

# Chapter 2

## Becoming Modern

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The revolutionary process by which human civilization transforms from agrarian into industrial manifests itself in the Chinese context as the historical transformation from a traditional society to a modern one. This transformation expresses itself in everyday life and the world of meaning; in particular, it is change involving the knowledge of the external world, status (from subject to citizen), and lifestyles. It represents not only the adjustment made by the people of an ancient country confronting modernization and globalization, but also the development path of conflict, cultural infiltration and integration, and change resulting from the cultural encounter between East and West. This century-long modernizing process turning the Chinese from an ancient people into a modern one is a historical necessity involving cultural transformation and modernization the core of which has always been the system of values. To study the course of this transformation and the concomitant social psychology, group mentality, and social life will provide us with a historical comparison between tradition and modernity which we hope can serve as a useful reference for other peoples or nations of the world.

### 1 Traditional Morality and World of Meaning

Before the modern era, China was a traditional society in which the family was the basic productive unit and agriculture was the principal mode of production. To have the family and the country share the same basic structure is a unique and important feature which ensured the stability and continuity of the Chinese society. Indeed, the Chinese expression for “country” is formed by putting together the words for “country” and “family”, indicating the close relationship between the two. Through the Confucian familial ethic which places filial piety at its core, this country-family

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relationship informs a political ethic which emphasizes the country-family social structure and a pan-filial-piety ideology. This is a salient Chinese characteristic which Western culture does not share.

In the traditional Chinese society where economic and social life was centered on agriculture, the family was the major operating unit; the protection, continuation, and unity of the family was of paramount importance, and this fact gave shape ultimately to an ideology in which the family (or clan) was all important. The Chinese had nurtured an obvious psychological and behavioral tendency to extend the structure, relationship, and *modus operandi* beyond the family to other groups and organizations (Ye and Yang 2009: 47). In this kind of nativist society, the basic structure is what is called a “hierarchical order” formed by a network of private relationships. Unlike the “group order” of modern Western societies in which everyone is equal, the hierarchical order consists of unequal relationships of various aspects including wealth, status, and kinship. As a result, social morality finds its meaning in private relationships. “Self-restraint becomes the most important virtue in social life. They won’t attempt to restrain the group in order to prevent it from encroaching on personal rights” (Fei 1985: 21–28). It is in direct contrast to Western societies in which morality is universal and applicable to everyone, and the result is that Chinese people are reluctant to relinquish the traditional mentality which places individual integrity before social morality and personal relationships before civic obligations. With the agrarian society being patriarchal and the family being the unit of life and production, there had to be a system of familial ethics to properly manage the various orders (age, status) within the family and to successfully perpetuate the family; but this familial ethics had to encompass a social ethics as well, applicable to emperors and common people alike, in order to promote social stability (Tang 2009). Therefore, filial piety became the ethical core of Chinese familial, social, and even religious life (Ye and Yang 2009: 2–3). The fundamental meaning of filial piety is “tending one’s parents”, including sustenance, materially speaking, and respect, spiritually speaking; as *The Book of Rites* states, “The son has three obligations to his parents: support them when they are alive, mourn them when they die, and commemorate them after mourning ends.” Filial Piety, commemorating one’s ancestors, the wish to find success and make them proud, and loyalty to the emperor as an evolved form of filial piety: all these things constitute the Chinese ideal of “creating world peace through bettering oneself, one’s family, and one’s country.”

Codifying, prioritizing, and socializing filial piety shaped the rights of father, husband, clan, and emperor (in ascending order of importance) and realized social order and stability. The ideal family in the traditional society was one in which many generations lived under one roof and whose members abided fully by a ranking in age and lineage.<sup>1</sup> The father had supreme power and controlled all

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<sup>1</sup>Large families with many generations living together was not common back then since the younger generation would move out and set up their own family once they became adults, and there were always other factors such as wars and diseases. Therefore, smaller families and families with three generations under one roof were more common.

matters of the family. In this living arrangement, the ethics which required the continuation of the family line and the caring of parents until their death became the meaning of life and the pursuit of values to the Chinese people and constituted an inherent value system. "There are three ways to fail at filial piety and having no son to carry on the family line is the worst," so says Mencius. It was only by extending life and bloodline that one could justify one's existence in the family. Based on this, the extension of bloodline had an inherent consistency with the inheritance of culture. Procreation was imbued with transcendence and practical necessity which led to an almost religious fervor for it; this is why the ultimate ideal of filial piety is ancestor worship.

