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Introduction

A reflection on culture is often accompanied by a search for the philosophical and ideological sources of its essential elements, such as customs and traditions, mentality, social structures and positive law. Behind any particular patterns of behaviour there always stands a concrete anthropological and ethical model of man. Though the degree to which that model is being consciously defined, accepted and incorporated into any given culture may vary, nevertheless, it is the culture that gives shape to – even if only indirectly – a concrete anthropological model of man, in that it determines dominant norms of behaviour, ideology, law, social organisation, and economic and political system.

Whether a particular ideology will be accepted or rejected by a society is a complex and multifaceted matter. However, from a sociological point of view, it is often possible to point to a certain dominating

mental background, favouring acceptance and formulation of ontological and anthropological premises.

The present article investigates the **social and economic system in modern-day China in comparison with Confucianism**. Any attempt to understand Communism in its Chinese version must take into account cultural and philosophical traditions of the Middle Country. Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism – all of them have exerted enormous influence on Chinese mentality and norms of behaviour. We shall examine a number of similarities between Confucianism and Communism and attempt to assess the role which the former played in the reception of the latter in China.

1. Confucian Ontology and Social Anthropology and Basic Premises of the Marxist Worldview

Confucius (551-479 BC) was one of the leading Chinese thinkers, whose teachings have set a lasting stamp on Chinese mentality. The principles of Confucianism, like Taoism, include a belief in the existence of an all-encompassing, cosmic moral order, **Tao**. **Tao** can be translated as the “way,” the “pathway”¹. In its verbal form it can also mean to “mark out,” to “delineate”². **Tao** (The Way) may be described as a somewhat vaguely defined world order and man’s place in it.

In the *Analects*³, the idea of the **Tao** assumes additional, sociological meaning. It describes a universal principle of cooperation, binding both individuals and state, which says that antagonisms and objectives of various social groups are not contradictory, but rather complementary to each other and mutually indispensable⁴.

According to Confucianism, the impersonal world and the mankind are in a constant movement, which is subject to a continuous, though not chaotic, transformation. The reality changes and gets transformed all the time. It is not possible to discern any ontological points

¹ See R. Stark, *Discovering God. The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief*, New York 2008, p. 257.

² See T. Dajczer, *Buddyzm w swej specyfice i odrębności wobec chrześcijaństwa*, Warszawa 1993, p. 58.

³ Chinese 論語 pinyin Lún Yǔ, V-IV B.C.E. – short sayings attributed to Confucius, written down by his students after his death. Polish edition: *Dialogi konfucjańskie* [orig. Lun-jü], trans. and annot. K. Czyżewska-Madajewicz et al., introd. M.J. Künstler, Warszawa 1976.

⁴ See T. Żbikowski, *Konfucjusz*, [w:] B. Kupis (red.), *Od Mojżesza do Mahometa*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 132-133.

of reference in that constantly evolving reality, unlike in metaphysics, with its categories of being and existence, matter and form, act and possibility, substance and accidents. There are, however, two discernible opposite modes of being at work: the *yin* and the *yang*. Their existence and activities prove that the world operates in accordance with a dialectical transformation⁵. Confucius saw the genesis of the world in the antagonistic interactions and the ensuing struggle of the cosmic forces. The world is not ontologically static, but is in the process of a continuous creation and transformation.

Such ontology, resting upon the thesis of the dialectics of transformation and the friction of the opposite forces is, to a certain degree, akin to Marxism, with its dialectics of social relationships seen as the dominant social dynamism present in the class conflict. Marxists maintain that there are two major, opposite forces at play: thesis and antithesis. These two fight with each other until a new quality emerges: the synthesis. This then turns into its exact opposites: another battling pair of thesis and antithesis fight again, until they give birth to yet another synthesis, and so on, and so forth⁶. To the Chinese ear, the thesis of Marx and Lenin about the class struggle, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, has a certain resonance with Taoism and Confucianism, especially with the idea of the *yin* and the *yang* and their continuous, mutual struggle towards a new quality in the synthesis.

Confucianism, like Marxism, is not primarily interested in the ontological questions, focusing instead on practical and sociological issues, with the aim of building a perfect society.

Confucianism denies man's relationship with personal Transcendence. Confucian anthropology is materialistic. Confucius taught that man belongs to the same order of things, as matter. Apart from his intellectual and psychological faculties, man does not possess any other attributes that would distinguish him from the rest of nature. Confucius interpreted the essence and the structure of man in the naturalistic sense only.

