ABSTRACT

China has had a long history of associating the passing over of kingship with the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, and the government as having a central bureaucracy structure. However, there existed a time when kingship was associated with a particular tribal god, called Shang-di, and the government’s structure based on tribal alliances. This was the Shang Dynasty (1570 BC -1045 BC)\(^1\), a mature political entity before the Zhou Dynasty.

When the Zhou people wrested kingship from the Shang, they did not follow the belief of Shang-di, but instead replaced it with the concept of the Mandate of Heaven. The system of tribal alliances of the Shang was also replaced by a proto-bureaucratic system invented by the Zhou Dynasty\(^2\).

This thesis seeks to find the reason for this abandonment of the Shang-di belief, and the system of tribal alliances at the point when the Zhou had successfully vanquished the Shang. In this thesis, the characteristics of the Shang and the Zhou political systems would be pointed out, each part follows by an examination of the social background belonging to that particular period of time. Thus, it will be noted that there was a change between the two social backgrounds: the transformation from a tribal society in Shang times to one that was less so in Zhou times. This transformation had led to a change in social consciousness: the perceptions of the people towards religion and politics became more humane and benevolent. This

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thesis argues that it was this change in social consciousness which caused the downfall of the Shang Dynasty.