). There are several possible interpretations for the pictograph 𠂔.

The "standard" interpretation is that this symbolizes grass. After all, the "grass radical" (kusa kanmuri) 艹 is derived from its original form of 屮, and thus this is a natural assumption. However, there is no evidence that the ancient scribes of 4000 years ago only had the image of grass in mind when they composed these characters (see #15 甫, p. 42).

The ancient Egyptians had a writing system that used symbols called "hieroglyphics" (literally, "holy writing") that had much in common with the ancient forms of Chinese characters. Hieroglyphics clearly developed from the religious concepts of the ancient Egyptians, and so it is reasonable to assume that the religious concepts of the ancient Chinese also played a role in the development of their writing system. This is, in fact, consistent with the widely held view that early writing systems were intimately connected with religion. Thus, if this assumption is true, then, rather than the commonly held view that the ancient characters were developed only in reference to objects of everyday life, one could reasonably hypothesize that many characters were originally based on stories and concepts connected with the worship of Shang Ti. While there is no evidence for any kind of written record related to the worship of Shang Ti in ancient China that is analogous to the biblical stories of creation and the history of early human beings that we find in the Bible, as was demonstrated earlier, the concepts contained within the rituals of Shang Ti worship were very similar to those of the Old Testament. Thus, I feel that an analysis of the makeup of Chinese characters — particularly the earliest forms — in comparison with Biblical concepts and stories, is not an illegitimate exercise.

Therefore, let us begin with the hypothesis that the pictograph 人, along with the related pictographs 亼 and 𠂇, all of which seem to refer to God in some way. If, for instance, you were to see the stick drawing 人, you would most likely conclude that it was intended to symbolize a human being. Such a simple drawing is actually very close to the bronzeware form of 天 (ten, heaven), which was 𠂇. We will look more carefully at this character later on (#12, p.41), but this form would seem to be referring to the "God of heaven." Likewise, interpreting 人

as referring to the "arms" of God raised in blessing fits in very naturally with a number of characters, making the original forms of 生 (sei, alive) 𠂔, and 告 (koku, tell) 𠂔 fit in very nicely with Genesis.

God 𠂔 created 𠂔, 𠂔 all living things 𠂔 from the ground 𠂔, and from his own "mouth" 𠂔, he spoke 𠂔 them into existence. As mentioned above, there are several variations in the original forms of the character for create (造), but they all include 𠂔 or 𠂔 (告). It is anyone's guess as to why there are several variations of the character, but it is consistent that the idea of being spoken into existence is included in all of them.

7. 气
KI
vapor
𠂔

This character includes the meanings of "breath", "air" and "vapor," and in its bronzeware form, it was 𠂔, which is thought to have represented vapor rising. Nevertheless, given the religious concepts of the ancient Chinese, I wonder if it didn't also symbolize the presence of God. The three lines would seem to be related to the three "persons" 𠂔𠂔𠂔 in the character for spirit (靈), and as we shall see with characters including 𠂔 (#31-35), as well as several other characters related to God, this number three keeps popping up. Likewise, in the seal characters, there is a character with the same meaning that is written 𠂔, and can be interpreted to be referring to "Adam" (see 𠂔, p.62 and 陽, p.55) being infused with the

breath of life.

8. 風
FŪ, kaze
wind
𠂔

In Hebrew, the word, "ruwach" can be translated as "wind," "breath" or "spirit," depending on context. The oracle bone form for the character 風 𠂔 would also seem to have a similar relationship. At the top there is a large mouth facing downwards 𠂔 that can be interpreted to represent God's "mouth", while the small mouth facing sideways 𠂔 would then represent man.

Into the man 𠂔, we see entering what could be interpreted as "breath" (𠂔 + 𠂔 = 𠂔). The rationale for this interpretation is that the bronzeware form of 气, which also means "breath," is 𠂔, and so the same three lines being "swept" 𠂔 into the

man 人 can be interpreted as the breath of God. The "ruwach" (breath) of God's "ruwach" (Spirit) blew into the first man, Adam, like a divine "kamikaze" (神風) "ruwach" (wind) to make him a living being. (In biblical Hebrew, "ruwach" has all three meanings.)

9. 神

SHIN, kami
god, deity

示

Chapter 20 is devoted to this and other characters containing the god radical 示, but let's first look at it in the context of the creation of man. The seal form of this character 𠩺¹⁴ shows what appears to be God 示 reaching down with his "hands" 𠩺 to create man 人. In the analysis to follow, we will see other characters that include what appear to be the hands of God reaching down, and they all have the hand facing downwards. There are also several characters that include two hands reaching up 𠩺𠩺, and these make sense when those hands are understood to represent human hands reaching up.

