

Original Paper

A Study on the Differences of Spring Festival Culture between China and Vietnam

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Abstract

For a long time, China and Vietnam have always had a deep friendship. The development of Vietnam in etiquette, customs and literature is closely related to the historical origins of China and Vietnam. Especially in the Spring Festival culture, Vietnam has retained many characteristics of China. This paper conducts a differentiated study on the Spring Festival culture of China and Vietnam from the aspects of Spring Festival etiquette, Spring Festival activities, cultural concepts, cultural exchanges, and cultural nature, so as to deepen the understanding of the cultural characteristics of the Spring Festival in China and Vietnam. At the same time, it also explores the social adaptability of the Spring Festival culture in modern China and Vietnam, so that more Vietnamese people can understand the cultural characteristics of China through the differentiated comparison of the Spring Festival culture, and further promote the cultural exchanges between China and Vietnam.

Keywords

Spring Festival culture, traditional culture, China, Vietnam

1. Introduction

In the long history of more than 2,000 years, Vietnam and China have always maintained a close and delicate historical relationship. Whether in language or writing, or in culture, customs, economy, etc., they have very close connections and cooperation, which are worthy of mutual appreciation. With the acceleration of the process of modernization, traditional festivals have gradually been alienated by people. Many people have gradually forgotten or weakened the customs and habits of traditional culture, or have been influenced by Western culture, or by the replacement and iteration of the trend of the times. In their view, these traditional cultures can no longer keep up with the pace of the times. However, under the current development situation, human thought and life need more traditional labels,

based on the relationship between man and nature, and between man and society.

2. The Historical Origins of the Spring Festival Culture between China and Vietnam

2.1 The Origin of Spring Festival Culture

2.1.1 Chinese Spring Festival Culture

In ancient times, in order to survive, humans created "year, month, and day" to record time according to the rise and fall of the sun and the changes in nature. In "Er Ya•Shi Tian", it says: "Xia called it Sui, Shang called it Si, Zhou called it Nian, Tang and Yu called it Zai". In fact, the real origin of the year comes from people's understanding of the cycle of the four seasons. The year is the end and starting point of the cycle. "Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty established the first month of the Xia calendar as the beginning of the year in 104 BC (Wei, 2016). Since then, the beginning of the year in China has been established and has been fixed. The year is the beginning of the year and the law of life in the farming era." The original meaning of the year is the maturity of crops. "Shuowen" says: "Year, the ripening of grains". After the harvest of crops, people held celebrations, worshiped the gods, and thanked the gods for their gifts. People called the ripening of grains a year. This time to celebrate the ripening of grains became a convention and gradually evolved into a festival.

"New Year" is "Spring Festival", which was originally the New Year's Day of the Xia calendar. The Xia calendar appeared in the Xia and Shang dynasties. At that time, people used the cycle of the waxing and waning of the moon as a month. The moon waxes and wanes twelve times a year, so they divided the twelve months into twelve months. The first waning of the moon in the cycle was established as the year, that is, the beginning of the year was also called the year. It can be seen that the name of the year has existed since the Zhou Dynasty, but it was not officially fixed until the Western Han Dynasty and has been passed down to this day. The Spring Festival is also the beginning of various time units: "year, season, month, new moon and full moon".

2.1.2 Vietnamese Spring Festival Culture

The Vietnamese New Year originated from ancient China. The Vietnamese called the Spring Festival "Tết Nguyên Đán" (New Year's Day), which is pronounced from the Chinese word "New Year". In addition to the name of the Spring Festival, there are many other names for Vietnamese New Year festivals, such as : Big Festival (Tết), Maitreya Spring Festival (Xu ân Di Lặc), Lunar New Year (Tết Âm Lịch), Ancient Festival (Tết Cổ Truyền), New Year (Năm Mới), etc. The Vietnamese New Year's Day is the Chinese Spring Festival instead of the Chinese New Year's Day. Legend has it that Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty had a minister named Dongfang Shuo, who was kind and humorous. He believed that the days of "creating the heaven and the earth" were a process. From the first to the third day of the first lunar month, chickens, dogs, and sheep appeared, pigs were born on the fourth day, cows were born on the fifth day, horses were born on the sixth day, and the seventh day was the birth day of human beings. Only on the eighth day did the five grains appear. Therefore, the New Year's Day period starts from the first day of the first lunar month and ends on the seventh day of the first lunar

month. However, the ancient Vietnamese believed that the first month of the lunar calendar was a happy day, and regarded the New Year's Day as a time for people to relax and have fun, a month of "eating, drinking and having fun". Therefore, the entire "Năm Mới" (New Year) almost has the atmosphere of the New Year.