As far as religion in the traditional Chinese society is concerned, ancestor worship was the most important aspect of the Chinese family. "It was a formality which helped in harmonizing and extending the family, the basic unit of the Chinese society" (Yang 2007: 42). The funeral rite which was full of elaborate offerings and symbolic meanings had as its basis the survivors' firm conviction that the soul did not die and as its function the cohesion and renewal of the clan. The traditional society's reliance on nature had made worship of the god of agriculture a part of the classical religious tradition. Different sectors of the economy had their protective gods as well. Apart from the beliefs and practices prevalent in families and professions, local activities such as religious services in temples, ceremonies during public crises or traditional holidays, and worship of protective gods provided a collective symbol which transcended monetary benefit, status, or social background and promoted cohesion of the community (Yang 2007: 44, 48, 72, 77–78, 86). Taoism and Buddhism were religions which people could choose beyond their families and communities; but in reality, Buddhism in its vulgarized form was very much part of people's lives.

Everything was framed and arranged by ethics in the traditional society. For the Chinese people, the meaning of life was based on the perception and need of their relations with nature, society, and family as revealed to them under the agrarian civilization. This way of life was passed down through the generations by the assimilation of ethics and inheritance of culture and took root in the fertile soil of Chinese culture. Dynasties came and went, political power ebbed and flowed, but the culture had stood uninterrupted for thousands of years until the industrial civilization knocked and forced this ancient people down the difficult path of modernization.

## **2 From Subject to Citizen: Identity in Transition**

The founding of the Republic of China marked the historical end of imperial rule. For two thousand years the Chinese people knew only the emperor's court and did not see themselves as a part of a country. Now they bade farewell to dynasties and emperors and became citizens of a new nation resurrected from the old empire. The original five-colored flag of the Chinese Republic also symbolized the primacy of

the nation and the people. "The emperor was out and our braids were off," people used to say. The Gregorian calendar replaced the imperial date system; the concept of citizen was written into the Constitution and acquired legal significance. The *Nation*, a newspaper of the early 20th century, published an article entitled "On Citizens" in which the author wrote, "What is a citizen? He is someone that the heaven was successful at making into a citizen. What is a slave? He is someone that the heaven was unsuccessful at making into a citizen. This is why a slave has no rights or responsibilities while a citizen does; a slave likes to have restrictions put on him while a citizen loves freedom; a slave loves the class system while a citizen wants equality; a slave imitates others while a citizen likes to be independent. These are the differences between a slave and a citizen"(Zhang and Wang 1960: 72). A nation was therefore created for the people, and the idea of citizen came from such modern concepts as rights, duties, responsibilities, freedom, equality, independence, self-respect, self-confidence, self-determination, valor, adventure, proactivity, group mentality, altruism, and nationhood (Liang 2003).

Education and the printed media became important channels for changing people's mentality from being the emperor's subjects to being modern citizens. From 1904 to 1906, the Commercial Press published ten volumes of "New Textbook" for primary school students to educate them and instill the idea of loving the nation and saving it from subjugation. The printed media did its best to inculcate the concept of citizen in people's mentality. As a result of its exhortations, people from all walks of life began to read newspapers and listen to political speeches; a spirit of openness was in the air. Music as an art form was thought to have a higher purpose in improving people's character, so school songs became popular; they expressed simple ideas with patriotic subjects such as saving the nation, strengthening the army, and resisting humiliation, and their goal was to cultivate national mentality and create a general mood (Liang 2003). The primary goal of women's education changed from creating good wives and mothers to producing "model mothers of citizens" (Luo 1996: 145). All these efforts opened the minds of the Chinese people at the turn of the last century and began the profound process of turning the emperor's subjects into the new nation's citizens. National mentality, which is a modern social concept, and a new common identity were the unique features of the inner experience of the Chinese people.

The change in status did more than introducing new ideas; it also ameliorated social customs by changing the traditional mentality and lifestyle(such as the group mentality and identity) which came from a long and persistent lack of awareness. Soon after its establishment, the provisional government of Nanjing announced a series of decrees to eradicate "bad habits and old customs". First, foot binding, opium smoking, and gambling were banned; banning foot binding had gotten the most positive response. Second, forms of address were modified; job titles, "mister", and "sir" replaced "master" and "your excellency". In short, inequality was replaced with equality. Third, simple bowing replaced kowtowing, genuflection and other forms of humbling oneself. Fourth, human trafficking was banned to respect human rights and public justice. Fifth, women's rights were respected. Sixth, the strict dress code was eased. Moreover, superstitions were discouraged, traditional

marriage and funeral rites abolished, and freedom to choose one's spouse advocated (Chen 1992: 323–330). These decrees involved more than a change in everyday customs; they resulted in a change of mentality. Abstract national mentality found its expression in concrete everyday behavior and met with social approval in its implementation, shaping mentality and trends in a truly historic way.

