

## **Inheriting Chinese Traditional Culture, Historical Subject's Inalienable Duty—Take Example for Confucian Historiography for the Composition of the First Test Paper of National College Entrance Examination**

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**ABSTRACT.** *Composition for Guan Zhong of the First Test Paper of National College Entrance Examination in 2020, tested the examinee's cognition of the value of the times of traditional culture. Examining the record of Guan Zhong in The Analects of Confucius can reveal the Confucian historiography. Confucianism adheres to Comprehensive Historiography requiring comprehensive dialectical observation, insists on Humanistic Historiography believing the people are the creators of history, perseveres in Heroic Historiography convincing princes and generals are the decisive force of history, upholds Orthodox Historiography advocating the maintenance of a unified situation. Middle school students should make a dialectical analysis of Confucian historical views, getting rid of its dross, saving its essence, inheriting and carrying forward for it in the case of Chinese traditional culture deeply rooted in the hearts of the people.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Guan Zhong; Confucianism; Historiography; The Analects of Confucius*

A famous historical event that Guan Zhong assisted Duke Huan of Qi to throne under the recommendation of Bao Shu during the Spring and Autumn period was selected in the 2020 composition subject of National College Entrance Examination Chinese Exam Paper I. It is reported that Confucius and Sima Qian gave different comments on this matter. In the test paper, examinees were required to give comments on anyone among Duke Huan of Qi, Guan Zhong, and Bao Shu. Under the context that the traditional culture that enjoys popular support, this exam question has investigated cognition of examinees on the value of the traditional culture. It is universally accepted that the profound Chinese traditional culture has been accumulated after undergoing historical development for thousands of years. The history subject, as one of the leading humanities, definitely should take responsibilities to inherit the Chinese traditional culture.

Confucius was the originator of the Confucian School. The Analects of

Confucius is the primary educational content in the “official school” of the Chinese traditional culture. To inspect records regarding Guan Zhong in the Analects of Confucius can observe the Confucian view of history to a certain extent. “The view of history represents people’s basic opinions on the history and refers to the social origin, the essence of social life, the overall movement of history, and theoretical property of general rules. It is the soul of historical science.”<sup>[1]</sup> To deeply recognize and comprehend the Confucian view of history contributes to distinguishing advantages and disadvantages of the traditional culture, deepening the connotations of the traditional culture education, and developing the traditional culture during the inheritance process.

### **1. The integral history**

The ideological origin of the integral history could be traced back to the Annales School in France. In 1929, Marc Broch and Lucien Febvre proposed the slogan of “the integral history” in the initial issue of Yearbook of Economic and Social History. Febvre emphasized that “mankind can’t be divided into segments. Instead, he is an integral whole. Similarly, history can’t be separated into a heap of matters or a heap of religions”.<sup>[2]</sup> The integral history requires comprehensive and dialectical treatment of the human history and specific historical figures. This is extremely similar to the Marxist historical materialism.

Guan Zhong suffered many failures as doing business. He feathered his nest as doing business with Bao Shu and became a deserter as joining the army. He failed to be an official for many times. He could not be loyal to the Prince Jiu when he acted as his official. Followers of Confucius thought Guan Zhong was not a good person but Confucius pointed out that even if Guan Zhong was lapped in luxury, he assisted Duke Huan of Qi to unite nine dukes and benefited the later generations. From the historical perspective, Confucius recognized Guan Zhong while admitting disadvantages of Guan Zhong under such a context.

The history subject runs through the ancient and modern in time and stretches across around the world in space. Its contents include everything in the world while it is involved in multiple subjects. During the teaching process, students ought to analyze and solve problems from the perspective of the integral history. To be specific, the roles and functions of specific historical figures differ in different periods and events. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze it from the macroscopical historical perspective. Different social stratum might give totally different comments on the specific historical event at that time. At the same time, the comments of later generations during the different historical periods also have tremendous differences. Middle school students not only should know well with these differences but also should recognize the in-depth causes behind these differences. Therefore, it is necessary to dialectically and comprehensively analyze and solve problems. For instance, “anti-globalization” caused by the pandemic changes the communication mode, the cooperation mode, and development prospect between China and the whole world.

## **2. The humanistic history**

The humanistic history requires to respect the human dignity, value, and freedom. Stalin pointed out in *Marxism and Linguistics* in 1950, “The Marxism is the science regarding the law of the natural and social development. It is the revolutionary science about oppressed and exploited people. It is the science for socialism to achieve success in all countries. And it is also the science about constructing the communist society.”<sup>[3]</sup> The Marxism concerns and saves vulnerable groups, considers the masses as creators of history, and respects the laboring people. The Chinese communist Party implements the tenet of “serving the people wholehearted” to insist on the humanistic history.