Accordingly, he did not concentrate on the meditation on the nature of man, because he only saw him as one of many elements of the culture, or as one of many members of the various social groups⁷. Man, according to him, has an inward inclination towards living in organised, social structures. In this, he resembles the animals' herd instinct. Unlike animals, however, he is not driven by mere instinct, but an absolute, existential necessity to live in society, since only in this

⁵ B. Szymańska (ed.), *Filozofia Wschodu*, Kraków 2001, p. 332.

⁶ See R.H. Popkin, A. Stroll, *Filozofia*, trans. J. Karłowski et al., Poznań 1994, p. 135.

⁷ See A. Zwoliński, *Chiny. Historia, terażniejszość*, Kraków 2007, p. 135.

way man can step on and pursue the path of his humanisation⁸. Society is the indispensable living environment, in which man can develop his talents and creativity. The social dimension of human life does not result from nature – as advocated by Christian anthropology – but from the existential necessity. From the ontological and social perspective, Confucianism treats man as an element of a larger picture, that is, the world and the society; he has to fit neatly into a clearly defined framework, or order of things. It is to society that he owes his very *raison d'être* and only there can he pursue his self-realisation and full subjectivity.

Confucius saw society as the best environment thinkable for man to live in, conducive to his development and humanisation. Man – according to him – exists for society; he can attain perfection only by strict adherence to cultural norms of behaviour of that society⁹.

Anthropological outlook that accords more value to the society than individual, necessarily leads to collectivism, where the individual person does not have any inherent value *per se*. His only worth is assessed against a degree of his subordination to the society he belongs to. In the view of M.J. Künstler, collectivism seems intrinsic to the oriental despotism. Confucianism, even if only implicitly, has – in fact – strengthened it by insisting on man's total subordination to social institutions like family, school, and civil authorities¹⁰.

Confucian collectivistic morality is asymmetrical. The individual must know his or her place in the social order. The son has duties to his father; younger sibling to his senior – not vice versa. Juniors owe their seniors reverence. The same applies on the social level: the individual has duties towards the collective, whereas the latter is not bound by any clearly defined obligations¹¹.

Confucian collectivism eased reception of Communism in China. Its ideology did not meet with a particularly strong opposition. Collectivism is also one of the central concepts in Marxism. It rests on

⁸ Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Sprawa Konfucjusza*, Warszawa 1983, p. 129.

⁹ See A. Zwoliński, *Chiny. Historia...*, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁰ Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Konfucjanizm a dzisiejsze społeczeństwo chińskie*, [in:] E. Śliwka (ed.), *Kościół w Chinach. Przeszłość – teraźniejszość – przyszłość*, Pieniężno 1988, pp. 146-147.

¹¹ Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Konfucjanizm...*, op. cit., p. 147. B. Bertolucci tells a story of his tour of the imperial palace in Beijing, when he was repeatedly frustrated in his attempts to inquire about the authorship of the objects on display, hearing instead that it had dated from so or so a period. He was later told that that was not due to the ignorance on the part of his tour guide, but rather exemplified his collectivistic way of thinking: the artist was less important than the community and the age that shaped him. Cf. *ibid.*

the materialistic determinism, which in turn provided Communism with its philosophical foundations of dialectical materialism. Since it implies a monistic and materialistic vision of reality, including man, it leads to reductionism and atheism¹². Man is seen merely as one of many biological elements in the natural world.

Marxism treats man as an epiphenomenon of society, i.e. a derivative and secondary phenomenon¹³. It has no place for ontological, let alone transcendental, reflection on the human nature. Human nature is the end result, the expression and the interaction of social relations. Marxism advocates an organistic interpretation of social life, endowing it with the capabilities to actually form men. According to Marx, "(...) the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of social relations"¹⁴. In other words, the essence of man lies outside his very self; he must discover it and adopt it in the process of socialisation and work¹⁵.

According to Marxism, society is not identical with a community of persons, each one endowed with their own subjectivity and personal status. In the ontological order, without society individual human beings actually do not exist. That is why society does not consist of individual beings; in reality, it is the ensemble of social relations¹⁶.

The consequence of the ontological primacy of the society over the individual is sociocentrism, that is the inferiority of the individual in its relationship to the collective. Classic philosophy, following Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, states that man is a social being; he creates society and lives in it; society exists because of and for man. He is the subject, the centre and the goal of social life¹⁷. Marxism proclaims the opposite: it is the society that is the essence of man. Man, despite all his complexity and cognitive faculties that give him superiority over the animal world is – ontologically speaking – nothing more than a derivative and a manifestation of the social collectivism¹⁸.

