Historical Traditions Social Customs and Cultural Practices in China

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History of the Culture

China is considered to be the third-largest nation in the world by area. China's land area occupies 3,691,502 square miles (9,596,960 square kilometres). Contemporary Chinese culture is a combination of old Chinese traditions and the Western standard of living. Zhonghua Renmmin Gogheguo or Zhong Guo is the other name used by the Chinese people to refer to their country. The Chinese population consists of over 55 ethnic minority groups. The Han ethnic group is the only majority in the Chinese population (10 Interesting Facts to Help You Understand Chinese Culture, n.d.).

Chinese culture has roots going back 5,000 years. In the Chinese scriptures, the Huaxia tribe initiated the Chinese culture. According to historical archives and records, Chinese culture has its roots in the Shang dynasty, which was established in 1700 BCE. The Shang dynasty was defeated by the Zhou. The Shang and Zhou dynasties are known to be the ancient culture of China. After the Zhou dynasty came the Qin dynasty. Imperial culture began during the reign of the Qin dynasty. During the Qin dynasty, Confucius' teachings were forbidden. People were motivated to build roads, canals, protective walls, etc. The formation of the Great Wall finds its roots in the Qin Dynasty. The Qin Dynasty is known to be the first and the shortest imperial dynasty in Chinese history. The Han dynasty emerged after the Qin era. The Han dynasty is known to be the longest imperial dynasty for beginning the Silk Road trade with Europe and Central Asia, making a benchmark for Chinese society. Furthermore, the Imperial Examination system was introduced. The Imperial Examination system was based on qualification and merit (The History of China, n.d.). The Han dynasty is known to be an important benchmark for the development of Chinese society. Other renowned dynasties of Chinese history include the Sui Dynasty, the Tang Dynasty, The Song Dynasty, The Yuan Dynasty, The Ming Dynasty, and the Qing Dynasty. The Republic of China was established after the Qing dynasty. After going through these eras, the Chinese culture got immense development in the field of arts, food, drinks, music, celebrations, and clothing.

The Chinese culture is famous for its arts and scientific innovations. The Chinese people are known for their unique painting, calligraphy, and sculpting techniques. Chinese calligraphy is a traditional Chinese art form. The Chinese hand fan, Chinese lantern, carved lacquer, and folding screen are significant for Chinese art. Chinese are renowned for their ancient association with Kung Fu (martial arts). The most famous sport played in China is table tennis (ping pong). Chinese writers, philosophers, and poets are given immense respect and acknowledgement for preserving Chinese

culture. The Tang dynasty is known to be the golden era for the development of Chinese poetry. The major Chinese philosophies include Ruism, Legalism, and Taoism. After the establishment of the Republic of China, modern Chinese literature immensely focused on promoting national strength and unity.

Chinese cuisine plays a significant role in Chinese culture. Chinese cuisine has a great effect on the cuisines of other countries from all around the world because of the Chinese diaspora. Tea is also a significant part of Chinese traditions. Tea is used as a traditional medicine in China. The major staple food of Chinese cuisine includes noodles, rice, and wheat. Tofu is one of the famous food products used in Chinese dishes. Fresh produce and vegetables are used in Chinese food. In Chinese culture, daily shopping for fresh produce is considered part of Chinese tradition. Hotpot and Peking duck from Beijing are among the famous Chinese foods. The hotpot has significant cultural value during traditional dinners, symbolizing the warmth and unity of people sitting around it. Herbs and seasonings are a major part of preparing Chinese food. Chinese cuisine is renowned for its different kinds of sauces, such as soya sauce, oyster sauce, fish sauce, and fur. Furu is a fermented sauce used to season Chinese food. There are different types of vinegar used in Chinese food, such as rice vinegar and Shanxi vinegar. Chinese desserts are served in small portions and are known as Dim Sum. Chinese food is usually prepared in a wok (cooking utensil).

Chinese beverages include traditional tea, alcoholic drinks, herbal drinks, and other nutritious drinks. The Chinese people drink their tea with Dim Sum (desserts) and snacks. The types of tea used in Chinese culture include oolong tea, green tea, black tea, scented tea, compressed tea, and white tea. Baiju is one of the famous alcoholic beverages consumed in Chinese culture. Mao Tai is known as the premium Baiju in China. Chinese herbal tea is known to be a famous herbal drink used in Chinese culture. Different nutritious beverages include soy milk, coconut milk, almond milk, and walnut milk.