Before achieving success, Guan Zhong has had considerable advantages. However, after he assisted Duke Huan of Qi to unite other dukes, he made the masses break away from the “dishevelled” uncivilized state and promoted the historical progress. Guan Zhong who benefited society and the masses represented a kind of great benevolence. And he was a great person, showing that Confucius paid attention to Guan Zhong’s social value.

The history subject is a kind of record, study, and explanation of previous figures, events, and activities in human society. History not only records dukes, officials, and heroes, but also includes the unprivileged people. Hence, as studying and explaining history, it is necessary to consider the masses with the majority of population. The masses should be the creators of the social material wealth and spiritual wealth and also the deciding forces of social reform. Middle schools must realize that the masses are creators of the history. To benefit the masses is the responsibility for the Chinese Communist Party and even the criterion to be implemented by everyone.

## **3. The heroic history**

The heroic history shows that heroes are decisive and leading forces for the social development. Carlyle, the famous British historian in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, claimed that “the world history...in essence is the history of giants who live in the world. They are great leaders of the masses. They will standardize and shape everything that is done or desired with great effort for ordinary people. In a broad sense, they are also creators...the essence of the entire world history and the history of giant.”<sup>[4]</sup>

According to the statement of Confucius, Guan Zhong assisted Duke Huan of Qi to unite nine dukes and unify the whole world, making him the first overlord during Spring and Autumn period. To some extent, Confucius viewed Guan Zhong and Duke Huan of Qi as a heroic figure and thought they supported the Zhou Royal Court to create the situation of unifying the whole country, but he partially exaggerated the historical roles of Guan Zhong.

It is widely believed that middle schools advocate idols, including heroes. But middle school students should set up the correct heroic history. On the one hand, the era needs heroes also creates heroes. There is no doubt that hospital nurses should be greatest heroes during the pandemic period, so middle school students ought to learn

glorious deeds of heroes and make great contributions to the country. On the other hand, middle schools should realize that the masses are decisive forces for the historical development and creators of the history.

#### **4. The orthodox history**

China's orthodox history pays attention to the legitimacy for successive inheritance of dynasties. "Orthodox" occurred in the Spring and Autumn Annals" at the earliest. In other words, the lineal primogeniture system must be orthodox while five emperors must be respected to unify the whole country. During the period of Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties, orthodox was developed with two layers of meaning, including "orthodox" and "unification" in political power. Nowadays, the meaning of "orthodox" is complicated. In addition to successive inheritance and direct lines of succession in political parties or schools, it refers to the opinion thought, code of conduct, and social custom that have been universally accepted and recognized by society.

Confucius advocated the Rites of Zhou and deeply favored the feudalism of the emperor of the Zhou Dynasty—dukes—officials—scholars—the masses. It is a pity that with the ritual collapse during the Spring and Autumn period, humanity, justice, propriety and wisdom were incomplete and society was totally disordered without rules. Confucius devoted himself to "denying self and returning to propriety". When Guan Zhong assisted Duke Huan of Qi to dominate the country, they showed the banner of "honoring the king and driving off the barbarians". They united nine dukes and fought up and down the country, maintaining the "uniform" situation" of the Zhou Dynasty to some extent. And this was highly praised by Confucius.

Meanwhile, middle school students should dialectally treat the orthodox history. On the one hand, with the decline of the Zhou Royal Court, the orthodox history of Confucius required to "deny self and return to propriety", but this should be the retroversion of history. Besides, the orthodox history of Confucius maintained the grand unification situation of the Chinese nation's regime, which should be the progress of history. Anyway, middle school students should set themselves against the separatist forces for "independence of Taiwan" and stick to defend unification of Chinese nation's regime.

Croce, the Italian historian, put forward the idea that "history should be the modern history" Collingwood, a British historian, claimed that "history is the history of thought". The composition subject of the National College Entrance Examination Chinese Exam Paper I further demonstrates the ideas of the above-mentioned two historians. Through the long river of history, the Chinese traditional culture reveals the strong realistic value at the present times. As the foundation for Chinese nation to settle down, the Chinese traditional culture realizes the spiritual pillar to fulfill the Chinese dream of great national renewal. It should be gradually praised and abandoned during the inheritance process. The history subject should undertake the heavy responsibilities during the process of carrying forward the Chinese traditional culture.

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