

Orphaned Children in Traditional Chinese Religious and Philosophical Doctrines: Social Aspect

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Abstract: The article studies the historical and pedagogical aspects of the Chinese social care over orphaned children system's establishment, in particular - the reflection of the social care over orphans idea in traditional Chinese philosophical and religious doctrines (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism). The aim of the article is to analyze the reflection of the idea that orphaned children are to be over the social care and guardianship (social welfare and social care system) in theory and practice of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The methodological basis of the article is represented by the methodology of historical pedagogical and comparative pedagogical studies. The article presents the author's personal point of view that the idea of social guardianship over the orphaned children in forms familiar to Europeans (orphanages, shelters attached to religious organizations, adoption), which was brought to China in the middle of the 18th century by abroad religious adepts, is not reflected in the traditional Chinese religious and philosophical doctrines. Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism at the theoretical level practically did not develop the idea of social care over the defined category of children, confining themselves to general declaration of the need to be mercy to unfortunates. In practice it resulted in the non-inclusion of the doctrines and their adepts as equal agents of socialization in the system of social welfare for orphans in Traditional China and modern PR China as well.

Keywords: *China, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, the system of social care (social welfare), orphans, religious and philosophical doctrine.*

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Introduction

Relations with society are one of the most pressing problems that any religious association faces. In one hand being an inseparable and natural social (sometimes, state) institution of a society, in the other hand religion (beliefs) provides the population with certain social services. Most of the world's religions in their arsenal have the postulates of mercy and help to unfortunates (old people, orphans and widows). But if these universal values in the religious practices of Europeans eventually took the form of a social care system (in some form or other the systems of social care over special groups of population in Europe, US is based on religious basis), the traditional philosophical and religious doctrines of the Chinese (Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism) in the aspect mentioned have not escalated into something concrete.

Modern studies of the problem of using religious and philosophical doctrines for social aspects of life of a person and society in general are reflected in works of E. Okom, A. Iquabal, D. Sherkat, M. Dillon, J. Monge etc. Some of researchers (especially in the fields of history of religion and theology) make their efforts to alight the problem of religious organizations` patronage and social care over different categories of people in the historical process and nowadays in such religions a Christianity, Judaism, Islam (Saheeh al-Bukhaari, M. Alhamad, J. Mirus, A. Dokolin, D. Rosen, D. Bratcher etc.). However, we have not found any works that would investigate the problem of the social care for orphans system`s organization from the point of view of the traditional religious and philosophical doctrines (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism) in China, although the "Chinese religions" themselves are analyzed in the works of such sinologists as V. Maliavin, S. Geley, S. Rutar, O. Krizhanovskiy, J. Ching, P. Wu and some others.

Social background of the problem

Orphanhood is a social phenomenon caused by the presence in society of children whose parents have died, as well as children left without care due to deprivation of parental rights, recognition parents of incompetent, missing, and so on. It also includes children whose parents are not deprived of parental rights, but in fact do not take any care of their children - social orphans. This problem is of an intersectoral nature, it is located at the intersection of sociology, social philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, economy, law, history, political science and other social sciences. Therefore, the analysis of the problems of orphanhood should be carried

out not only from the standpoint of psychological limitations, but also in the context of human rights, social etiology of limiting opportunities, sociocultural foundations and principles, both social adaptation and socialization.

In the modern world, orphanhood is a cross-national problem and each country solves this problem depending on its own historical traditions and realities of the present. The economical world crisis as well as the one in individual countries, in particular, led to a sharp drop in the level of material and moral well-being of a family, causing an increase in the number of orphans with living parents - social orphans. This phenomenon testifies the crisis of family institution, the negative influence of society on the formation of personality in the social, spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical aspects of a child's individual development. The severity of this problem is due, on the one hand, to the increase in the number of children of category mentioned, and on the other hand to the inefficient functioning of the social welfare and support system. The activities of state, public organizations, foster families and professionals are disparate, the existing system of adaptation and socialization of children deprived of parental care is ineffective. Increasing the effectiveness of the social assistance system for this category of people is linked to the coordination of the activities of various institutions on the basis of an individual approach to working with orphans, in particular the social ones (Abebe, 2009).

Being the first law and social norm institution appeared in the history of mankind, beliefs and further on religion (which from the other point of view, if avoid the ritual component, can be treated as philosophical doctrine) traditionally deals and regulates all the social needs and problems and the problem mentioned as well (Okere, 1974). Due to complex nature and "specialization" of each Chinese religious and philosophical doctrines the problem of orphans and social orphans was somehow missed in them.