The early period of China includes the close association of dance and music. Traditional Chinese music is known as “Yayue”. “Qin” was a musical instrument used in ancient Chinese culture, especially during the Han dynasty. Other musical instruments are Guzheng, Xiao, Pipa, Sheng, and many more for composing music.

The clothing styles and fashion trends of imperial Chinese culture were based on different social classes. The clothes of the elite class were strictly made from pure silk. The dressing style of a person reflects his social class and status. Dragon embroidery on clothes and bright yellow colour was only worn by the emperors. In ancient Chinese culture, civil servants and officials had specific uniforms according to their ranks. However, modern Chinese culture has innovative trends. The traditional wedding costume is mainly red because the red colour is considered lucky. The traditional Chinese clothing style includes Hanfu, Zhongshan Suit, Tang Suit, and Cheongsam (qipao).

The major part of Chinese culture (ancient and modern) relies on celebrating different cultural festivals. The Chinese festivals include “Chinese New Year, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival (Tomb-Sweeping Day), Dragon Boat Festival, Double Seventh Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Double-Ninth

Festival, Winter Solstice, and Laba Festival" (Traditional Chinese Holidays and Festivals: Customs, Calendar, n.d.). These Chinese festivals hold immense importance in Chinese culture. Chinese people religiously follow their cultural festivals with strict traditional trends and norms.

Aspects of culture that are important for Chinese people are:

Importance of Chinese Cuisine: Food plays a significant role in Chinese culture. Different types of food reflect the social status of the family. Furthermore, Chinese people use different foods for symbolic purposes. For instance, during the Spring Festival, the Chinese people eat dumplings to emphasize their association with their God.

Importance of family structure: Coherence of family and family structure plays a significant role in Chinese culture. Chinese people focus on uniting their families, marrying, and having children. The parents and grandparents live with their children. The Chinese view of family structure is extremely opposite to that of Western culture. The children are supposed to take care of their parents after they become financially stable. Chinese culture is very possessive of the norms and values of family structure. Chinese culture reflects warmth and solidarity. The cultural norms and values taught by Chinese culture promote a prosperous family structure.

Tell Your Story

I belong to the United States of America. The USA is known as the hub of diverse ethnic groups from all around the world. I belong to an ethnic group of non-Hispanic white people who are also known as Anglo-Americans. My ancestors are white Americans with English as their native language. My great-grandfather came from England after the American Revolution. My great-grandfather was a doctor by profession. My great-grandfather married a German lady (my great-grandmother). This German lady was a nurse in the hospital where my great-grandfather was working. They settled in Alabama. I came to know about this through a conversation with my grandmother. My grandmother told me about our relationship, which was of German descent. After my grandmother was born, she married an English American who also lived in Alabama. My grandmother had four siblings, of which I have three aunts and two uncles. My three aunts are married to Mexican immigrants who are settled in Laredo, Texas. Two uncles are settled in Alabama. Amongst all her cousins, my grandmother is from a white American background because my grandmother married a native white American. Hence, my family is also Native American. My parents and my siblings, including me, have white skin. My father is the eldest son, making me close to my other family members. He is a dentist by profession. Most professions in our family are associated with the medical field.

My family is settled in a small town in Alabama. We often visit our grandmother, who lives 2 miles away from our house. My mother is a practising gynaecologist in a private hospital. Therefore, my

parents are busy in their professional lives, so we spend much of our time with our grandmother. In America, we prefer canned food and make quick meals. We do not use fresh produce for our daily meals. We get fresh vegetables and fresh meat during large family dinners during Thanksgiving. We speak English as a native language. Our Western culture gives us the liberty to live our lives freely. My family is secular, and having white American parents in the medical profession has its perks and luxuries.

