

Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

Commentary 6: On How the Chinese Communist Party Destroyed Traditional Culture

Foreword

Culture is the soul of a nation. This spiritual factor is as important to mankind as physical factors such as race and land.

Cultural developments define the history of a nation's civilization. The complete destruction of a national culture leads to the end of the nation. Ancient nations that had created glorious civilizations were considered to have vanished when their cultures disappeared, even though people of their races may have survived.

China is the only country in the world whose ancient civilization has been passed down continuously for over 5,000 years. Destruction of its traditional culture is an unforgivable crime.

The Chinese culture, believed to be passed down by God, started with such myths as Pangu's creation of heaven and

the earth,[1] Nüwa's creation of humanity,[2] Shennong's identification of hundreds of medicinal herbs,[3] and Cangjie's invention of Chinese characters.[4]

“Man follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Tao, and the Tao follows what is natural.”[5] The Taoist wisdom of unity of heaven and humanity has coursed through the veins of Chinese culture.

“Great learning promotes the cultivation of virtue.”[6] Confucius opened a school to teach students more than 2,000 years ago and imparted to society the Confucian ideals represented by the five cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness.

Traditional Chinese culture sought harmony between man and the universe and emphasized an individual's ethics and morality.

In the first century, Shakyamuni's Buddhism traveled east to China with its emphasis on compassion and salvation for all beings. The Chinese culture became more wide-ranging and profound. Thereafter, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism became complementary beliefs in Chinese society, bringing the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907) to the peak of its glory and prosperity, as is known to all under heaven.

Although the Chinese nation has experienced invasion and attack many times in history, the Chinese culture has shown great endurance and stamina, and its essence has been continuously passed down. The unity of heaven and humanity represents our ancestors' cosmology.

It is common sense that kindness will be rewarded and evil will be punished. It is an elementary virtue that one does not do to others what one does not want done to oneself.

Loyalty, filial piety, dignity, and justice have set the social standards, and Confucius's five cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness have laid the foundation for social and personal morality. With these principles, the Chinese culture embodied honesty, kindness, harmony, and tolerance.

Common Chinese people's death memorials show reverence to "heaven, earth, monarch, parents, and teacher." This is a cultural expression of the deeply rooted Chinese traditions, which include worship of god (heaven and earth), loyalty to the country (monarch), values of family (parents), and respect for teachers.

The traditional Chinese culture sought harmony between man and the universe and emphasized an individual's ethics

and morality. It was based on the faiths of the cultivation practices of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and provided the Chinese people with tolerance, social progress, a safeguard for human morality, and righteous belief.

Unlike law, which prescribes hard rules, culture works as a soft constraint. The law enforces punishment after a crime has been committed, while culture, by nurturing morality, prevents crimes from happening in the first place. A society's morality is often embodied in its culture.

Almost all the invading ethnic groups were assimilated to the Chinese ways, showing the great integrative power of traditional Chinese culture.

In Chinese history, traditional culture reached its peak during the prosperous Tang Dynasty, coinciding with the height of the Chinese nation's power. Science was also advanced and enjoyed a unique reputation among all nations. Scholars from Europe, the Middle East, and Japan came to study in Chang'an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty.

Countries bordering China took China as their suzerain state. "Tens of thousands of countries came to pay tribute to China, even though they might have to be translated multiple times and clear successive customs." [7]

After the Qin Dynasty (221–207 B.C.), China was often occupied by minority groups. This happened during the Sui (A.D. 581–618), Tang (A.D. 618–907), Yuan (A.D. 1271–1361) and Qing (A.D. 1644–1911) dynasties and at other times when ethnic minorities established their own regimes.

Nevertheless, almost all these ethnic groups were assimilated to the Chinese ways. This shows the great integrative power of traditional Chinese culture. As Confucius said, “[Thus] if the people from afar are not compliant, bring them around by cultivating [our] culture and virtue.”[8]

Since attaining power in 1949, the CCP has devoted the nation’s resources to destroying China’s traditional culture. This ill intention did not come from the CCP’s zeal for industrialization, nor from simple foolishness in worshipping Western civilization.

Rather, it came from the CCP’s inherent ideological opposition to traditional Chinese culture. Thus, the CCP’s destruction of Chinese culture has been planned, well organized, and systematic, supported by the state’s use of violence. Since its establishment, the CCP has never

stopped “revolutionizing” Chinese culture in the attempt to destroy its spirit completely.

Even more despicable than the CCP’s destruction of traditional culture is its intentional misuse and underhanded modification of traditional culture. The CCP has highlighted the vile parts from China’s history, things that occurred whenever people diverged from traditional values, such as internal strife for power within the royal family, the use of tactics and conspiracy, and the exercise of dictatorship and despotism.

It has used these historical examples to help create the CCP’s own set of moral standards, ways of thinking, and system of discourse. In doing so, the CCP has given the false impression that the “Party culture” is actually a continuation of traditional Chinese culture. The CCP has even taken advantage of the aversion some people have for the Party culture to incite further abandonment of the authentic Chinese tradition.