Theoretical framework of the problem

As the historians of the Orthodox Church note, in Russia even in the pre-Christian period there were scoundrels (special shelters for lonely aged people where they can live up to their death), where old women fed and took care of abandoned children. All the scoundrels were financed by local communities. Stert Ivan IV all the orphanages in the country were ruled by the Church Patriarchal Order. In 1706 r. Novgorod Metropolitan Yiov used his own money to start a shelter and then an orphanage attached to Holmovo-Uspenskii monastery. And soon he opened 10 shelters and

orphanages could take care of 3 thousand people. One of the main ideas that was persecuted by the hierarchy, was “salvation of each Christian soul” (Kastalskii, 2008). It can be said that taking care for unfortunate including orphans was considered to be a moral obligation of any Orthodox Christian.

European countries with a developed Catholic tradition (Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Austria) created a more or less widely developed system of educational institutions attached to monasteries and parishes for children abandoned by their parents (Okon, 2010). Such institutions were guided, on the one hand, by the general Christian postulates of mercy, on the other hand, they were considered to be a kind of “personnel reserve” for the monasteries themselves as well as centers of free, sometimes highly skilled labor (seamstresses, gold embroideries, etc.). Protestantism, which in Europe appeared the last and absorbed the ideas of Enlightenment and Renaissance, approached the issues of orphans` welfare more pragmatically, trying to coordinate the efforts of the Church, state, society and a particular person or community in one direction under the goals of mercy to unfortunates (Rohs & Estrine, 2011).

In Islam, to sacrifice for the poor is a duty sanctified by religious norms. This idea and tradition is reflected in a number of Muslim traditional holidays: Kurban-Bayram, Ideain, Uraza-Bayram, and others. Prophet Muhammad`s companion Ibn Umar said: “Sacrifices and gifts: a third is for you, a third is for the family, a third is for the unfortunates” (Alhamad, 2014). Until now this proportion is sacredly honored by those who profess Islam.

Charity, taking care of others is also one of the basic precepts of Judaism. The Old Testament contains several laws that emphasize the need not to forget about the needy and provides a kind of taxation in favor of the underprivileged and unfortunates. In the Talmud, the principles and rules of charity are described in great detail: who and how is obliged to chary, who has the right to use is, how much is to be given etc. (Rosen, 2004).

Chinese religious and philosophical doctrines never were treated and never existed in the form of a “church” or ordered social institution as the Europeans used to have it. The Chinese system of religious syncretism, which was the result of a complex synthesizing process of all three doctrines (Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism) took shape slowly and gradually during several centuries. In China, unlike other civilizations of the East, social ethics and administrative practice have always played a much greater role than mystical abstractions and individualistic search for salvation (Ching, 1993). A sober and rationalist-minded Chinese never thought too much about the mysteries of being and the problems of life and death, but he always saw a standard of supreme virtue and considered it to be his

sacred duty to imitate it. It should be also noted that the religious structure of China has always been characterized by socially insignificant role of clergies and priests. Buddhist and especially Taoist monks the average Chinese usually treated without respect or even with a poorly concealed disdain. As for the Confucian scholars, who mainly performed the most important functions of the priests and were the most respected and privileged social class in China, they were more officials and state servants than priests (Maliavin, 2006: 227).

Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, coexisting for many centuries, gradually converged with each other and each of the doctrines found its place in the Chinese system of religious syncretism. Confucianism prevailed in the field of ethics and social relations including family; Taoism with its magic, metaphysics, pantheon of deities and spirits was addressed to the sphere of feelings and so called “compensated” the dryness and rationalism of Confucianism; Buddhism cared for the concealment of sins, provided the illusions about a good future. The average Chinese usually did not see the difference between the three doctrines. To each of them, or even to all, he immediately appealed in case of need: the more gods and spirits hear his requests, the greater are the chances of success. The peculiarity of each doctrine, its independence and identity were preserved and cultivated only among educated shenshi (those state servants who passed the state exams on Confucianism), Taoists scholars or Buddhist monks in monasteries (Norden, 2011). As the Chinese themselves say, a classical Chinese is a rationalist by nature, a Confucian by education, a Buddhist or Taoist by occasion or in need, and a pagan on his inner convictions.

Orphanhood in China: definition peculiarities

The alleged indifference of traditional Chinese philosophical and religious doctrines toward to the problems of orphans can be explained by the peculiarity of the orphanhood phenomenon perception by traditional Chinese culture. It should be mentioned that due to the patriarchy of classical Chinese society and the secondary role of a women in the society, among the nobles in China an orphan was considered to be only a child who lost his father. Among the rurals, a child who lost his father was considered to be “misfortuned”, but an orphan was called a child who lost both parents. Also in Traditional China, a child was not recognized as an orphan until:

1. there remained at least one male relative from the father`s side (according to the Chinese laws, the closest blood relative from the father`s side was to take the child to his house and family as a guardian);

2. the child is over 10 years old (in this case, the child was considered old enough to stay in his home under the supervision of women or a curator from the community);

3. the child is over 14 years old (in this case, the boys were already considered to be old enough to start their own labor activity, and the girls - to get married).