10. 丁

TEI, CHŌ
adult male



In present-day Japan, this character is most commonly used in the word 丁目 chōme, which is used as a counter in addresses for sections of a city. Its original usage, however, is still reflected in words such as 壯丁 sōtei, which refers to a male who has reached adulthood.¹⁵

Interestingly enough, in its original form, this character was simply a large "dot," as in ● or ■.¹⁶ Why a large dot was chosen to represent an adult male is a bit of a mystery, of course, but the fact that it means this is an important key to the interpretation of many ancient characters from the perspective of Genesis.

As we saw in the analysis of 生 sei (alive) above, its ancient form contained within it the character for soil 土 (土). If we interpret the dot ● in 土, 𡗗 and 𡗘 to represent an adult male, then they fit in very nicely with the biblical concept of the creation of the first human as an adult male from the soil of the ground.

Likewise, in the analysis of 神 kami above, we saw that the seal character form of the 申 part of the character was 𠩺. The bronzeware form of this same character was 𠩺,¹⁷ with the 𠩺 part being equivalent

to the "hands reaching down" 𢇛, and surrounding what can be interpreted as an adult male 𠂇. In Japanese, 申 (mō(su)) is most commonly used as the honorific form of "to say," but in the original Chinese usage, it meant to "teach" or "explain." This is exactly what God did to the "crown of his creation," the newly formed Adam, created in his image.

11. 印

IN, shirushi
seal, imprint,
symbol



This common character is used in words such as 印鑑 (inkan, a personal seal) and 印刷 (insatsu, printing), but its original form implies that it first applied to God's "imprint" through his creation of a spiritual nature in human beings. In the oracle bone form 𢇛, we see a hand 𢇛 reaching down from above to touch the kneeling human figure 𠂇.

The "standard" explanation of this character is that of forced submission to the one in power.¹⁸ While that is certainly possible, might it not just as easily have originally referred to God's "hand" putting his "stamp of approval" on his highest creation?

12~13. 天、大

TEN DAI,
ama ōki(i)
heavens, great,
Heaven large



The original form of 天 was a symbol that simply looks like a stick drawing of a human being 𠂇. Again, we see the enlarged "dot," and as we shall see in many other characters as well, this is thought to represent "glory" in some sense.¹⁹

The primitive form of 大 dai was similar, looking like a stick drawing of a human with outstretched arms and legs 𠂇. This character, however, meant more than just "large" or "great," as it also carried the meaning of a "great, noble person." Thus, it would seem that the God of Heaven, Shang Ti, was conceived of as a glorious and noble person.

14. 父

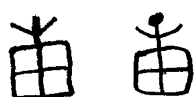
FU, chichi, tō
father

The bronzeware form of 父 is 𠂔, and here again we see the pronounced thickening of part of the character in a manner similar to that for 天 人. Thus, here also there appears to be an allusion to the glory of the "Heavenly Father." This is hinted at in the rituals of worship to Shang Ti, 於惟皇兮、億兆物之祖眞, which translates as, "You alone, O Emperor, are the

true ancestor (father) of all things." ²⁰

In the bronzeware characters of 3500 years ago, there are a couple of very suggestive characters of unknown meaning. One is the combination 𠂔, ²¹ which when put into the context we are using here would seem to be somehow related to the idea of the "Heavenly Father" 𠂔 creating the first human, Adam 人. The other character is 𠂔, and since 𠂔 is the primitive form of 乙 otsu, which means a "young maiden," this character would seem to be referring to Eve, the first "young maiden" ~ created by the God the Father 𠂔. ²²

15. 甫


HO, hajime
beginning,
father, field

In the oracle bone form, this character is 𠂔, and in the bronzeware, it is 𠂔 or 𠂔. As for its meaning, it has a very broad usage, including "beginning," "father" and "field." ²³ (It is also the original form of the 圃 in 田圃 tanbo, a paddy field.)