2.2 The Importance of Spring Festival Culture

The Spring Festival culture is a common feature of China and Vietnam, and is also a cultural product created by mankind in historical development and social practice. The Spring Festival culture represents the cultural characteristics of the nation, the progress of social civilization and the development of the country. Tao Siyan believes that the meaning of the Spring Festival is to bid farewell to the old and accept the new (Tao, 2015). It is a symbol of life and shows the past and the future. The meaning of the Spring Festival is to pay tribute to and remember the grace of the ancestors, inherit the will of the martyrs, integrate the survival of the world, and pray for a happy life. The meaning of the Spring Festival is to take the family as the center and establish etiquette communication according to the distance of blood relationship. The meaning of the Spring Festival is to spread the beauty of traditional culture, feel the waves of emotions, and feel the joy of life.

Vietnam is a nation with a strong sense of self. The Vietnamese nation comes from the legend of "a hundred eggs give birth to a hundred boys", which means that the Vietnamese are a nation born from the same twins. It is most appropriate to use "all people in the world are brothers" to reflect the social reality of Vietnam and the feelings of the Vietnamese people. "Trees have roots, rivers have sources, and people have ancestors" is the concept of the Vietnamese. Therefore, worshiping ancestors and reuniting with ancestors are the most important parts of the Spring Festival. Sacrificial offerings retain the primitive society's perception of ancestors, express the remembrance and gratitude for the virtues of ancestors, and also embody the concept of cautious practice of national culture. "Filial piety, gratitude, and sacrifice" have been combined into one, showing one's root-seeking psychology and sense of belonging. The sacrificial food contains the meaning of adapting to the season, balancing yin and yang, and praying for blessings and auspiciousness, which helps to cultivate the spirit of life. Today, the Spring Festival culture has penetrated into the history and blood of every Vietnamese. Its mission is to promote cultural traditions and national spirit, and contains rich folk significance.

3. Similarities and Differences between the Spring Festival Culture of China and Vietnam

3.1 Commonalities of Spring Festival Culture

As the saying goes: a hundred kilometers have different roads, and thousands of kilometers have different customs. The Spring Festival traditions of China and Vietnam have their own characteristics. Some customs are only popular in certain areas. Although they are not representative and typical, they have strong local characteristics.

3.1.1 General Cleaning

Cleaning is an essential activity for the Chinese and Vietnamese people during the Chinese New Year. "

Whether you have money or not, you should clean up before the Chinese New Year" is a custom since ancient times. According to the lunar calendar, before the Chinese New Year, it is the 23rd day of the twelfth lunar month every year. According to legend, the Kitchen God is the god of kitchens, who governs every kitchen and is also a close minister of the Jade Emperor. On the 23rd day of the twelfth lunar month, he has to report to the heavens about the living conditions of the people throughout the year. People take advantage of the opportunity when the Kitchen God is not there, and when there is no god watching over the house, they can clean and adjust some things in the house that are usually taboo to move, in preparation for the Chinese New Year. Everyone is busy cleaning and preparing for the arrival of the New Year.

It is said that sweeping the house and removing dust before the Chinese New Year is a long-standing custom to welcome the spring. The word "broom" has already appeared in oracle bone inscriptions, which means that people knew long ago that dirt and dust can spread diseases, so the custom of "sweeping the year" already existed in the Yao and Shun era. It originated from a religious ritual of the ancients to drive away epidemics, and later gradually became a year-end cleaning for every household that continues to this day.

Because the Chinese words "dust" and "old" are homophones, sweeping the dust during the New Year means "getting rid of the old and bringing in the new." The intention is to sweep out all the bad things, such as "bad luck" and " bad luck."

3.1.2 New Year's Eve Dinner

"Year" in ancient China, the atmosphere of the New Year has been there, and the New Year's Eve dinner has also come into being. The reason why people value the New Year's Eve dinner is that the economy was not as rich as it is now, and people's living conditions were poor. Only the New Year's Eve dinner was the most sumptuous dinner for people and gods to share. Children can also have a big meal. The New Year's Eve dinner reflects the most important reunion of the year for people. It is the reunion of family members and the yearning and longing for a better life in the future. The names of the dishes for the New Year's Eve dinner contain reunion, wealth, and benefit. For example, salted boiled peanuts are called "longevity fruit", a bowl of fish with a head and tail is called "yuanbao fish", pickled vegetables and bean paste are called " eight treasure dishes", tofu and fish are called " rich fish", etc. (Wan, 2018).