In modern PR China today, 100% of orphans in the country are the children who really do not have both parents. Mostly children lose them due to natural disasters, or parents (mainly those from economically backward regions) “throw” the children to the state, leaving them in public places, and it is impossible to find such parents, although the Chinese police have a whole unit that searches for such parents (the number of “thrown” children whose parents could not be found does not exceed 15% from the total number of orphans in the country). According to official data of the PR China’s government, today country has 573,000 orphans and only 66,000 of them are completely held at the expense of the state; the rest are under guardianship or adopted by relatives (approximately 80% of the total number of orphans under 18 years old) (“China has 537 thousands of orphans”, 2013). And only those that are fully contained by the state, Chinese society and science define as orphans (adopted children do not receive from the state any subsidies or benefits).

As to Social Orphans, the problems associated with the lack of supervision of children and adolescents in the PRC are designed to address state programs which prevent vagrancy, illegal migration of people from economically backward territories to economically developed regions of the country, improve the quality of life of people in the countryside, prevent juvenile crimes, but not the targeted programs to prevent or decrease the level of social orphanhood. Even the term "social orphanhood" in Chinese pedagogics or sociology (as well as in medicine, law, welfare etc.) is not used. The Chinese use own analogues of this term: 自主的孩子- independent (autonomous) child, 拒绝孩子- rejected child (seldom used), 早熟的孩子- an early-grew-up child. The term "social orphan" is not used

Confucianism

Nevertheless, among the three religious and philosophical doctrines of China, Confucianism always played the dominant role. Like many famous peoples` one, Confucius personality is covered with legends. Modern researchers admit that the philosophical system, which we call Confucianism today, does not go back to one person (it is proved that from the whole doctrine`s theoretical framework Confucius himself is related only to the

collection of utterances “Lun yui” (Conversations and ideas); but even this book was not written by Confucius himself but written down by one of his students after the teacher’s death according to the other students’ memories). Confucius ideas perfectly fitted the system of traditional philosophical views of the Chinese over the social order, harmony and worship to ancestors. Coming from a noble but impoverished family, Confucius tried to make a career as a civil servant in order to have a comfortable life and restore the former glory of the family. Failed in making a military or court career, Confucius engaged himself to scientific work. This was due to the ‘state order’ of that time: the Ruler of Lu kingdom (native kingdom of Confucius) through military expansion annexed and attached to Lu kingdom large areas with heterogeneous ethnics and beliefs. He desperately needed a new state ideology that would stop internecine strife, consolidate social inequality, unite the country and was accessible and understandable to everyone. Confucius, in his doctrine took prevailing at that time views over the society structure, combined them with popular ideals and beliefs, and proposed a suitable religious, philosophical and ethical system. This doctrine not only satisfied the Ruler, but also became the dominant system for the Chinese society organization for many centuries (Bell, 2010).

Confucius proposed three key ideas, which could explain almost everything in the social and personal relationships including the inner world structure of a person:

Ren is the “basic rule” of Confucianism and it means that people should live in love and peace. In Chinese Ren means humanity, love to other people, tolerance. For Confucius, the realization of this idea entails realizing the true potential of a person. Love and peace, according to Confucius, are manifested in respect and tolerance towards other people, family members, friends and rulers.

Li. According to Confucius, people should not only be human, but also should observe the ritual - Li. It means that a person should show respect, good attitude and true faith not only during formal ceremonies, but also in everyday communication. In other words, people should always show humanity.

Yunzi. A man who demonstrates humanity and observes the ritual, Confucius calls “super personality”. Moreover, the superiority of such a person over all others is not only in his origin (as was used in early Chinese society), but also in his moral qualities and self-control.

Based on these principles, Confucius and his followers (mainly) created a philosophical system that has revealed the ways of achieving social harmony through the priority of five virtues:

- Sincerity;
- Etiquette;
- Wisdom;
- Fidelity (loyalty);
- Respect for parents and ancestors.

Confucius also defined the position in the society for each of its members and the relationship between people occupying different social positions, defining five types of relations:

- a husband and a wife;
- a parent and a child;
- ruler and subordinate;
- a child and a child (within one family);
- a friend and a friend (Tu, 1989).