A salient aspect of this change of identity from subject to citizen is the local autonomy movement during the early days of the Republic of China era. To use Shanghai as an example, the Western model of municipal administration in the foreign concessions was emulated by the local people of other areas, and Shanghai entered quickly into a period of urbanization. The concessions in Shanghai had more influence on China than those of other cities in terms of tax levying, municipal management, utilities, public transportation, and traffic rules. These new systems were very different from the traditional Chinese bureaucracy, making people of Shanghai the first to experience political modernization. The twenty-two years of local autonomy in Shanghai started in 1905 and can be divided into three periods: Qing-Republic Transition (1905–1914), Department of Public Works (1914–1923), and City Hall (1923–1927). The essence of local autonomy was the adoption of a constitution which allowed for participation in government by capable individuals who were charged with responsibilities and endowed with rights. The eligibility requirements for the elections had a lot to do with the success of local autonomy; according to an editorial of the newspaper *Shenbao*, there were four requirements: the capability for autonomy, the spirit of cooperation, common knowledge, and the concepts of society and nation. The eligibility for autonomy was closely related to the eligibility for voting; the qualities of the citizen determined the qualities of the voter (Zhou 2004: 205). The most influential aspect of Shanghai's autonomy was that as a democratic practice with an entrenched grass-roots foundation, it changed the values, political vision, and lifestyle of the people of Shanghai and formed a collective memory of the way democracy functioned. Autonomy was a culture which permeated people's lives, thoughts, and behavior, becoming a systemic substance, a lifestyle (Zhou 2007).

But we have to realize that in the era of the Revolution of 1911, national mentality resonated more with a new group of intellectuals and did not become a consensus of the nation. There was a long held belief in China that rising up to the more difficult tasks of life was the province of heroes, not ordinary people, and this explains why it took a longer mental process for the change from subject to citizen to take effect. While more and more young people of the cities began to shake off patriarchal control to seek freedom to marry, villagers continued their traditional way of life. According to Fei Xiaotong's study of Jiangcun village in the 1930s, parents still made decisions regarding land, house, and sideline work; they controlled all major financial matters of the house and arranged for the children's marriages. When a son left the home, he could receive his own house or land, but as long as the father was still alive, he would not be able to sell the land against the father's wishes; his share of the assets was to be used for the purpose of production and only a small part could be used toward his own consumption, and what belonged to the parents would be kept as such (Fei 1984: 30, 43–49). Similarly,

even though republican laws clearly mandated equal inheritance of assets and shared obligations for the caring of parents, daughters in villages often would not get their shares of assets. Just as Edward Shils said, “Upholding traditions is a fact of social structure.” The change of identity from subject to citizen showed on the one hand the monumental influence modern production and lifestyle had on the traditional society, and made clear on the other hand that this influence was subject to the opposition between tradition and modernity, between East and West, and between cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity.

### **3 From Frugality to Consumption: Lifestyle in Transition**

As civilization changed from agrarian to industrial in the modern age, the essence of this change was economic development and industrial production. Traditional frugality and the old philosophy which affirmed less was more began to waver. As the traditional society turned modern, the people of Shanghai experienced Western material civilization and law-based system and accepted gradually the new concepts of competition and consumption which changed their everyday life. Some manifestations of this included: First, important changes occurred in their concept of consumption; it was no longer viewed as expending consumables and enjoying the satisfaction which materiality brought but as a means to realize self-worth. The material aspect of consumption was overpowered by its spiritual significance. Second, the people of Shanghai formed their own style of consumption and became its exponents. Yue Zheng summarized this new wave of consumption in late Qing as emphasizing extravagance, stylishness, and distinction. Frugality as a virtue depreciated in value. Consumption was honorific, tied to the society and production, and oblivious to status or class. Guided by this new system of values, the people of Shanghai broke free of the old ways of thinking and created a new lifestyle. This was a social change rife with meaning (Zheng 1991: 98–103, 131).