¹² See P. Kowalczyk, *Komunizm a globalizm*, „Człowiek w kulturze”, no. 14, 2002, pp. 97-106.

¹³ Cf. T. Ślipko, *Pojęcie człowieka w świetle współczesnej filozoficznej antropologii marksistowskiej w Polsce*, „Zeszyty Naukowe KUL”, no. 2, 1967, p. 14.

¹⁴ Qtd. [after:] A. Zwoliński, *Wobec komunizmu*, Kraków 1991, p. 111.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. P. Kowalczyk, *Komunizm a globalizm*, art. cit., pp. 98-99.

¹⁷ Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* 25.

¹⁸ See P. Kowalczyk, *Komunizm a globalizm*, art. cit., p. 99.

Marxist sociocentrism propounds the ontological and axiological primacy of the collective over the individual. Man is both a tool and a product of the society. Only in society can he maintain his value and dignity, and attain the fullness of his humanity. The consequence of such anthropology is simple: depersonalisation of man and his degradation to a category of a mere tool serving some vague, impersonal goals.

The inevitable outcome of the above is a serious infringement, if not an outright negation, of man's right to self-determination. Dialectical materialism did try to preserve some vaguely defined autonomy of man and even explored a number of possibilities of marrying human freedom with the law of nature and workings of social and economic factors. Some of its proponents, however, advocated a radical determinism. For example, F. Engels was very vocal in his opposition to any right of self-determination. Later ideologues differed on the issue; some supported Engels' determinism, while others preferred to take a somewhat more moderate stance. At the end of the day, however, Marxists, as materialistic monists, followed the view that the psychological dimension of man was nothing more than the product of the matter. That led them to a conclusion that it was not possible to award any constant value to human freedom and acknowledge it as the inherent part of the ontological structure of man¹⁹. In this way they effectively removed from man the authority to pursue his ethical self-creation for the benefit of being content with his status as an element and effect of social processes. It was nothing less than a total denial of man's ontological uniqueness by taking away his intrinsic rights.

Notwithstanding all similarities between Confucianism and Marxism, the latter did encounter certain obstacles in China. One of the foremost differences between collectivism in its Confucian and Communist versions is importance accorded to family life. For Confucius, family was the most essential part of the society, the social paradigm²⁰. Confucian anthropology identifies it as the community built on the natural system of interdependence. It does not, however, rest on parental or filial love, but on the dependence and unconditional obedience of juniors to seniors. It has a direct correlation in the national dimension.

¹⁹ Cf. P. Kowalczyk, *Podstawy światopoglądu chrześcijańskiego*, Wrocław 1995, p. 36.

²⁰ In the Chinese scheme of things, family has always occupied a prominent position. The governing elite comprised large and independent families, by and large unaffected by various social conflicts and wars. Confucius and his followers confirmed and strengthened the role of the family in the Chinese society. In this, he can be rightly called a philosopher of the Chinese family system. Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Konfucjanizm...*, op. cit., p. 146.

Subjects owe filial reverence to their rulers. It is a social obligation, an imperative²¹. It does not cease even with the death of the parent, when the soul of the deceased becomes an object of the cult and the eldest son assumes responsibility for its continuity as the new head of the family²². That was why having male offspring was of such paramount importance to the Chinese²³.

Confucius constructed his theory of good governance on the family model. In many ways, the state was regarded as an extension of the family²⁴. Both were organised according to a certain pattern, where members occupied their strictly assigned places in the hierarchical order of the family or the state and performed their clearly defined tasks according to the rules of propriety²⁵. Just as in the family, where the son owed reverence for and obedience to his father²⁶, the subjects owed the same to their ruler, whose authority was absolute²⁷. But Confucius put the family over the state. Family bonds were for him more important than the social ones. And this is precisely where Confucianism and Marxism differ, at least in the latter radical, Stalinist version, where the role and value of the family was nothing compared with the loyalty and total obedience to the Communist party, personified in blindly committed ideologues like, for example, the infamous Pawka Morozow, who denounced his own father.

Like Communists, Confucius was no supporter of democracy in the proper sense of the word. It would not fit into his worldview and philosophy of man²⁸. Good governance, according to him, depended on the authoritarian exercise of power and on keeping the myth of the ideal ruler alive. A couple of Chinese dynasties have tried precisely that. Many ages later, the Confucian ideal would find its ultimate expression in Mao Tse-tung and his followers.