The status of each member of the traditional Chinese society, both in the family and in society, was determined by the role assigned to him in accordance with the Confucius doctrine. Wealth, noble origin, family status and education also were taken into consideration. Depending on the position in society, the individual was to make his “proper” relationships and communications with other members of the society. Confucius believed that if people behave “properly” (were tolerant in their family and loyal to members of their class in the social hierarchy) it will prepare them well to serve the interests of society. They will also be obedient to those who have higher position in the social hierarchy (Maliavin, 2006).

As for the idea of orphans` welfare and guardianship, Confucian doctrine does not develop issues related to certain categories of population. Appealing to charity as a universal value, the Confucius` followers recognized the need for equal attitude to any member of the Chinese society.

Confucian principles start the Zhou Dynasty began to have a significant impact on the Chinese society. Under the Han dynasty they received the status of the official doctrine and state ideology. The Confucian canon continued to remain crucial to the political and social structure of China during the reign of all dynasties followed, even non-Chinese ones by origin. In the rural regions of China, Confucian doctrine defined family and communal relations till year 1949 on the level of traditional law, and its echoes are heard in China even now.

Not being a religion in the traditional meaning of the word, Confucianism absorbed both political and the administrative systems as well as function of the supreme regulator of social and economic processes became the basis of the entire Chinese way of life, a concentrated form of the Chinese culture.

Taoism

At first it was only a mixture of psychology and philosophy. Later on Taoism developed into a full-fledged religion, and for some time Laozi, who is considered to be the founder of this doctrine, was revered by the Chinese as God. Unlike Confucianism, Taoism does not consider the role of an individual in society. The aim of Taoism philosophical system is cultivation of philosophical awareness of life. Taoism is based on the Tao (The Way) as the universal category and principle. As Tao cannot be understood by consciousness, Taoists tend to achieve a certain mystical state through breathing and other exercises.

Taoists follow the *wu wei* (natural development) conception that they call “Wuwei art”. They think that if follow Tao then “Rulers will not lose armies, fathers will not lose sons, and children will not remain orphaned” (Fen & Shi, 2001). Also, the provisions of mercy for the unfortunates and the miserables are clearly recorded in the Taoist commandments:

- Respect old people and protect children;
- Grieve orphans, treat widows with compassion;
- Help the needy;
- Rescue people in danger;
- Feel pity for anybody’s misfortune;
- Have mercy without counting on the reward. Give it willingly;
- Do not laugh at someone else’s ugliness (Fairlie, 2018).

As to the practical implementation of the above mentioned commandments, they, firstly, appeal more to the monks than to ordinary people. On the other hand, due to the seclusion and isolation of the Taoists, it have not resulted in any centralized system of care or guardianship over orphans. Orphaned children could be postponed to a Taoist monastery (more often it concerned girls), or ask to become a servant to a Taoist monk by themselves. But to be transferred to a religious organization, a child did not have to be an orphan: Buddhists and Taoists accepted all children for education, regardless of their origin and family status. Subsequently, these children almost 100% became servants of the cult. Therefore, this fact cannot be regarded as a form of social work with orphans from the side of the doctrines mentioned.

Buddhism

Like Taoism, it has a long history and spread in China, though it has the abroad origin. Buddhism entered China along the Great Silk Road from India in the 5th century A.D. The attractiveness of Buddhism for the

Chinese was partly conditioned by the fact that it was not necessary to be a monk to obtain salvation. Monastic life did not fit the ideas of the Chinese, who highly valued family relations and interpersonal harmony. Buddhism promised the possibility of salvation through self-improvement. In addition, polytheism, which distinguished Buddhism, successfully combined with the ideas of the Chinese about ancestral spirits, patron spirits, etc. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas merged with local deities and thus strengthened the roots of Buddhism in China (Kitagawa & Cummings, 1987).

It can be said that Buddhism is the only Chinese doctrine that has somehow studied and investigated the idea of orphanhood. In particular, by professing the principle of rebirth (reincarnation), Buddhists believe that each creature comes into the world depending on what it did in the previous life. Death, therefore, is not a disappearance, but only a rebirth. There were defined three stages of reincarnation in people: the highest stage - the deceased returned as a noble, a general or any other high-ranking official; the average stage - as a scientist, an artisan or a tiller; the lowest stage - as widower, a mare, a childless person, a widow, an orphan (Sinderits, 2007). In other words, the fact that a person grows up as an orphan and suffers deprivation is his payment for sins that were committed in previous lives. To prevent a person from passing his path of redemption by alleviation of his suffering is a great sin, as well as aggravating this process in purpose. Therefore, orphans entered Buddhist monasteries by equal conditions with other children as servants and in the future became monks (Maliavin, 2006: 248-258).