The CCP’s destruction of traditional culture has brought disastrous consequences to China. Not only have people lost their moral bearings, they have also been forcibly indoctrinated with the CCP’s evil theories.

I. Why Did the CCP Want to Sabotage Traditional Culture?

The Long Tradition of Chinese Culture: Based on Faith and Venerating Virtue

The authentic culture of the Chinese nation started about 5,000 years ago with the legendary Emperor Huang, who is deemed to be the earliest ancestor of Chinese civilization. In fact, Emperor Huang was also credited with founding Taoism, which was also called the Huang-Lao (Lao Zi) school of thought.

The profound influence of Taoism on Confucianism can be seen in such Confucian sayings as “Aspire to the Tao, align with virtue, abide by benevolence, and immerse yourself in the arts” and “If one hears the Tao in the morning, one can die without regret in the evening.”

The “Book of Changes” (“I Ching”), a record of heaven and earth, yin and yang, cosmic changes, social rise and decline, and the laws of human life, was regarded as “number one among all Chinese classics” by Confucians. The prophetic power of the book has far surpassed what modern science can conceive.

In addition to Taoism and Confucianism, Buddhism especially Zen Buddhism has had a subtle yet profound influence on Chinese intellectuals.

Confucianism is the part of the traditional Chinese culture that focused on “entering the mundane world.” It emphasized family-based ethics, in which filial piety played an extremely important role, teaching that “all kindness starts with filial piety.” Confucius advocated benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness, but also said, “Aren’t filial piety and brotherly love the roots of benevolence?”

Family-based ethics can be naturally extended to guide social morality. Filial piety can be extended to subordinates’ loyalty to the monarch. Confucius said, “It is seldom that a person with filial piety and brotherly love will be inclined to offend those above.”[9]

Brotherly love is the relationship among brothers and can be extended to righteousness and justice among friends. Confucians teach that in a family, a father should be kind, a son filial, an older brother friendly, and a younger brother respectful.

The beliefs of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism offered the Chinese people a very stable moral system. Here, fatherly kindness can be extended to benevolence of the monarch toward his subordinates. As long as the traditions of a family can be maintained, social morality can naturally be sustained. “Cultivate oneself, regulate one’s family, rightly govern one’s state, and make the whole kingdom tranquil and happy.”[10]

Buddhism and Taoism are the parts of Chinese culture that focused on “leaving the mundane world.” The influence of Buddhism and Taoism can be found to penetrate all aspects of ordinary people’s lives. Practices that are deeply rooted in Taoism include Chinese medicine, qigong, geomancy (Feng Shui), and divination.

These practices, as well as the Buddhist concepts of a heavenly kingdom and hell, the karmic reward of good and the retribution of evil, have, together with Confucian ethics, formed the core of traditional Chinese culture.

The beliefs of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism offered the Chinese people a very stable moral system, unchangeable “so long as heaven remains.”[11] This ethical system offered the basis for sustainability, peace, and harmony in society.

Morality belongs to the spiritual realm; thus, it is often conceptual. Culture expresses an abstract moral system in a language that can be commonly understood.

Take the Four Chinese Classics, the four most-renowned novels in Chinese culture, as examples. “The Journey to the West”[12] is a mythical tale.

“A Dream of Red Mansions”[13] starts with a dialog among a spirited stone, the Deity of Infinite Space, and the Tao of Boundless Time at the Baseless Cliff of the Great Waste Mountain. This dialog provides clues for the human drama that unfolds in the novel.

“Outlaws of the Marsh”[14] opens with a tale of how Premier Hong, in charge of military affairs, accidentally set free 108 demons. This legend explains the origin of the “108 outlaw militants of prowess.”

“Three Kingdoms”[15] begins with a heavenly warning of a disaster and ends with the inescapable conclusion of God’s will: “The world’s affairs rush on like an endless stream; a heaven-told fate, infinite in reach, dooms all.”

Other well-known stories, such as “The Romance of the Eastern Zhou”[16] and “The Complete Story of Yue Fei,” [17] all begin with similar legends.

These novelists’ use of myths was not a coincidence, but a reflection of a basic philosophy of Chinese intellectuals toward nature and humanity. These novels have had a profound influence on the Chinese mind.

When speaking of righteousness, people think of Guan Yu (A.D. 160–219) of the Three Kingdoms rather than the concept itself: how his righteousness to his friends transcended the clouds and reached heaven; how his unmovable loyalty to his superior and sworn-brother Liu Bei gained him respect even from his enemies; how his bravery in battle prevailed in the most dire of situations, his final defeat in a battle near the town of Mai; and finally, his conference as a deity with his son.

When speaking of loyalty, Chinese people naturally think of Yue Fei (A.D. 1103–1141), a Song Dynasty general who served his country with unreserved integrity and loyalty, and Zhuge Liang (A.D. 181–234), prime minister of the Shu State during the Three Kingdoms period, who “gave his all until his heart stopped beating.”

Traditional Chinese culture's eulogy of loyalty and righteousness has been fully elaborated in these authors' colorful stories. The abstract moral principles they espouse have been made specific and embodied in cultural expressions.