If this kind of change was limited to Shanghai and the coastal region, the wind of modernization was blowing unmistakably from the east coast toward the vast western hinterland. During the Republic of China era, many local chronicles described the lavish spending of fashion-minded people. Even in land-locked Yunnan, with the new train service to Vietnam, the spate of enterprises and commercial development, and the new culture of consumption coming in, the old self-sufficient economy began to disintegrate along with traditional views. Frugality had been the motto of the people of Yunnan, but during the republican period, “extravagant” and “luxurious” became the operative words of many chronicles in local newspapers and magazines. Inspired by the new consumerism, “people want to outdo each other in consumption; every move they make and every bite they take reek of extravagance. The old customs of Yunnan were thrown to the wind.” Even some staid and unpretentious villages slowly became affluent and glamorous (Jiang 2012).

The change of lifestyle as a result of the new consumerism became systematized, rapid, comprehensive, and universal in the 20th century. Led by the cities, it began

to form a market-oriented, social, and popular “public living community” and accelerated the polarization in lifestyle between cities and villages (Li 2008: 6–7). Migrants, who moved from a community of friends to a community of strangers, went to the public spaces of a city to learn the rules of living in the city and how to obey the social order.

During the early years of Qing Emperor Guangxu’s rule, authorities in charge of foreign concessions in Shanghai issued decrees concerning traffic, peddling, pan-handling, gambling, inebriation, fighting, and garbage disposal (Ge 1989: 3). “Shanghai Municipal Council Public Safety Regulations” released in 1904 contained traffic rules governing driving, overtaking, turning, parking, and loading. During the Republic of China era, the Municipal Council was much more proactive in regulating public transport than the late Qing Court, and the aims of these regulations were standardization, order, safety, and flow with strict implementation. Regarding sanitation, apart from closely monitoring restaurants, hotels, and grocery stores, the Municipal Council educated the public on public health and instituted sanitation rules which inculcated the idea of the rule of law (Luo and Zuanyou 1999: 30–42). The management of the foreign concessions was so successful that they became models for emulation for other parts of China. Shanghai County Magistrate Office copied all the regulations of the concessions, and then revised and issued them as its own, gradually making modernization of city government a common vision for the residents and the local government, and this became the impetus for the local autonomy movement (Zhang 1990: 944).

The acceptance and usage of Western instruments marked the most extensive change in the modern life of the Chinese people, and it spread from the cities to the villages. In particular, instruments of time and lighting had major influence on people’s everyday life and their concept of time (Li 2008: 108–109). The concept of precise time was a product of industrial civilization, a modern element relating division of labor with sensible planning. According to Li Changli’s study, the mechanical clock was a European invention of the 14th century and first appeared in Chinese trading cities; some tall buildings had striking clocks installed on the facades. In Shanghai during the 1870s, not only foreign companies and larger shops had clocks, opium dens, bars, and brothels had them as well. The Qing Court instituted a new educational system in 1904 using clock time as standard in the classrooms, officially recognizing clock time as an important element in social life. All government organizations and schools used clock time as standard since the Republic of China era. Clock time became the official way of describing time in the society, making people’s lives more efficient and more amenable to planning and providing the conditions for commercial activities and active public life in the cities. Furthermore, new lighting equipment such as kerosene, gas, and electric lamps provided the conditions for night life in the cities, and people gradually became habituated to the idea of going out at night. “The level of night life in the cities became an important indication of their prosperity” (Li 2008: 111–123, 136–138).

Along with the new instruments came Western habits and customs. During the early Republic of China era in early 20th century, Sunday as the day of rest was

promoted throughout China until it became the norm. The weekly rest system ensured time for recreation and raised the quality of life; it effected a separation between time used for public and private activities, strengthened personal autonomy and freedom, and promoted social interaction and public engagement. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, days with political-social significance such as New Year's Day, Labor Day (May 1), and Women's Day (March 8) became national holidays in recognition of the newly established Chinese nation, other world civilizations, and the universality of civil rights (Li 2008: 425–431, 443).

Insofar as their value system and private behavior took a commercial turn in the direction of utilitarianism, hedonism and a sense of accomplishment as a result of these new ideas about spending, day-to-day compliance with rules of civility already marks the beginning of the modernization process for the Chinese people. Protecting orderliness of the society by honoring rules and laws of the land, subjecting oneself to their constraints by managing personal behavior, experiencing the progress of industrial civilization through a heightened awareness of time and expanding space for human activities, creating a new sense of national identity and personal rights through observing holidays: this civilizational progress is tantamount to the process of rationalization and the modernization of humanity.