It should be noted, however, that the founders of both pure Chinese religious and philosophical doctrines (Confucianism and Taoism) were orphans. Confucius lost his father in early age and the biography of Laozi does not mention he father at all. Modern culturologists of China believe that orphanhood was the factor that only added greatness to these historical figures, proving the loyalty of the Chinese rulers to people regardless their origin or family status and the talent of Confucius and Laozi.

Religious organizations as a part of social care system in Modern China

Philosophical and religious doctrines of Classical China do not play a great social role in Modern China. The Chinese willingly use them for cultural, but not the spiritual or religious purposes. They study philosophical literature of Confucianism, Buddhism or Taoism as the examples of literacy and study language peculiarities on it. As a philosophical examples they are used by narrow-specialized students and scientist.

There are several abroad religious-oriented organizations that try to make particular efforts in helping Chinese orphaned children. Among them we can name Christian organization «Beyond Outreach Foundation» (their activity is devoted to targeted assistance to abused children), World Orphans' Organization and a charitable organization «All God's International Children» (their new project "Formula" aims to collect money from foreign donors to provide proper nutrition for children with disabilities and premature orphans who are in PRC state orphanages).

The only exception among the Chinese philosophical and religious doctrines representatives is the Tibetan children's village - an educational institution, which has a pronounced Buddhism (Lamaism) orientation. In 1959, Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, fled into exile to Dharamsala (India), accompanied by 100,000 of his followers, many of whom left their children in their homeland to follow him. The Dalai Lama founded a shelter for such children (later it became a place also for children who were transferred there as to educational institution) - the Tibetan Children's Village - and imposed responsibility for it over his sister Jetsun Pemu, known as "Mother of Tibet". In this "resort of Tibetan culture and tradition" and its branch offices (some of them are located abroad), more than 7,000 children (which in fact are social orphans) live and study the Tibetan language and beliefs, as well as traditional Tibetan professions and crafts ("Tibetan Children's Village", 2013).

Postmodern aspect of religion in social-welfare system in China

Syncretic ideas and approaches to religious beliefs - that is realized as one of postmodern's characteristics in religion and other spiritual practices (McDaniel, 2008) - were seen as the norm for a China throughout the times. In one hand none of the Chinese religions and philosophical doctrines tried to occupy the only leading role in China as well as in the particular region. As it was already mentioned, the "spheres of influence" were strictly divided and each of them had its own "zone of existence". In the other hand all the doctrines thanks to their non-dogmatic, syncretic, eclectic, and draw from various faiths and traditions nature turned out to be a conglomerate of ideas taken from three of them and now mainly exist as "Chinese religion".

Nowadays all the Chinese (and abroad as well) religious and philosophical doctrines were proclaimed "a cultural heritage of China", are equal in their rights and have no preferences. They are taught and officially exist only in the cultural sphere as a part of the Chinese culture and inspire the Chinese and abroad artists to create and reconsider both the basics and the role of the Chinese religion and religion itself in the contemporary world.

As to the welfare system of Modern China the postmodern approaches can be met in this sphere in the field of room decoration (with the images of Buddhist and Confucious saints presenting them as cultural and historical character), additional reading (the Buddhist Pentateuch, Dao de Tsin and Confucious literature is used for the cultural and literature needs), traditional celebrations (when former local festival traditions are saved as part of the cultural herritage of the nation etc). Children who are raides in orphanages are free both to save the religious identity they came to the orphanage with as well as to follow the ones they choose. But mainly being a state organization orphanages in China provide the Chinese religion as a part of the cultural tradition of the Chinese nation which is both to be saved and rethought according to the realities of the modern life.

Conclusion

The idea of social guardianship over the orphaned children (both theoretical framework and forms of its practical realization) was introduced to China in the middle of the 18th century by abroad religious adepts (mainly Orthodox and Catholics). The Chinese state and government traditionally paid little attention to the problems connected with orphans, which, on the one hand, can be explained by the peculiarity of the interpretation of this concept in the Chinese culture, and on the other hand by the specifics of the religious and philosophical views of the Chinese (unlike Europe where religion was the driving force for the establishment of the state custody system for different population groups). The key idea of the need for orphaned children to be cared by the state or society is not reflected in the traditional Chinese religious and philosophical doctrines. Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism at the theoretical level practically did not develop the idea of social care over the defined category of children, confining themselves to general declaration of the need to be mercy to unfortunates. As the result the “Chinese religions” were and are not included as equal institution of socialization in the system of social welfare for orphans neither in Traditional China nor in modern PR China.

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