Chinese Society Essay, Research Paper

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Change in Chinese Society

The two articles provided do not show much evidence of change in the way Chinese society has functioned

In the first article, the obvious focal point would be the traditional collective family unit and Confucian value of filial piety. Many of the rural workers give their reasons for migration on the need to earn more money in order to support their families. In the case of a former farmer, Wang Jie, he left the countryside for a job loading trucks in a state company (which he acquired through help from his soldier brother, also bringing into light the importance of Guan xi in Chinese society.) earning 150 RMB a month . Through his hard work and wise career decisions, he earned a promotion and secured a 2000 RMB a month job selling the products of the factory to wholesalers. Financially secure, he has been able to build houses, purchase luxury goods and even send back supplementary income for his father, wife and daughter who remain in the village. His wife has even convinced him to stay in Beijing for as long as it takes to save money for their daughters university education. Through this case, we can see clearly how the traditional ties and obligation to the family have not changed even to this date, with special note taken of the job of a son in supporting his ageing parents and the focus on education.

(It could be interpreted by some as a break in a sense from cultural norms in which girls in rural areas rarely had a chance to higher education)

Although Wang admits that being away from his family is a sacrifice, he says it is worth it. This is an example of how familism has carried on to this day, in which the common good of the family is paramount and overrides individual well being.

These remittance of money back home by the scores of migrant workers has vastly improved the rural economy, so not only are individual families better off, but also the conditions of the countryside and society on a whole. Officials in Quanyang county in central Anhui province estimate that approximately half the families their have relatives who have migrant workers who reportedly remit substantial amounts (figure given as 3000RMB) a year. Although many workers stay away for extended periods ranging from two to five years, some return home to till the fields during busy periods.

This practice of sending money home has not changed much from the days in which gold miners would send their earnings to their respective families, and the scores of overseas Chinese, my own family included, who continue to remit money back to their less well off kin.

Other causes of migration is due to the fact that many farmers can not turn a healthy profit tilling their relatively small plots of land and the unequal rise betwixt the cost of farming and the market value of organic produce . Coupled with unofficial taxes laid on the people by provincial governments, farming is simply not cost effective. Despite the enormous social and economical upheavals in China, it seems as if the implementation of unofficial taxes and such practices by officials has always been a part of Chinese society ranging throughout time. In a very similar situation in the 1880s, peasants were increasingly isolated from the land, as a result of the growth of commercialised agriculture, local manufacturing, and foreign economic influences. Many Chinese were no longer able to cultivate their own crops and were forced to sell their land. Whilst many become hired hands or tenant farmers, many chose to migrate to wealthier provinces or foreign countries as in the case now . One can but wonder if migration has always been a part of the National psyche and society when the previous data is coupled with the substantial amount of Chinese immigrants to different parts of the world.

In the second article, we can see clearly how the traditional preference of a male child over a female child has lasted throughout the ages to the modern day society of China.

With the enactment of the one-child policy, many peasants were horrified of the prospect of having no sons, but with the introduction of ultrasound and safer abortion techniques, parents were able to select the sex of their unborn child, which lead to the abortion of many female foetuses . With the government cracking down upon this practice, and the relatively high cost of a scan (in terms of the people), it is not surprising to see people revert to the age old method of appealing to the gods, in this case the goddess Nu Wa.

Many couples believe that by kneeling before the goddess and selecting one of the many plastic male dolls strewn on the altar will ensure that their unborn child is male . This sexist tradition has always been present in Chinese society, with one woman stating,

A daughter once married off, is like water that s been splashed out.

This is a basic reflection of the attitude towards the gender of the children, and a throwback to Confucian precepts of how a son will support his parents in their old age. In the case of females, once married they are of no value, as she does not provide for her parents in the way a son would. The traditional desire to preserve the family line is unchanged through this time, and once again places more in favour of a male child, as only they are able to carry on the family name, while a daughter would adopt the name of her husbands line.

Through the study of these two articles, we can see how traditional Chinese values have endured the test of time and how ingrained they are within the culture of the Chinese people. Despite the introduction (or contamination) of Western ideas and culture into the society, the basic family unit and preferences have changed little from the 1940s to now. The most apparent example on how deeply etched these cultural values are in the Chinese people, one only has to examine the people of Hong Kong and Singapore to see how these traditions flourish in completely different environments and societies.