3.1.3 Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship during the Spring Festival is an important ritual and activity for Chinese and Vietnamese people during the New Year, and is a legacy of primitive society. Ancestor worship during the Spring Festival not only preserves the ancient people's concept of ancestor worship, but also reflects gratitude to ancestors and remembrance of national culture. People not only rush back to their hometowns from all directions to welcome their families, but also return to their hometowns to worship their ancestors. Ancestors and family ethics are the eternal spiritual core of the traditional Spring Festival (Tao, 2020). With the development of family society, the form of worship has gradually evolved into the La Day Festival, which is mainly for worshipping ancestors. In order to express respect

for their ancestors, people kill pigs and sheep, and gather again in the house where the ancestral tablets are enshrined to eat together.

3.1.4 Setting off Firecrackers

The custom of setting off firecrackers comes from the legend of the "Nian monster". The so-called "one firecracker to get rid of the old year" is because people believe that the sound of firecrackers can not only drive away evil spirits and all the unpleasant things in the past year, but also increase the festive atmosphere and welcome a new year full of auspiciousness and hope.

3.2 Differences in Spring Festival Culture

3.2.1 Chinese Zodiac

When talking about the Spring Festival, we have to talk about the twelve zodiac animals. Tao Siyan have proposed to use the twelve zodiac animals as the biggest festival symbol of the Spring Festival, and hope that the country will support the creation of a mark for each zodiac animal and fix it as the festival symbol of the Spring Festival. The twelve zodiac animals are a deeply rooted cultural phenomenon in the Chinese and Vietnamese folks, and are also one of the traditional cultural symbols of the Spring Festival. Each zodiac animal corresponds to the Spring Festival activities of the corresponding year.

The twelve Chinese zodiac signs are rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, chicken, dog and pig; the twelve Vietnamese zodiac signs are rat, ox, tiger, cat, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, chicken, dog and pig. The fourth position of the Chinese and Vietnamese zodiac signs is different. The Chinese "Year of the Rabbit" becomes the "Year of the Cat" in Vietnam. Therefore, people who belong to the "Rabbit" in China become "Cat" in Vietnam. Whether in China or Vietnam, when the Spring Festival is approaching, the image of the zodiac sign of the next year will appear in various novel ways in different places or on TV screens and other places where people can see it (Wu, 2021).

3.2.2 Milu on New Year's Eve

The Vietnamese consider New Year's Eve to be the time when they are most blessed by the gods. The elderly stay up all night to "say goodbye to the old year", while the young stay up all night to extend the life of their elders. During the sacred time, people have the custom of "seeking fortune" (picking fortune, collecting fortune). At midnight, everyone goes to the temple to "collect fortune" and take it home. This custom is divided into two types: one is to pick a plum blossom or a branch with green leaves in the temple yard when returning from the temple to worship ancestors, and then insert it in front of the shrine at home, which means collecting the fortune bestowed by the gods of heaven and earth; the other is that the monks specially prepare for the people in the temple: a variety of colors and various flowers and fruits (no white, bringing white things home during the New Year is the most taboo thing for Vietnamese people). After worshiping Buddha and offering sacrifices to ancestors, everyone asks for fortune, taking a flower (peach blossom, yellow plum blossom) or an orange home, also known as "fortune" - "Buddha's fortune" to pray for everything to go well in the year. There is another

way to seek fortune, called "Xianglu", which is to light a bunch of incense when offering sacrifices to ancestors in the temple, stand in front of the altar and pray, then take it home to offer it in the incense burner at the ancestral altar or the kitchen god altar. Most people believe that incense is a symbol of prosperity, and when the incense is blown by the wind and burns faster when returning, it indicates a good year. If the incense is extinguished on the way back, it indicates that life will be unfavorable in the next year, so hurry back to the temple to light it again.

3.2.3 Specialty Food

Dumplings are one of the traditional Chinese foods and one of the important special foods of Chinese Spring Festival culture. Dumplings are also called flatbread or beidao. This kind of food is found in central Vietnam. It is called "Bánh Chung" in Vietnamese, but the ingredients are different. Dumplings are a symbol of traditional Chinese food and also represent the meaning of the beginning. People regard this moment as a sacred moment. Making dumplings means wrapping up good fortune, and eating dumplings symbolizes a happy life (Wang, 2021).