Your Personal Perspective

According to my viewpoint, this cultural research paper provided me with new insight into Chinese culture. China is one of the leading countries in the global era. This research paper will help me in my academic and professional life. Chinese culture is extremely different from our Western American culture. Our American culture promotes living separately after children get married. However, after researching Chinese culture, I came to know the significance of family structure and coherence. Therefore, Chinese culture has brought unique cultural norms and values into the limelight. I learned about family structure and the social classes of Chinese culture. The most amazing fact that I learned from Chinese culture is the symbolic association of food with cultural norms and religious festivals. I never knew how food can be associated with different symbolic interpretations. Another interesting fact that I came to know after this research paper is that Chinese people are very sensitive and possessive about their culture. I had a Chinese friend in my class during high school. Whenever we tried to socialize with him, his conversations reflected his love for Chinese culture. He was very possessive about his Chinese culture. After analyzing Chinese culture, I believe that his possessiveness towards his culture is justified. I want to visit the famous Forbidden City in China. This research paper has incited a personal urge to visit China and see its culture firsthand.

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Pictures & Exhibits

CHINESE

The Chinese writing system is the oldest continuously-used system in the world and the only major logosyllabary still in use. Tens of thousands of characters have been created over the centuries but only about 4,000 are needed for literacy. The chart below shows 100 basic characters with the standard Mandarin pronunciation (using pinyin).

大 dà big / great	小 xiǎo small	一 yī one	二 èr two	三 sān three	十 shí ten	百 bǎi hundred	千 qiān thousand	多 duō much / many	不 bù not
人 rén person	夫 fū man	子 zǐ child	男 nán male	女 nǚ female	王 wáng king	主 zhǔ master	我 wǒ I	你 nǐ you	他 tā he / she
口 kǒu mouth	说 shuō speak	目 mù eye	見 jiàn look	耳 ěr ear	闻 wén hear	手 shǒu hand	工 gōng work	脚 jiǎo foot	行 xíng go
来 lái come	入 rù enter	出 chū exit	上 shàng up / on	下 xià down / under	中 zhōng center	在 zài located at / in	左 zuǒ left	右 yòu right	有 yǒu have
吃 chī eat	饭 fàn rice (cooked)	菜 cài vegetable	豆 dòu bean	肉 ròu meat	牛 niú cow	猪 zhū pig	鸡 jī chicken	鱼 yú fish	茶 chá tea
国 guó nation	家 jiā home	校 xiào school	文 wén text	学 xué learn	狗 gǒu dog	猫 māo cat	马 mǎ horse	鸟 niǎo bird	虫 chóng insect
日 rì sun / day	月 yuè moon / month	天 tiān sky	地 dì land	海 hǎi sea	木 mù wood	火 huǒ fire	土 tǔ earth	金 jīn metal / gold	水 shuǐ water
气 qì air	干 gān dry	雨 yǔ rain	山 shān mountain	川 chuān river	米 mǐ rice (grain)	田 tián field	花 huā flower	石 shí stone	玉 yù jade
村 cūn village	店 diàn shop	车 chē vehicle	衣 yī clothes	白 bái white	黑 hēi black	红 hóng red	蓝 lán blue	绿 lǜ green	黄 huáng yellow
是 shì be	心 xīn heart / mind	好 hǎo good	爱 ài love	喜 xǐ happiness	幸 xìng luck	生 shēng life	死 sǐ death	力 lì strength	病 bìng sickness