## **4 From Traditional to Modern: Values in Transition**

As the constituent element at the core of a culture, the system of values consists of that culture's basic views on certain things and represents the relatively stable beliefs, confidence, and ideals regarding these things and the standards and rules for judging and assessing value. The transformation of the Chinese society from traditional to modern has always been accompanied by the conflict, cultural infiltration and integration, and change resulting from the encounter between East and West and shot through with cultural transformation and modernization which has the system of values at its core.

The modernization of Chinese values started after the middle of the 19th century with the Practical Knowledge Movement which stressed that what one learned had to be useful to the state. Yu Ying-shih believed that this movement of the late Qing period broke with Chinese tradition through political reform and never returned to the Confucian ideal of creating world peace through wise administration of the country. Once this lacuna opened, Chinese intellectuals' faith in Confucian values began to waver (Yu 2004: 49). If proponents of the Hundred Days' Reform shook the foundation of the Confucian value system for the first time with their proclamation to "fight the entrapment of traditions", the real purpose of this reform movement was to "use Western modern ethical theories to supplement and renew the traditional Chinese ethical system in order to create a new kind of citizens with integrity, independence, and freedom" as described later by Liang Qichao in his newspaper article entitled "The New Citizen". Liang argued that the new citizen had to have a sense of social ethics which was applicable to every individual. "The



New Citizen” not only gave a full description to the fully autonomous modern man, it decidedly changed the value system of the Chinese people, especially the intellectuals (Yu 2004: 54). Intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement subverted the traditional ethics with their courageous aim to “reevaluate all values” and ushered in new Western values such as democracy, freedom, science, and human rights.

If the May Fourth Movement was the intellectuals’ conceptual response to the modernization process, then, as Western values spread to China, economic and social changes were already buffeting traditional values. The commodity economy subverted the agrarian economy, invaded educational and cultural domains, and directly challenged the traditional concepts of justice and profit. Public opinion began to favor the acquisition of wealth. Profit-amassing careers not only provided a path to personal wealth, they were a necessity for enriching and building a strong nation. Changes in social customs accompanied the changes in values: self-realization used to mean distinguishing oneself by merit and becoming a civil servant, and now it meant going into commerce and enriching the family; the old mantra had been to better oneself through Confucian practice, now it was to profiteer ceaselessly; the role worthy of emulation had been the scholar, now it was the merchant. The Confucian views which favored ethics and agriculture were replaced with the modern preference for profit and commerce. The people of Shanghai gradually shook off the system of political ethics to embrace the commercial revolution of the modern era, becoming prosperous and capitalist in the process (Zheng 1991: 57–59, 70–71).

The modernization process and the May Fourth Movement eroded traditional ethics and the clan system. Republican law abolished the ancient inheritance system, negated traditional patriarchy, and instituted monogamy and economic equality between men and women, with the result that the traditional clan system lost its political foundation and legal protection (Chen 1997). Relevant studies indicate that modern marriage customs based on monogamy, freedom to choose one’s spouse, and equality between husband and wife became the norm in the cities. Family size became smaller; familial structure and functions regarding age, power, finance, education, religion, and recreation underwent unprecedented changes also. Husband and wife of equal status gradually became the primary relationship within the family, eclipsing traditionally unequal ones such as that between father and son or between husband and wife. The senior generation’s authority gradually declined within the family; they were more likely to be cared for than obeyed. Children began to choose their own profession and make independent marriage decisions. As the father-son relationship changed, so did the husband-wife relationship; women began to work outside the home and choose their own profession, gradually getting the same opportunities as men. With the change in family structure, new social organizations with a dedicated purpose sprang up in the cities to replace the social functions of the family. Regular school education gradually replaced the educational function of the family; the simple child-rearing function of the family became less important as people became more concerned with education after a child’s birth. The old habit of favoring boys to girls began to change while ancestor worship diminished in importance (Chen 1997).

From behavior to thoughts, from materiality to culture, the modernization of Chinese values was the essential manifestation of contemporary social transformation and reigned profoundly over China's development in the 20th century. The disintegration of traditional values and ethical order was related to the change in the political and economic systems as well as the sense of self-awareness of the intellectuals. The latter used the May Fourth Movement to create modern values out of Western individualism and oversaw the destruction of traditional values. But as Yu Ying-shih said, "the system of values involves not only the world of concepts; more importantly, it involves everyday life" (Yu 2004: 46). As an inherited symbolic system and way of life, the traditional culture had a signifying, allusive, explanatory, and true essence which always operated on the cognitive rules and the world of meaning of a specific people. If the West's intrinsic modernization whose cause is the Industrial Revolution was driven spiritually by its own cultural traditions, namely what Weber called "asceticism" and what Sombart called "acquisitiveness", then what China's social transformation, burdened as it was by external pressures, brought to its people was a change in values which was a hybrid experience of conflict and compatibility between tradition and modernity.