As is often the case, the explanations of the origin of this character differ widely from dictionary to dictionary. For instance, according to the 漢和中華辭典 (Kanwa Chū Jiten, the Middle-sized Chinese Character-Japanese Dictionary), "This character is obviously the symbol for grass 艹 (草) (kusa) added on to 田 (den, tan, paddy field). It thus refers to a field where vegetables are grown." ²⁴ On the other hand, the 字源辭典 (Jigen Jiten, the Dictionary of Character Origins) says with equal authority, "This character is a 'meaning/sound-association character' which gets its meaning from the radical 用 (yō, to use) as well as from 斧 (ono, axe), with the 父 (fu, father) giving it its sound." ²⁵

When we consider, however, that this character means "beginning," "father" and "field," it would make much more sense to assume that

the ancient scribes who first devised this character had in mind the first "field" that the "Heavenly Father" created in the "beginning," namely the Garden of Eden. After all, it would appear that the Ψ in 畝 is related to 父 (father). Thus, it would seem that this character is referring to the "field of God." If this is correct, then the Ψ in the oracle bone form of the character 畝 would not be "grass" but, as we saw before, the "upraised arms of God in blessing."


16. 

saketsubo
a vessel for
rice wine



This character was not included in the officially recognized characters, but it was given the reading of "saketsubo" in Japan. Its original meaning was simply a vessel in general, and in its original form 𠂔 , we can again discern a relation to the creation of man. The 𠂔 is an adaptation of 人 (human being), which seems to envelope the symbol for soil 土 (土) we looked at earlier. As the 丁 (丁) means an adult male, a reasonable interpretation of this character would be that of "a man created from the soil," who then is compared to a clay vessel.

This is very reminiscent of the words of Isaiah, "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand" (64:8). We likewise find a similar phrase in the Shang Ti rituals: 皇德無京、陶此羣生 "O Lord, your greatest virtue is beyond knowing. As a potter, you have created all life."²⁶

17. 




JAKU, waka(i)
young,
similarity



In Japanese, this character is used almost exclusively with the sense of "young," but its original meaning had to do with "bearing the image of" or "resembling." Its usage in words meaning "young" is a "borrowed usage," and its original meaning, while still referred to in Japanese dictionaries, has gone out of general use.²⁷

When this character's origin is taken into account, it is clear that the makeup of this character also "resembles" the Genesis stories. It is a bit difficult to see in the oracle bone style 𠂔 , but in the bronzeware version 𠂔 , there are clearly three Ψ . In the seal characters that followed some 1100 years later, the form evolved into 若 , and then finally into the modern character 若. If the Ψ is

taken to mean "the uplifted arms of God in blessing," as was the case in 𠂇(甫) and 𠂇 (告), the combined symbol 𠂇 could be taken to mean, "three gods being one." In 𠂇, then, we have a small "mouth" 𠂇 (which could be interpreted as Adam) being added, with the resulting combination depicting the "Triune God 𠂇 creating man 𠂇 in his own image 𠂇." As 𠂇 can also mean "hand," this combination of "three hands united into one" could also be viewed as the hands of God creating man in his own image.

	+		=	
three hands united into one		man		resemble, similarity

While the concept of the Trinity is not specifically referred to in Genesis, the phrase in 1:26 "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" is in the plural, and since the triune nature of God is the clear teaching of the Bible as a whole, it would appear that even in this area, the concept of God held by ancient Chinese "resembled" (若) that of the Bible. (See footnote #10)

18. 参

(参)
SAN, mai(ru)
visit (a shrine)







When one considers the ancient forms of this character, 𠂇 and 𠂇, it would appear that the ancient Chinese composed this character, with its meaning of "going into the presence of God," by associating a person 𠂇 (a stylized version of 人) going before Shang Ti. Among the Bronzeware characters, there is a similar character 𠂇 that is thought to be simply a variety of this same character. The bottom part of

this character 𠂇 appears to be a representation of a kneeling human, and is quite similar to the ancient form of 光 (hikari = light), which is 𠂇 (See p.66).

It is striking that this character also contains three 0's connected together in unity, just like the three 𠂇 in 𠂇 (若#17, p.43) and the three 𠂇 in 靈 (pp.35-36). (We will also see the same pattern in characters including the 𠂇 radical (kozato hen, #31-35), which was three mouths

For three horizontal lines 𠄎 connected with a vertical line and also the oracle bone form of 帝 (Emperor, which was 𠄎, #212, p.172). All of these seem to be pointing toward the mysterious, triune nature of Shang Ti 上帝.

The Japanese use this character most commonly in the sense of going to a shrine or visiting the graves of one's ancestors (お参り omairi or 参拝 sanpai). Also, the three diagonal lines 彡 in 𠄎 are similar to those seen in 𠄎 (風 kaze, p.39), which we saw can be interpreted as the Spirit of God. Thus, putting these together, if the thesis that the origin of this character is based on the religious concepts of ancient China is correct, then the original "omairi" (お参り) of human history was not to the graves of the ancestors, but into the presence of the God who created the ancestors, Shang Ti.

	+		+		=	
three beings united in one		person		Spirit of God		visiting a shrine