The Distinctive Characteristics Of Chinese Cultural Identity

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History, Tradition, and the Formation of Chinese Identity

According to the scholarly article, Chinese identity is unique and distinct from other cultures all over the world. The community's history and culture are major because they are geographically aligned to one specific place. China today geographically stretches from Korea in the north all the way to Burma in the south. It is prudent to acknowledge the fact that such a territory comes with internal variations. China incorporated the entire empire in the eighteenth century, and every expansion drew in variations of customs, land, language, and culture. According to studies, the regional aspect of identity is known as a complicating factor in the agreement with the whole Chinese identity (Thompson, 2015).

It is worth noting that China has undergone considerable changes in the past century, especially since the fall of the imperial order in 1911. As varying understandings of the country's past and future are interpreted to meet China's present needs, discussions regarding identity are expected to be thorough, complex and shifting. China's governing elites profoundly, though selectively, documented the people's history. It is critical that the Chinese are conscious of the images of their country that are spread by local media or films and fiction.

History plays a major role in China today because it describes the past of the Chinese culture. According to studies, China has a five-thousand-year past that dates back to an estimated time of 2600 BC, supported by the archaeological record. Chinese people value their past a lot, and that is why there are historical centres where past events are kept for other generations to learn what China looked like years back. Pre-modern Chinese history points out negotiations of power leading to the identity construction of imperial China.

Furthermore, China has a unique culture that is passed from generation to generation. Even the most radical proponents of the Chinese culture are themselves deeply rooted in the tradition. Moreover, Chinese identity is rooted in shared traditions that are perceived in shifts in interpretations and principles. Chinese philosophers and political and social beliefs were most visible in Confucianism among elite powers. During the imperial era of Chinese history, social and political beliefs among the

Chinese elite were primarily shaped by the ideas of Confucius. However, the ideas of Confucianism among both the common people and the elite changed considerably over time. The influence and dominance of Confucianism over the history, identity and social structure of the Chinese cannot be overstated. It is the bedrock of traditional Chinese culture.

It is worth noting that the foundations of Chinese identity are variable. The Chinese cultural identity is characterized by utmost diversity and richness. Indeed, several articles have tried to figure out Chinese identity, but the real identity of Chinese people is never fixed. The past, place, and tradition provide multiple ideas that can be used to address the needs of the time. It is critical to acknowledge the fact that Chinese identity is rooted in the community culture and traditions that are passed from generation to generation through Confucianism.

Ritual And Life Cycle

The study of ritual rites of a group of people helps the researcher to understand the way a certain society behaves. Almost every society has different ritual ways to commemorate, regulate and demarcate various stages of life. Through studying rites in the life cycle, one is able to achieve a more profound understanding of a given society. China has deep-rooted ritual rites that are effective right from childhood all the way to adulthood. For instance, the Chinese community has certain measures to follow before marriage is commemorated. Hence, married couples are mandated to go to the temple to seek the power of the goddess to give them the ability to have children.

Additionally, Chinese families prefer the male child in the family to the female because he will be carrying the family's name in the future. In fact, many hospitals today prefer not to reveal the identity of the fetus because the female unborn child is likely to be aborted. There are some people who have deviated from that belief, but the general population still holds on to the life cycle of community rituals (Dean, 2014). Furthermore, the newly born babies were given jewellery by the grandparents to keep evil away from harming the child.

Most Chinese children are enrolled in kindergarten at a young age. This is primarily because a majority of Chinese mothers work full-time. Most of these children join primary school at about six years and subsequently go through the education system for at least nine years. Upon a child earning admission to a university, family and friends congratulate his/her parents, showering them with presents such as money in a red packet. In return, the parents host their family and friends to a great banquet. Such banquets may even go on for several days, especially if the family is well-connected.

Just like in many other societies across the world, marriage is one of the most valued events among the Chinese. Marriage ceremonies in China entail a variety of rituals. Most traditional rituals in present-day Chinese society are actually retained in marriage. Some rituals and practices regarding marriage in Chinese culture have changed over the years. For example, traditional China requires that the bride be in tears when she leaves her parents' home. However, this particular practice is hardly

followed in contemporary Chinese society.

According to research, the Chinese community had a guan ceremony, which allowed the respected members of the community to perform rituals that allowed passage from childhood to adulthood. Important events like marriage and funerals were dealt with according to set traditions, and any mistakes were seen as taboo to those involved. While some traditional rites and rituals have been passed down from traditional Chinese society to contemporary China, others, such as guan ceremonies, are rarely practised and have thus faded away from the daily lives of most Chinese people. Most Chinese people still practice rituals in the present day. However, few have embraced the Western way of life.

Family And Marriage

Chinese society, according to the articles, still values family and marriage a lot. Chinese society perceives the family as an imperative social unit because people depend on families for basic needs. Chinese believe that the family is responsible for raising children and caring for the old, sick and needy in society.

The family structure of the Chinese people consists of multi-generational families that are believed to be composed of five generations staying together under the same compound. Scholars have found that extended families live in one common place for security reasons. Even today, extended families staying together have persisted over the years, with the urban population taking the nuclear form of family.

However, Chinese family traditions are facing reduction factors regarding family size due to several factors. Family income affects the size of the family, implying that the lowest-income-earning family will consist of 3.3 people while families earning substantial income will statistically consist of 2.52 persons. In imperial China, marriages could be terminated as a result of reasons such as theft, chronic illness, barrenness, jealousy, wanton conduct or even neglect of the husband’s parents. However, only men had the power to initiate divorce proceedings.