2. Common elements of Confucian and Marxist ethics

Whatever can be said about the Confucian ethics, it is not an ethics of virtues (*or* values) in the classic sense. They were not intended

²¹ See T. Żbikowski, *Konfucjusz*, art. cit., p. 134.

²² Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Sprawa Konfucjusza*, op. cit., p. 129.

²³ Cf. T. Żbikowski, *Konfucjusz*, art. cit., p. 134.

²⁴ Cf. J. Lobman, *Chiny poprzez wieki*, Warszawa 1962, p. 43.

²⁵ Cf. T. Żbikowski, *Konfucjusz*, art. cit., p. 134.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁷ Cf. J. Lobman, *Chiny...*, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

as means for oneself-realisation in line with a defined ontological model, but rather as useful tools for the formation of good citizens. It could be reasonably argued that Confucius confined his teaching on ethics to the theory of the social upbringing, good manners and propriety²⁹. He insisted on practising social virtues, especially doing one's duties, and the so-called "humanitarianism"³⁰. Subjects should be submissive, obedient, and loyal. The whole point was that the society be easily ruled and the state smoothly run³¹.

Confucius recommended patriarchy, where family and social bonds favour creation and maintenance of efficient networks of mutual obligations and reciprocity³². One of the most important rules in Confucianism is the *li*, which regulates the proper observance of forms of behaviour (gestures, body movements, etc.) in the concrete time and situations. It is the *li*, the etiquette, the ceremonial, which occupies the first place among all other virtues. Etiquette limits freedom of choice by putting restrictions on the freedom of expression, sincerity and loyalty. Ultimately it puts primacy of form over essence, practice over norms. It is a very characteristic strand in Confucianism³³, according to which only a harmonious action, undertaken at a proper time, can yield a desirable effect³⁴. Confucian ethics is conditioned by particular, concrete situations, where moral norms are being moulded to suit those situations.

Confucius taught that man had an in-born faculty to recognise concrete, social and economic situations, which enabled him to harmoniously adjust himself to changing situations. In line with this thinking, a good citizen should adjust himself to the changing social situations as well³⁵. From there it was not far to opportunism and conformism.

Confucian ethics were very practical, geared towards achievement of practical, social goals. Confucius did not deal with the justifica-

²⁹ The famous Golden Rule, or ethic of reciprocity, espoused by Confucius, was: "Do not do to others what you would not like done to yourself." Morality is supported by justice. It regulates five principal relationships between: 1) ruler and ministers; 2) father and son; 3) husband and wife; 4) elder sibling and older sibling; 5) friend and friend. Confucius commanded love of neighbour, loyalty, sincerity, diligence and cult of the dead. See P. Siwek, *Wieczory paryskie*, Poznań 1960, p. 75.

³⁰ Cf. J. Lobman, *Chiny...*, op. cit., p. 47.

³¹ Ibid., p. 41.

³² Ibid., p. 46.

³³ Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Sprawa Konfucjusza*, op. cit., p. 130.

³⁴ See R. Stark, *Discovering God. The Origins...*, op. cit., p. 267.

³⁵ Cf. A. Zwoliński, *Chiny. Historia...*, op. cit., p. 135.

tion of good³⁶. He did not invoke any transcendental justifications for morality. Neither did he see any connection between virtuous life and ethical betterment of man. His ethical system was part of a broader social pattern of family life and good governance. It would, thus, not be a big exaggeration to call it the "sociotechnics-turned-ethics."

Difficulties with coming up with a viable description of human nature, discernment between good and evil, coupled with the conviction that morality is conditioned by circumstances (whatever comes at a proper time is good), leads to moral relativism, egoism, and opportunism. Such ethics do not conflict with the kind of morality professed by the Communist ideology, where moral norms are relative and even morality itself is regarded as a historical process dependant on social variables³⁷. Teaching morality is an integral part of the entire Communist ideology, which – in its turn – forms a part of the so-called "ideological superstructure," being itself conditioned by the given historical period and culture. That superstructure has a transitory nature in that it goes into oblivion as soon as the so-called "base," that is the particular social and economic situation, changes. To Marxists it is clear that universal and permanent ethical norms can be no objective. Ethics change along with the socio-economic system they serve³⁸.

