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The Depiction of Chinese Cultural Peculiarities

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the definition of culture is essential for talking about culture differences. About the definition of culture, of course, different people have their own understanding of culture. But American Zhang Jie, associate professor, master, Department of Foreign Language and Literature, China Youth University for Political Sciences, and anthropologist, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, explained in his book *Culture: "A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions"* (1952), there are more than 160 different kinds of definitions about culture.

Keywords:

Knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, and habits

Culture is a floorboard for knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, and habits. According to the Baidu definition of culture, "culture" refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. To be more exactly: Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

Culture is communication, communication is culture. Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning. A culture is a way of life of a group of people—the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. Culture is symbolic communication. Some of its symbols include a group's skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives. The meanings of

the symbols are learned and deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions. Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action; on the other hand, as conditioning influences upon further action.

Culture is the sum of total of the learned behavior of a group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation. Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Cultural differences manifest themselves in different ways and differing levels of depth. Symbols represent the most superficial values and the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between. The true cultural meaning of the practices is intangible; this is revealed only when the practices are

interpreted by the insiders. So culture is the total way of a nation's living and thinking; it is in a nation anyway and everywhere; it is with the person in the culture what he wears, what he speaks, what he eats, what ways of living he has, and what kinds of ideological ways of thinking he has. Understanding the Chinese Culture with the definition and understanding of culture, it is defined as that culture is really a notion for broad study. Chinese culture is always considered to be multi-faceted. In China, it is even broad, profound, and refined. It includes benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faith, loyalty, filial piety, Ti, festival, will, courage, let; fancies of men of letters, 360 rows, the four great inventions, folk taboo, patriotism, natural health, bamboo, ballads, loess, the Yangtze River, the Yellow River, red, the moon; 12 animals: cattle, tiger, rabbit, rat, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, chicken, dog, pig; peasant, the peasant uprising, hoe; the royal palace. They represent the ancient philosophers, lyre-playing, chess, calligraphy and painting lute-playing, chess, calligraphy, and painting accomplishments of a scholar of the old school; traditional literature, traditional holidays, Chinese drama, Chinese architecture, Chinese characters in Chinese traditional Chinese medicine, the philosophy of religion, folk handicraft, the Chinese martial arts, regional culture, folk custom, and dress. With the advances, advantages, and varieties of Chinese traditional culture, and with the fast development of Chinese modern culture, sharing these cultures with the whole world is necessary and urgent.

The Basic of American Culture and the Idea of Self-government Edward T. Hall (1966) has said that the "hidden dimensions" of language and culture provide interesting insights into understanding the cultural behavior of other groups with whom we may not be familiar. From the beginning, American culture was defining itself against confederations of big government in favor of self-government. There is much more evidence to indicate that the early period (1600s), before the American Revolution, was filled with cultural emphasis about self-government. The people were quick to rise up against any

condition which prevented self-government from dominating their lives, even taxation.

Covenantal Freedom as the Basis for American Culture Richard Parker of the Kennedy School in Boston (1995) maintains that American culture is neither cultural or a civilization. Rather, that America is the dream born out of the Protestant Reformation that individuals can find God on their own terms, and without intervention by the church. He believes that America's core is born out of the need to free oneself from both the tyranny of the state and the church. He maintains that it was the community of belief around these ideas that the American culture and state were born.

The Basis for American Values as Religious Commitment Maier (1995) suggests another view of American culture. He is concerned about Americans believing that religion is the basis of American culture because the root word is "cult" (as defined here he means a particular system of religious worship) or a small group of religions that formed the basis for American values. To be sure, the role of religion in America is an interesting one.

American Prosperity as a Cultural Root In an analysis of *Tocqueville Revisited*, Handy (2001) suggests that earned wealth not inherited wealth is a value that was immediately embraced by American cultural values. He also suggests that by "codifying and legalizing the emerging property", it was possible to move capital and grow into a wealthy culture. These values, inside the American psyche, associated with human capital and knowledge, create a United States that is pivotal in the global economy.

