

# Why Does Chinese Traditional Culture Advocate Collectivism?

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**Abstract:** *China has thousands of years of history and profound culture. In the course of thousands of years of development, China's collectivist culture has continuously developed and evolved, gradually becoming the common value orientation of all Chinese people in the long-term historical process, and the collectivist cultural ideology has occupied a dominant position in the traditional values of Chinese people for the vast majority of historical time. In the course of thousands of years of development, China's collectivist culture has continuously developed and evolved. In the long historical process, it has gradually become the common value orientation of all Chinese people. This concept fills the minds of Chinese people and forms the collectivist thinking mode in Chinese traditional culture. The root of Chinese traditional culture advocating collectivism is not only geographical environmental factors, but also political, economic and cultural factors. It is a complete system to study the reasons of Chinese traditional culture advocating collectivism.*

**Keywords:** *Traditional culture, Collectivism, Patriarchal system, Absolutism and centralization*

## 1. The unique geographical environment is the natural cradle of collectivist culture

Some people say that "collectivism is a value that goes deep into the blood of the Chinese nation", which means that the idea of collectivism has deeply penetrated into Chinese traditional culture and become an important part of Chinese traditional culture. So, why is this so? Why does Chinese culture worship collectivism? In ancient Chinese culture, where did collectivism come from? What factors are contained in the Chinese traditional cultural system that cultivate the collectivist ideology of the Chinese nation?

### 1.1. Geographical environment has great influence on social development

"Collectivism, as a socialist moral principle and an important symbol of socialist spiritual civilization"[1], The synthesis of various natural conditions for people's survival is called geographical environment, which mainly includes terrain, climate, landform, soil, mountains, trees, mineral animals, plants and microorganisms, and provides a space place and an activity stage for human to adapt to society. At the same time, it is also a necessary condition for social development and progress. [2] geographical environment is the foundation of the existence and development of human society. In history, many experts and scholars, such as Montesquieu and Hegel, put forward the theory of geographical environment determinism, believing that geographical environment can have a considerable impact on social development. Marx believes that all productive forces are attributed to nature, and the fundamental reason is the elements of productive forces, that is, the means of labor, workers and objects of labor. In addition, the energy and power needed in production and labor, such as wind power, water conservancy and electricity, come from nature. It is also for this reason that the geographical environment will affect the economic development mode of a country or region, such as the structure of productive forces, Economic characteristics and labor division. Therefore, geographical environment can not only accelerate or alleviate the process of social progress and development, but also play a decisive role in social development even under certain conditions and scope.

### 1.2. The unique Chinese geographical environment promotes the development of collectivism

Chinese Mainland is an independent and complete geographical unit, which is the natural basis for the emergence of Chinese collectivist ideology. From China's map, China is located in the east of Asia and the West Bank of the Pacific Ocean. Its territory is East, West, north, South, and in all directions,

there are mountains and rivers, closely surrounding China. It encloses China in such a land: to the north are the Mongolian Plateau and Siberia, which were called Mobei in ancient times, meaning "the north of the great desert". As the name implies, the deserts here are widespread and northerly, and the terrain is high and cold; To the west is central Asia, which was called the "western region" in ancient times. It is located deep in the inland, connected with the Central Plains by the Hexi corridor. The tall and lofty Pamirs and the Qinghai Tibet Plateau lie between them. It is covered with snow and cold ice all the year round; In the East, there is the boundless Pacific Ocean, and the boundless sea gives the ancient Chinese who are farming people an unknown fear; In the south, there is the endless South China Sea and Southeast Asia with tropical forests. The Indochina Peninsula is crisscrossed by mountains and rivers. Since ancient times, it has been hot and humid, full of miasma, and sparsely populated. Even if there are some regimes, it is still a small country and few people, which hardly constitutes any threat to China; Only in the central part, the Yangtze River and the Yellow River have impacted a large area of plains, and several cities have been formed wherever the rivers go.

In this way, there is a natural geographical separation in all directions of China, which separates China from other countries or major regimes in the world at the same time, making China's geographical position more unique than that of any country in the world. China's geographical environment makes the Chinese people enclosed in the land of East Asia without being disturbed by other civilizations - external aggressive forces can not enter, and it is difficult for China's internal political power and forces to go out of areas outside China. Although the Central Plains regime in China has always been invaded by a small number of people from Northwest China, it is only a "small-scale fight" in today's China. On the whole, China's geographical environment has guaranteed China's relative security and stability since ancient times, thus becoming the only civilization among the world's four major civilizations that has never been interrupted and standing proudly in the east of the world. This state has greatly promoted the formation of collectivist ideology.

