

# **Study on the Commonalities of People's Religious Consciousness in China and Japan – From the Intercultural Communication Perspective**

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**Abstract.** Religious reflect and influence the cultural character of a nation. Different religious consciousness reflects the different cultural development path of social personality. People's religious consciousness in China and Japan are both gradually formed along with the booming development of commodity economy at the end of fifteenth century. Because of the same Confucian cultural circle of East Asia, with rich connotation that is significantly different from the medieval western public awareness of religion, they exhibit similar external characteristics and internal performance on a variety of levels. From the intercultural communication perspective, through the analysis on the commonalities of people's religious consciousness in China and Japan, it helps to understand the inside and outside connection of both, and then really promote the smooth realization of intercultural communication.

## **Introduction**

In the context of globalization today, interaction activities between different countries and regions, different languages and different cultural traditions are increasingly becoming frequent. But the objective existence of cultural differences between different countries, such as Cultural background, social customs, thinking mode, value orientation and so on, will create obstacles to cross-cultural to varying degrees. Religion is a cultural phenomenon which appeared when human society came to a certain historical stage. The religious consciousness of different people's society reflects the multicultural personality and characteristic of different diversity, which plays an important role in cross-cultural communication. However, which is often overlooked in this area is commonalities beyond personality. China and Japan are the two main social subjects of the religious history. China and Japan culture is an important part of Oriental Culture, both belonging to the East Asian cultural circle, which takes Chinese characters culture, Confucianism, Buddhism as the basic elements. They have many similarities in language writing, ideas, and social structure, thus, the long-term gradual cultivation of the civil society gradually formed a similar religious consciousness. So compared with the European and American countries of different cultures, cross-cultural communication between China and Japan is smoother. In this paper, we aim to conduct comprehensive analysis of people's religious consciousness in China and Japan, to seek and accurately judge the commonalities of religion between China and Japan, and enhance mutual understanding of culture, so that promote the further cross-cultural exchange smoothly.

## **Commonalities of People's Religious Consciousness in China and Japan**

### **The Concept of Heaven and Karma Theory**

Both religious consciousness people's religious consciousness in China and Japan has a strong color of heaven concept and karma theory. On the one hand, this is closely related to the influence of Confucianism in China and Japan. Chinese Confucian thought was established as the only orthodox thought of the Chinese feudal society, and is widely spread around Japan, Korea and other countries. It is eventually established as the mainstream in the entire East Asian cultural circle, and deeply affects the Confucian culture of East Asia countries in social ideology. The concept of heaven is an important part of Confucianism. The Confucian concept of heaven emphasizes the

powerful decision of the heaven's will for the real world. It mentions in *Confucius • Yan Yuan*: Dying is as natural as living. Han Dynasty famous Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu also put forward the heaven induction theory. Confucian concept of heaven emphasizes that "heaven" is in charge of people's life and death, and people's life and death is will reflection of the "heaven".

On the other hand, the wide spread of Buddhism culture in China and Japan a also an important cause of the idea of retribution. Buddhism emphasizes karma and reality reincarnation thought, which has profound impact on its audience's ideology. When people are powerless to find something to explain and free in the face of natural forces, the thought of karma came into being. Undoubtedly, there are a lot of vulnerabilities that karma theory cannot explain in real life, and then people will use the Confucian concept of heaven to fill it. Buddhism karma theory and Confucian concept of heaven complement each other and indispensable, and play the main role of the rotary aid in the ethics of the citizen class in China and Japan. Buddhism and Confucianism merge together, promoting the formation of the concept of heaven and karma theory in civil society in China and Japan

### **Human Religion Consciousness of Heaven and Man**

People's religious consciousness in China and Japan often shows a kind of religious consciousness of "heaven and man". On the one hand, people gave feudal rulers with deification. In ancient China, feudal emperors in order to consolidate their dominant position, they often proclaim the power of God, which was called Divine Right of Kings. From the beginning of Yao and Shun, Kings of Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin all claimed to be the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, thus to declare their monarchy and dominance is desirable. In Japan, the emperor has the sacred power which can not infringe. Emperor Kami Take was the first emperor of Japan's myth. Later, the Japanese ruling class Deduct that Emperor Kami Take was a man from God 2600 years ago, who was ruled by God's will. The subsequent ancient emperors are his sons, with Amaterasu descent and supreme authority.