In Vietnam, the most important traditional food for Vietnamese people during the Spring Festival is the New Year Zongzi, also known as "Zongzi" (Bashko, 2021). It originated in the Hung King era and has a history of 4,000 years. There are two types of Vietnamese Zongzi: the first type is the Zongzi eaten during the Dragon Boat Festival (a four-pointed Zongzi), which is called "Bánh Ú" in Vietnamese; the second type is the Zongzi eaten during the Spring Festival (also of two types): the cylindrical one is called "Bánh Tét"; the square one is called "Bánh Chung" (Chung cake). The Zongzi eaten during the Spring Festival is larger, generally about two kilograms. After wrapping, it takes seven or eight hours to cook in the pot. It looks very special and tastes really charming. Vietnamese Zongzi is very special. It is wrapped in banana leaves and has many kinds of fillings, such as pork filling, banana filling, etc. There are cylindrical Zongzi in the south and rectangular Zongzi in the north. It is a symbol of the roundness of the sky and the squareness of the earth. The typical concept of the roundness of the sky and the squareness of the earth is so wonderfully reflected in the New Year food in the south and the north. When enjoying it, you can also taste a noble and sacred feeling.

3.2.4 Laba Festival

In China, there is a custom of eating Laba porridge on Laba Festival. According to legend, in order to save the world from suffering and explore ways to relieve the pain of life, Sakyamuni Buddha gave up his rich and luxurious life in the palace and practiced asceticism everywhere. He only ate one grain of hemp and one grain of rice every day and practiced asceticism for five years until he was exhausted and fainted. A shepherdess passed by and offered him a bowl of mixed rice porridge. After he finished eating, he was immediately refreshed. He thanked the female donor and continued to meditate and practice. On the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, he finally had a great enlightenment and became a Buddha. Later, in order to commemorate the Buddha's enlightenment and the female donor's kindness in giving porridge, Buddhist disciples cooked porridge in the temple on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month to offer to the Buddha and then distributed it to the poor to satisfy hunger and keep warm,

to show their great compassion. Laba porridge, also known as "Buddha porridge", means that after eating it, you will be blessed by the Buddha, increase your blessings and life, and feel happy.

There is no such custom in Vietnam. Most people only know that day is the anniversary of Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, and many monks hold grand "Buddha's Enlightenment" festival in temples.

4. Modernization and Innovation of Vietnamese Spring Festival Culture

The Spring Festival culture is the most important traditional festival in Vietnam in a year. In recent years, while maintaining the traditional activities inherent in the Spring Festival, Vietnam is also increasing the diversity of Spring Festival activities. Local governments in Vietnam will hold some "Healthy Spring Festival" activities (Anh, Nguyen, et al., 2019). Public stadiums, gyms, sports parks and national sports projects are open free of charge, advocating Vietnamese people to participate in outdoor activities and spring outings, especially after the epidemic. Outdoor activities allow people to get close to nature, appreciate the beauty of spring, broaden people's horizons, continue to feel the festive spirit of spring, create a sense of unity and cooperation, and strengthen friendship and feelings. With the increasing abundance of material life today, Spring Festival tourism has become a new mode and new fun for modern people to celebrate the New Year. Outdoor activities can broaden the horizons of tourists and cultivate their temperament. City people can go to the countryside to experience the fun of farmers and feel the strong traditional New Year flavor. Rural people go to the city to shop and feel the prosperity of modern cities.

The Vietnamese government not only advocates a healthy Spring Festival, but also encourages Vietnamese people to participate in the "Walk for the Poor" and "Walk for Orphans" activities. During the Spring Festival, funds and materials are raised to help and comfort lonely elderly people or single-parent families, as well as families in difficult circumstances. Let the Spring Festival deeply warm the hearts of the Vietnamese people and let the Spring Festival care for every Vietnamese person.

5. Conclusion

So far, Vietnam's traditional customs and activities have been well preserved and rooted in people's minds, giving life to national culture. Vietnam's Spring Festival culture continues to promote social harmony, strengthen family ethics, and increase family affection. Although the Spring Festival cultures of China and Vietnam are different, they are both practitioners of traditional cultural inheritance and advanced cultural development

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