The Reflection of Both Chinese Culture and American Culture in the Novel As the ideas mentioned above in the novel, some of the Chinese cultures will be found and some of the American cultures or signs will be shown.

Chinese Culture Reflected and Scattered in the Novel is considered as the novel full of Chinese culture. It is not only refers to the ideas or things in the novel, even in the novel, from the beginning to the end, the author use the Chinese sound to mean the idea. The Chinese letters are the most noticeable Chinese culture.

Chinese Fable Story in the Novel. The key point in this novel is the "Kitchen God". In the second chapter of the novel, the mother told a story about "Kitchen God". In China long time ago, there was a rich farmer named Zhang, such a lucky man... He was not satisfied with his happy life. He wanted to play with a pretty girl and chased his wife away. Later, he became poor, he wore patches than whole cloth on his pants. He crawled from the gate of one household to another, crying, give me your moldy grain. At last he got to his wife house, but he was shame to meet his wife and began leaping about the kitchen looking for some place to hide, then jumped in the kitchen fireplace just as his wife walked in the room.

The History of Chinese History Depicted in the Novel. In the novel, the history was recorded. It mentioned. When the Japanese took over Shanghai in 1937...when the Japanese lost in 1945 and the Kuomintang came back... and when the communists took over in 1949, the first story came back. All the time mentioned is the exact time sequence of the Japanese invasion of China and the liberation of Shanghai in 1949. (p. 80) Of course, it is not the exact history of Chinese in the 30s; the novel referred to something happening at that time. It is a vivid description of the Chinese at that time. But it is a miniature of the Japanese invasion of China in 30s and 40s. About the war Chinese experienced was mainly in three places: Nanking, Kunming, and Shanghai.

The Domination American Culture Reflected in the Novel. In the novel, the Philip's response to his mother-in-law was an immediate reflection of the American culture. "...the day before, we had a polite argument with my mother over where we would stay" "But we've already made reservation at the hotel" (p. 6). Staying at the hotel rather than with the relatives is an American culture of visiting either friends or relatives. In Chinese culture, it is common to stay at the relatives houses. It can be resumed from the old Chinese ways of living style. In the old China, when relatives visited, the host usually prepared a spare room for the visitors to live in. Later, things changed in China, each family has not got enough space for visitor. Actually they could not provide them bed, and

they had not enough money to reserve at a hotel. So the only way for the visitors is either to crowd with the host family or the host asked for help of the neighbor for shelter of the visitor. Over time, Chinese have developed a habit not to stay in a hotel in the city or town with relatives. But the situation in the story is that there are lots of rooms in the house for them to settle down. And the mother persuaded them not to waste the money. So the description here shows the American ways contrast with Chinese ways. While they were talking about the Kitchen God, they mentioned "he is not Santa Clause. More life a spy - FBI agent, CIA, Mafia, worse than IRS, that kind of person! And he doesn't give you gift and you give him things". When mother talked about her childhood experiences, she mentioned that: "In China back then, you were always responsible to someone else. It's not life here in the United States—freedom, independence, individual thinking, do what you want, disobey your mother, no such thing. Nobody every said to me: be good, little girl, and I will give you a piece of candy. You did not get reward for being good, what was expected. But if you were bad—your family could do anything to you, no reason needed". (p. 162)

The Solution of the Two Cultures With the explanation of culture in the novel, the writer shows the conflicts of the two cultures. But the solution is the acceptances of the other culture. With the mother's (Wei-wei's) early experiences in China and her later living in America, she adjusted the two cultures properly. She never preferred one to the other in her talking about the differences of the two cultures. After many years in America, the mother knew some differences between China and America. While the mother recalled her visits to her father after many years of departure, she had the kind of mood to describe the moment situation. "Of course, he did not hug me and kiss me, not the way you Americans do when you have been reunited after five minutes' separation" (p. 176). That shows she notices and accepts the Western culture.

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