On the other hand, in ancient China and Japan, practitioners of feudal ethics in various dynasties were often worshiped as "God". In China, Confucius had become a "saint" incarnation on earth. Confucius worship temples were built around China, even his disciples were enshrined by people. In addition to worship the gods of ancient Shinto gods and emperor in the shrine, there was also Shrine to worship National hero and clan ancestors. These phenomena can well explain that Chinese and Japanese people have established a human religious thought during the long feudal period.

### **Utilitarian Pragmatism as the Value Orientation**

Pragmatic survival and secular are the common national characters of Chinese people and Japanese people, that is, a psychological feature of faith taking utilitarian pragmatism as the value orientation at the religious consciousness level. In China, Confucianism takes the humanistic spirit as the core, giving sufficient certain of human value on the relationship between man and God. Such ethics idea of real benefit has deeply influenced Chinese believers, so people's religious consciousness and behavior has a strong pragmatism color. People will worship different gods according to their needs, e.g. to worship the Dragon King for good weather, to worship God of wealth and Guan Gong for money, to worship Kitchen God for auspicious peace, etc. They have a very realistic view of religion, and the belief tendency of the folk utilitarianism is common.

Similarly in Japan, people will worship different gods according to their needs, too. The elderly people worship Jurōjin for longevity. If the god somewhere is efficacious, Worshipers will despite the hardships and rush to it. On the contrary, if not efficacious, it will be cast aside. The phenomenon above shows that Most Chinese and Japanese people believe in religion is not to convert the soul, but to gain protect by Gods, and even to meet the individual needs in life. It is thus clear that, Chinese and Japanese people on the purpose of religious beliefs are focused on utilitarian practicality.

### **Polytheism as the Belief Orientation**

Practical orientation and secular orientation of religious consciousness has caused Chinese and Japanese lack of faith-specific, SO the multi-religious worship of God is its corollary. In terms of

object selection, religious consciousness of Chinese and Japanese both have diversified characteristics. “God” is defined in Modern Chinese Dictionary as the ruler and creator of heaven and earth. Chinese Traditional Religion is a fusion product of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, so we can Gods of different religions are worshiped together. Taoism has Jade Emperor, Western Queen and Lao, etc.; Buddhism has Ruluf, Maitreya Buddha, Guanyin Bodhisattva, etc. The position, supernatural powers and roles of the Gods are not the same. There are a variety of large and small shrine in Japan, being dedicated to different gods. Natural mountains, forests, sun, fire, thunder and animals can be their worship objects. Among the many gods of their faith, lord god and all of subordinate god are coexisting; natural god and social god are coexisting; aboriginal god and alien gods are coexisting. In the Japanese home, the scene of many statues worshiped can be seen everywhere. From the time perspective, the time span of God Faith of Chinese and Japanese was quite long time and Disorderly; from the space perspective, people had not build a unified structure strict line. Thus it can be seen, religious belief embody polytheism and huge inclusiveness both in China and Japan.

### **Polytheism as the Belief Orientation**

Which was along with practical value orientation of religious consciousness is the secular of religious practice consciousness between Chinese and Japanese people. In China, believers are engaged in religious activities with a positive attitude to the world. Chinese Taoist was good at alchemy and practicing Wushu. There was even a considerable part of the Taoist priest living a secular life, and had a wealth of experience in life. Taoist gods all have mana for demon exorcism and changing human injustice. Buddhist religious activities are so as well. People actively pray for Buddha bless through donating statues, worshiping plead, votiving pilgrimage and other external form, while monks also advocated the practice mode of building bridges and roads and giving good. On every festival of sacrifice, there would be celebration scenes with crowds flooded, which is no different with the purely secular celebration.

Japanese people incorporated the spirit of religion into their real life through various religious ceremonies and religious festivals, and the boundary between the religious world and the secular world is very vague. Japanese Buddhist monk was allowed to get married and have children; at home of Japanese people, they are free to worship The shrine and altar at the same time, without limitation of shrine and temple visits. All kinds of religious activities have become essential content in the daily life of the Japanese – Japanese teaism, Ikebana, Ninjutsu, Calligraphy, Painting and even Daily activities are all penetrated by the spirit of religion. These religious practices are full of real secular sense rather than symbolic spiritual beliefs. Thus we can see that, these religious practices of Chinese and Japanese all show a common consciousness of the world Down to the most popular mass, which is different from Theological Ethics.

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