The Chinese people stay in such a relatively closed environment. Because the mountains and rivers obstruct the outward expansion of the Chinese people, the Chinese people can only stay in this land. Their main contact objects are the things on this land. They have frequent contacts, thus forming the vision system of the ancient Chinese - "world view". The so-called world is the sum of all these things in the Chinese people's vision. The vision of the ancient Chinese is the above-mentioned limited area, which has formed a whole through thousands of years of mutual exchanges. It is such a limited collective. "Tianxia" has become the most distinctive expression of China's earliest collectivist ideology.

### ***1.3. Land is limited and collective cooperation is promoted***

As has been analyzed above, under China's geographical environment, the ancient Chinese could not cross the East, West, North and south, and the ancient Chinese were "trapped" in this land. Moreover, the central part of China is the fertile Central Plains, an agricultural area with flowing rivers and simultaneous rain and heat. It can be cultivated here. However, agriculture in ancient times was a labor-intensive industry. China built its country on agricultural production and had to produce a large number of people. Population density has become extremely high, but arable land is limited. People have to work as hard as possible on every mu of land they get, and only then can they have harvest, can they take care of food, clothing, housing and transportation, and can't slack off at all. Therefore, the structure of survival will tend to be collectivized - people unite to improve the harvest of the land, help each other in busy agricultural times, help each other when iron plows and cattle are needed, and help each other when agriculture goes bankrupt, It also needs the government to organize a certain "large collective" to relieve the unemployed so as to tide over the difficulties. These are the collective models in ancient China.

In such a process, people repeatedly touched the above-mentioned collective model, gradually cultivated the idea of collectivism, and gave birth to China's original collectivism. Marx pointed out that all productive forces are attributed to the nature, and the fundamental reason is the productive forces, that is, the means of labor, workers and objects of labor. In addition, the energy and power needed in production and labor, such as wind power, water conservancy and electricity, come from the nature. It is also because of this that the geographical environment will affect the economic development mode of a country or region, such as the structure of productive forces, Economic characteristics and labor division. China's most primitive collectivism was formed in this geographical environment of China.

## **2. Collectivism is the inevitable choice to deal with natural and man-made disasters**

China's ancient agriculture, but we can never deny that there were many natural disasters in ancient

China. In history and even now, floods, locusts, wars and so on are frequent, and there are many kinds. They play an obvious role in urging China to move towards collectivism.

### ***2.1. Flood disaster***

China is located in the monsoon region, and precipitation is concentrated in summer and autumn. In order to cope with common natural disasters such as floods and droughts, China's ancestors began to build water conservancy. If the water conservancy projects are relatively small, it is enough to rely on one family. If the water conservancy projects needed are a little larger, it needs a small collective of human and material resources. If we encounter more massive natural disasters, Then, a family can not solve the problem, and it needs a larger collective. For example, building dams on major rivers, preventing locust disasters, earthquake relief, and plague control can only rely on the collective strength of the state power. With more and more incidents of "collective need", collectivism is more and more needed by people than individualism.

### ***2.2. The Yellow river overflows***

The Chinese civilization is a river civilization, which has obtained advanced agricultural production because of river irrigation. The Chinese people farmed because of the river, the early regime was born because of the river, the early war was born because of the river, and the early cities were built because of the river. The river played an important role in China's early civilization. Everything has two sides. River flooding should be the number one disaster in ancient China.

Chinese civilization was born on the Yellow River. The flood of the Yellow River has accompanied China for 5000 years. The first priority of the establishment of feudal dynasties in all dynasties is to harness the Yellow River. Even the Chinese idiom "the river is clear and the sea is tranquil" describes the prosperity of the world. It seems that it is indeed a beautiful thing in the minds of ancient Chinese people that the Yellow River can avoid accidents. In China's long history, the flooding of the Yellow River has always been a worry of the Chinese rulers. The capricious flooding of the Yellow River requires constant management, and the management of water requires huge manpower and material resources. Such huge manpower and material resources can not be supported by families. In the process of the management of the Yellow River, the ancients realized that only relying on strong collective strength can be competent. This is also a source of Chinese collectivism.

### ***2.3. War threat***

There were many wars in ancient China. There were both wars of various regimes in China and wars of internal regimes and external aggressors. In order to deal with the threat of war and win the war, the ancient government could only concentrate the people, so that it was easier to obtain enough troops, and instilled collectivist education in the people to make them accept this collectivism. Over time, People will also identify with collectivism - because when war is coming, the crisis people feel is real, and it is impossible to rely on individuals alone.