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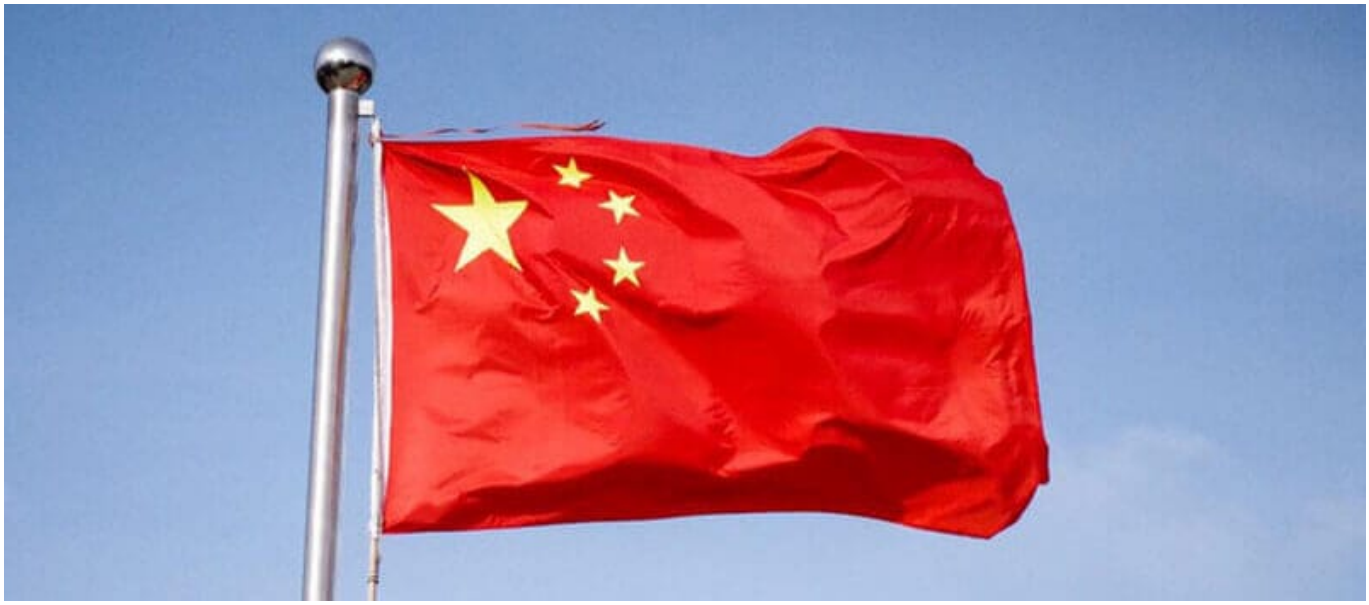

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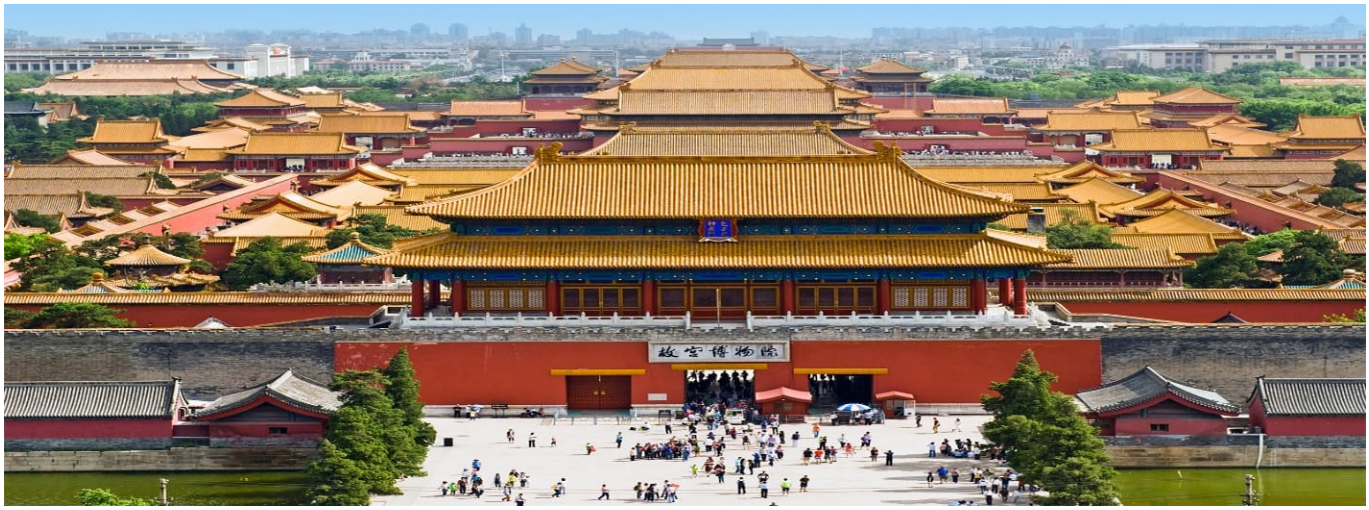

(*Forbidden City | History, Facts, & Map | Britannica*, n.d.)