Taoism emphasizes truthfulness; Buddhism emphasizes compassion; and Confucianism values loyalty, tolerance, benevolence, and righteousness. "While their forms differ, their purposes are the same. ... They all inspire people to return to kindness." [18] These are the most valuable aspects of traditional Chinese culture based upon the beliefs in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

Traditional Chinese culture is filled with concepts and principles such as heaven, the Tao, God, Buddha, fate, predestination, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faithfulness, honesty, shame, loyalty, filial piety, dignity, and so on.

Many Chinese may be illiterate, but they are still familiar with traditional plays and operas. These cultural forms have been important ways for ordinary people to learn traditional morals. Therefore, the CCP's destruction of traditional Chinese culture is a direct attack against Chinese morality and undermines the basis for peace and harmony in society.

[1] Pangu was the first living being and the creator of all, according to Chinese mythology.

[2] Nüwa was the mother goddess who created humankind, according to Chinese mythology.

[3] Shennong (literally, “the Heavenly Farmer”) is a legendary figure in Chinese mythology who lived about 5,000 years ago. He taught the ancient people the practices of agriculture. He is also credited with risking his life to identify hundreds of medicinal (and poisonous) herbs and various plants of that nature, which were crucial to the development of traditional Chinese medicine.

[4] Cangjie, or Cang Jie, is a legendary figure in ancient China. He is said to have been the Yellow Emperor’s official historian and the inventor of the Chinese characters. The Cangjie method of Chinese character computer input is named after him.

[5] From “Tao-te Ching” or “Dao De Jing,” one of the most important Taoist texts, written by Lao Zi (Lao Tze).

[6] Opening remarks from “The Great Learning” by Confucius.

[7] From “Records of the Historian” (“Shi Ji,” also translated as “The Grand Scribe’s Record”) by Sima Qian (145–85 B.C.) the first major Chinese historian. It served as model for the official standard histories of the imperial dynasties for the next 2,000 years.

[8] From “Analects” by Confucius.

[9] From Confucius’s “Analects.”

[10] This is in reference to a statement made by Confucius in “The Great Learning”: “Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.”

[11] This is in reference to a statement made by Dong Zhongshu (c. 179–104 B.C.) in the treatise “Three Ways to Harmonize Humans with Heaven” (“Tian Ren San Ce”): “If heaven remains, the Tao does not change.” Dong Zhongshu was a Confucian thinker during the Han Dynasty.

[12] “The Journey to the West” (known to Westerners as “Monkey King”), written by Wu Cheng’en (c. 1506–1582),

is one of the renowned classical Chinese novels. It is based on a true story of a famous Chinese monk in the Tang Dynasty, Xuan Zang (602–664). Xuan Zang traveled on foot to what is today India, the birthplace of Buddhism, to search for the sutras. In the novel, the Buddha arranged for the Monkey King, Pigsy, and Sandy to become disciples of Xuan Zang and escort him to the West to get the sutras. They went through 81 dangers and calamities before they finally arrived at the West and achieved True Fruition.

[13] “A Dream of Red Mansions,” (“Hung Lou Meng,” also translated as “The Dream of the Red Chamber”), was written by Cao Xueqin (or Tsao Hsueh-Chin) (c. 1715–1763) in the Qing (Ching) Dynasty. It is a tragic love story set against the background of the decline of an aristocratic family. It is universally recognized as the epitome of the art of the classical novel in China.

[14] “Outlaws of the Marsh” (also translated as “Heroes of Water Margins”), written in the 14th century by Shi Nai’an, is one of China’s great classic novels. It describes how 108 men and women band together to be outlaws of the marsh.

[15] “Three Kingdoms,” written by Luo Guanzhong (c. 1330–1400), is one of the most famous Chinese classic novels based on the history of the Three Kingdoms period

(220–280). It describes the intricate and tense struggles for the throne among three powerful political forces: Liu Bei, Cao Cao, and Sun Quan, and focuses on various great talents and bold strategies during that period.

[16] “The Romance of the Eastern Zhou” was originally written by Yu Shaoyu in the Ming Dynasty, revised and rewritten by Feng Menglong at the end of the Ming Dynasty, and further revised by Cai Yuanfang in the Qing Dynasty. The novel covers a history of more than 500 years during the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 B.C.) and the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.).

[17] “The Complete Story of Yue Fei” was written by Qian Cai in the Qing Dynasty. It described the life of Yue Fei (1103–1142) from the Southern Song Dynasty, one of the most famous generals and patriotic heroes in Chinese history. General Yue Fei distinguished himself in battles against northern invaders from the Jin nation. He was framed for crimes that he did not commit, sent to prison, and executed as Prime Minister Qin Hui attempted to eliminate the war party. Yue Fei was later cleared of the groundless charges, and a temple was built in his memory. Four cast-iron figures were made for his tomb. With chests bare and hands bound behind their backs and kneeling before it, they represent those people who are responsible

for Yue Fei's murder. Yue Fei has become a model in Chinese culture of loyalty to the country.

[18] Quoted from "Abstract of Collected Taoist Scriptures" ("Dao Cang Ji Yao") compiled in the Qing Dynasty.