In addition to the above three major natural disasters, in ancient China, there were actually more problems and disasters. It was precisely because each generation needed to be tested by these disasters, and individuals and families could not resist nature. They needed to form tribes, villages and countries to fight against the harsh living environment in the form of collective organizations. In the course of fighting against natural disasters from generation to generation and year after year, every person and every family has continuously received shelter and influence from the collective. This shelter and influence, in turn, continue to enhance people's sense of identity and belonging to the collective.

## **3. Autocratic centralism is the institutional guarantee of collectivist culture**

First of all, since the Qin Dynasty, China has completely entered the feudal society, established the autocratic centralized power system, and profoundly affected the historical pattern of China for more than two thousand years. Generally speaking, ancient China advocated centralized power system, which was characterized by top-down, absolute obedience of subordinates and supremacy of imperial power. "Top down" determines that the ancient government can effectively control the people, control the overall situation and control the whole. The ancient government has absolute dominance and preemptive advantage. Therefore, the ancient government can make the people accept what it wants to convey and

needs to convey. In ancient China, the ruling class of China took advantage of the centralized power system to convey and copy it level by level from top to bottom. Since the ancient rulers were the controllers of the overall situation, that is, the collective, the thought that the rulers wanted to convey was "the supremacy of collective interests", because safeguarding the collective interests would help safeguard the vested interests of the rulers. Only by conveying this idea can the ruler directly control the aristocratic family and the aristocratic family directly control the lower level people. Moreover, the more stable this rule was, the more deeply rooted this thought was, which also promoted the development of collectivism in ancient China. In addition, to a certain extent, this is also a kind of golden mean thought. "Golden mean, as a unique thinking system, may be one of the cultural roots of employees' unwillingness to make self aggressive / inhibitory suggestions that are easy to cause conflicts." [3] The result of this cultural evolution is collectivism.

Certain politics can determine certain culture. "The ethical characteristics of Chinese culture mainly stem from the patriarchal system of ancient Chinese society." [4] This situation in the political field can deeply affect the situation in the cultural and ideological fields. The political field advocates collectivism, and the ideological and cultural field naturally advocates collectivism and needs collectivism. Such a political situation can make collectivism spread layer by layer, because it is conducive to the stability of political power and society, and can protect the interests of rulers. In such a mechanism, it has played a role in promoting the development of Chinese traditional collectivism. Under the feudal society, collectivism is at the commanding height of morality and morality. If anyone violates this advocacy, he will become the condemned Party of morality, suffer a lot of criticism, and fall into a situation of isolation and helplessness. Without the support of the overwhelming majority of people, that is, the collective, he will not survive. In this case, the vast majority of people in the feudal society will definitely choose loyalty, that is, to identify with collectivism. Thus, these traditional Chinese cultures have created a strong collective cultural environment.

#### 4. Summary

The unique geographical location and the complete and closed geographical environment have become the natural basis for the formation of the collectivist ideology of the Chinese people. Restricted by geographical and natural conditions, the Chinese people have formed a complete collective, densely distributed in the Central Plains, and need to face all kinds of natural and man-made disasters such as floods and wars together. Therefore, in order to survive, it is natural for the Chinese people to "hold groups to keep warm". In the outline on Feuerbach, Marx pointed out that "the essence of human beings is not the inherent abstraction of individual human beings. In its reality, it is the sum of all social relations." [5] The emergence of Chinese collectivist culture perfectly explains this point. It is also because every generation of Chinese people needs to accept the test of all kinds of unknown disasters, large or small, and individuals and families can not cope with all kinds of disasters independently. Therefore, it is necessary to form tribes, villages, countries and other units to confront the above problems in the form of collective organizations, so as to obtain space for survival. In the repeated process of fighting against natural disasters from generation to generation, year after year, every person and every family have continuously accepted the protection from the collective, survived under the protection of the collective, and developed on this basis. This is a perfect experience - protected by the collective and given more new opportunities. Who wouldn't be grateful to the collective that helped him? This successful experience and perfect experience, in turn, continue to enhance people's sense of identity and belonging to the collective. At the same time, there is also the strong advocacy of this collectivist culture by China's authoritarian centralized political system, which has been in a continuous line since ancient times, the transmission and indoctrination from top to bottom, and the patriarchal concept that has been solidified into a system in the minds of the Chinese people since the western Zhou Dynasty. There is also the cultural atmosphere formed by the loyalty and filial piety thought that has been repeatedly emphasized by the Confucian School of Chinese official philosophy in all dynasties, All these make the collectivist culture of ancient China obtain a good space for survival and development, and pass it down in one continuous line, and form a virtuous circle. This virtuous cycle runs through Chinese culture and becomes a part of Chinese culture.

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