Shanghai used to prefer agriculture to commerce, ethics to profits, empire to republic, boys to girls, and native to foreign. These traditional views were under severe attack from the 1920s to the 1930s, because they were in conflict with the modernizing process which was happening in the city. Moreover, the influence of nativist organizations such as the guilds and other social organizations and the various functions they had revealed the practicality and adaptability of traditional views amidst social transformation (Zhang 1990: 29; Xin 1996: 90). A great number of traditional commercial, financial, and artisan organizations did not perish during modernization; on the contrary, they found space for their existence through adapting to market demand. This shows that traditions are dynamic and constructive, not fixed or passive; modernization "does not mean a retrenchment of traditional views and activities" (Goodman 2004: 25) but "a continuous process in which traditional systems and values adapt to the functional demands of modernization" (Black 1996: p. 18 of Translator's Preface).

Similarly, we should not ignore the following facts: although the clan system began to disintegrate since the republican period and the revolutionary transformation of the family thoroughly changed the family's power structure and its economic, educational, religious, and recreational functions, the traditional clan system did not disappear completely; clan rights, clan halls, clan genealogical records, and clan farming plots still exist in China's cities and villages. During the Mao-era to ensure the clans' death, the government had confiscated clan farmland, expropriated clan halls, and burned genealogical records (Xu 1992: 465–468); but even after the impact of political revolution and the assault of social changes, clans still exist today. This is because the ancient clan system has adapted itself to the on-going social transformation and lives on in modern-day social organizations (Feng 2005: 1). Moreover, ethical views on wealth and power inspired by Confucius, power worship and hierarchical mentality inherited from autocratic rulers, the importance of *guanxi* in social interactions, male heirs as caregivers and

inheritors of property, and ceremonies and activities in observance of traditional holidays: all these aspects of contemporary life contain the acceptance and recognition of modernity and universal values as well as the adherence to and protection of traditional values and beliefs. Furthermore, the vastness of China and the imbalance in development between cities and villages have created the complicated situation where the new co-exists with the old, East intertwines with West, tradition challenges modernity, and nationalism fights colonialism.

According to Yu Ying-shih, proponents of the May Fourth Movement such as Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, and Lu Xun could not shake off the deep-rooted group identity even when they railed against traditional cultural values; they advocated for personal liberation and individual autonomy for the purpose of creating a new group order (Yu 2004: 68). In the 1920s, when saving the nation was a much more urgent task than promoting cultural enlightenment, China entered an era of collectivism. Hu Shi felt that “both the nationalist movement and the Communist revolutionary movement reflected this prevalent anti-individualist tendency” (Yu 2004: 68–70). Later, the socialist revolution swept aside traditional values and Western liberalism to make room for the new Marxist ideology. But the progressive political, social, and cultural revolutions of the 20th century did not completely remove the obstacles of and the resistance to social transformation; on the contrary, cutting ties to traditions created new social problems and led to a return of traditional culture and folk religion several decades later. The reason is that “modernization is a continuum between tradition and modernity. Modernity without tradition is colonialism or semi-colonialism while tradition without modernity is cultural suicide...Modernization succeeds if it is adept at overcoming tradition’s resistance to revolution, especially if it can make tradition assist reform” (Luo 1993: 376). This is the only way to avoid violent conflicts and psychological crises and enable social transformation to continue without interruption.

As indicated above, the modernization of Chinese values shows in a most prominent way the basic characteristic of social changes; its aim is to remove old ways of thinking which are no longer germane, to pass on core values appropriate for modernity, and to adapt to the modernizing development through creative modifications. It is the organic integration between historical and practical logic, and a window to the world of concepts and the reality of everyday life. As the core of the modernizing process, the modernization of values permeates contemporary Chinese society and drives its modern historical development. It is an important resource of social change and the necessary foundation for stability and development. It reveals cultural conflict and collision, and cultural convergence and integration. It is the deepest revolution in thoughts and the most vivid life experience. It declares in no uncertain terms that ancient civilizations need to be reborn in the modern era, and advanced cultures need to put down roots in their own soil in order to prosper. Modernization of traditional values is the midwife to China’s rebirth and the key to China’s participation in the world community.

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