Men generally avoided termination due to strong cultural norms and negative social pressures. In both traditional Chinese society and contemporary China, divorce and remarriages are associated with high costs for the relevant parties. Just like in many other societies around the world, globalization has had a considerable impact on modern Chinese society. More changes in the Chinese family systems are anticipated as a result of China’s market reforms and increased participation in the global capitalist system.

It is worth noting that love and romance are necessary but insufficient preconditions for a long-lived relationship in China. For example, research suggests that fairy tales are a major idea for American young adults. However, the same cannot be said for the Chinese young people. Marriage, on the other hand, is a crucial factor in Chinese society, whereby the woman is taken to the man’s family after the

bride’s parents pay her price (Hareven, 2018).

According to Chinese traditions, it is not a must that the couple romance or date to get married; arranged marriages were made and the two stayed in a marriage without any problem. By the age of 30, most Chinese women are required to get married, while their male counterparts could even marry past that age. However, marriage could end up breaking up due to some factors such as chronic illness of the spouse, jealousy, and sometimes fading of romantic love and other reasonable factors.

Gender And Sexuality

According to research, gender plays a major role in influencing how Chinese society organized itself in the past and the present day. Sexuality and gender influence various aspects of life in Chinese history, such as work, family roles, political participation, and education. Moreover, sexuality converged more on a specific aspect of life, which includes experiences and organization around gender. Pre-modern Chinese history relies on Confucianism for principles that regulate everyone in society (Zang, 2015). The principles of sexuality and gender determine how men and women are supposed to behave in society. Men were accorded much more respect than women, who were to be submissive to their male counterparts.

Confucianism emphasized family and lineage. Therefore, in traditional China, sexuality was a priority in order to enhance the procreation of a new generation. As a result of the communist revolution in 1949, many aspects of social life, such as sexual relations in Chinese society, were rearranged. As in other societies around the world, the sexuality picture in China is characterized by complexity, especially with regard to issues such as homosexuality and sex and the economy.

During pre-modern history, the Chinese elite embraced Confucianism as the main principle to regulate the people. Everybody was expected to know and behave according to their level in Chinese society. This was not only aimed at promoting harmony among the people but also establishing a hierarchical order. It is unfortunate that women were at the bottom with regard to their position in society and were thus expected to be submissive. Confucianism established a family system where men were dominant over women. The idea of the inferiority of women served as the code for women in traditional Chinese society.

The cornerstone of the family system was that the primary purpose of sexuality and marriage was for procreation. Ensuring future generations was thus a critical aspect. Love and pleasure were thus less important than procreation. Males in pre-modern Chinese society were allowed to have more than one woman throughout their entire lives. Society permitted the man to marry another wife as long as he was comfortable being responsible. However, the woman was never to be involved in infidelity; in fact, a woman should be loyal to only one man according to Confucian laws. The Chinese traditions even permit the woman to take her life in the event of rape to keep her virtue as a woman of integrity.

The sexuality aspect in pre-modern Chinese society was majorly purposed for procreation and making sure that the next generation was brought in. Also, it is important to note that sexuality, as a factor, did not allow women to work in an environment where men worked. It is the responsibility of the woman to do domestic jobs, be a good wife to her husband, and leave men's tasks to men. According to studies, there was a time when the government was able to do domestic chores and create more vacancies for men.

Contested Ground, Community, And Neighborhood

Community needs governance and leadership to develop politically and socially; hence, pre-modern China is no different. After the Maoist era, local and state representatives competed for the available resources in China. Local leaders advocated resistance to the state rule on the basis that the government is set to demoralize society by imposing state policies such as birth control (Yunling, 2016). According to studies, during the pre-modern era, informal social networks worked wonders in resisting state rules. In fact, the introduction of tax policies initiated more strategies and plans to resist the government.

Moreover, policies open up solidarity accumulation spaces both in a rural community and in the local government. Villagers were set to defend their interests after the provision of public services and goods deteriorated. The community fears that the government, led by corrupt people, will soon exploit them, and that is what they did not want and hence resisted. As a result of the fall of the pre-1978 commune structure, the distribution of infrastructure in the rural community has been altered. It is critical that the village community is not treated as an autonomous entity protected against state domination.

The Chinese authoritarian system has been credited with controlling Chinese society to discourage and prevent alienation and social and political crises. Many state intervention programmes have resulted from the need for political stability and effective governance. Significant changes in urban neighbourhoods have been realized as a result of the increased competition for community space. Such competition leads to disputes and mobilization against government policies. As a result of the increased urban transformation, differentiation of organizational infrastructures has been achieved. Also, there has been the rapid growth of locally based collective actions for community space.

The role of state power in the creation of civic spaces cannot be overstated. However, varying aspects of the community and society as a whole must be viewed as due to relevant interventions and strategic institutional choices by the government. The state is striving to validate and revalidate its authority and influence in both rural communities and urban neighbourhoods.

This is achieved through enhanced village democracy and the implementation of proper rural welfare programmes. In summary, it is vital to acknowledge the fact that Chinese people are one of a kind and have unique cultural, past, and place identities. Chinese tradition in pre-modern days plays an

important role in shaping present-day China. To date, Chinese identity is still unique because Chinese traditions are still practised in most of the country. There are a lot of other societies that still hold on to their heritage, but China is one of a kind.

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