³⁶ Confucian philosophers actually did pose questions about man's moral nature and moral quality of human acts. For instance, Mencius thought that man is by nature good, and the moral virtues are in-born, and advised that men should nourish and develop them. Cf. Teachings of Mencius, www.chiny.pl/mengzi.php [accessed: 11.04.2013]. Xunzi professed a contrary view: human nature is evil and man is born bad. Taste for wealth and egoism leads to depravity, rivalry, jealousy, hatred and conflicts between men. Good is being "initiated" by conscious good acts. See Xunzi, www.2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/Xunzi.htm [accessed: 11.04.2013]. Another thinker, Gaozi, took the middle road, maintaining that human nature is morally neutral, neither good, nor bad. Morality depends on upbringing and external factors. Cf. F. Youlan, *Krótko historia filozofii chińskiej*, trans. M. Zagrodzki, Kraków 2001, p. 81. During the Han dynasty (220-206 B.C.) Zhongshu tried to solve the problem of good and evil by proposing that whatever happens in either individual or communal life at a proper time is good. His philosophy assumes an interaction between the heaven (*tien*) and the human race (*ren*). Emperor represents heaven as its ambassador on earth. Zhongshu introduced many elements of Taoism into his theory, where the dialectics of the opposites *yin* and *yang* play decisive part in the history of the world. See Dong Zhongshu, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/608995/Dong-Zhongshu [accessed: 11.04.2013].

³⁷ Cf. M.J. Künstler, *Konfucjanizm...*, op. cit., p. 149.

³⁸ Cf. G. Gak, *Zagadnienie etyki w światopoglądzie marksistowsko-leninowskim*, [in:] *Collective work, O komunistycznej moralności*, trans. M. Kluźniak, Warszawa 1953, p. 82.

“According to Marxists, morality is a historical category. There can be no morality that could be applied for all times and every nation. Rules of behaviour and interaction between people change along with the social and economic conditions”³⁹.

M. Fritzhand judged Marxism to be an amoral system, which recognises no permanent, objective moral norm that every man should accept and practice. Marxism – he said – is above ethics. In his opinion, “if Marxists proclaim certain moral norms as just and obligatory, they either contradict themselves, or do it for the sake of the class struggle”⁴⁰. He clarifies that the Marxists view morality as a product of social interaction⁴¹. Material conditions and processes of production are the chief factors in morality. In other words, morality of any given society is conditioned by its economic system and means of production⁴².

Morality is variable, ever evolving, ever dependent on social and economic factors⁴³. Because it is powered by the class struggle, where conflicting interests of opposite social groups fight for dominance, it is justifiable, or sometimes even commendable, to employ various methods to overcome the opposition. Morality must further the interests of the proletariat. Like in Confucianism, it serves practical, social ends.

Morality has nothing to do with religion or metaphysics. It sprouts not from human nature, but from society. In Marxists’ view, even if one wanted to argue in favour of the theory of moral norms’ permanent character, it would only be possible when the class struggle ends, with Communism victorious over all other ideologies and the introduction of new, non-antagonistic economic relationships. That, according to them, would clear the way for a new type of morality, based on social solidarity⁴⁴.

³⁹ N. Bołdyriew, *W. Lenin i J. Stalin o kształtowaniu moralności komunistycznej*, [in:] *O komunistycznej moralności*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁴⁰ See M. Fritzhand, *W kręgu etyki marksistowskiej. Szkice i polemiki etyczne*, Warszawa 1966, p. 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴³ J. Stalin summarised his thoughts on relative value of things as follows: “Dialectics tell us that there is nothing eternal in this our world; everything comes to a pass. Everything changes: nature, society, customs and traditions, our notion of justice, even truth itself also changes.” See J. Stalin, *Dziela*, trans. Inst. Marksa-Engelsa-Lenina przy KC WKP, v. I, Warszawa 1949, p. 313, qtd. [after:] N. Bołdyriew, *Lenin i J. Stalin...*, art. cit., p. 28.

⁴⁴ Cf. M. Fritzhand, *W kręgu etyki marksistowskiej. Szkice...*, op. cit., p. 42.

Another interesting concept in Marxism is the class morality. It is determined and driven by economic antagonisms between the classes. Its central premise is that each class has its own ideas of good and evil, justice and falsehood, morality and immorality, and it acts upon these ideas. Accordingly, each class has certain assumptions about what is good and what is evil in its adversaries and expects them to always act upon them, too. Class-related morality, in crude words, depends on little more than one's own vantage point⁴⁵. In Marxists' view, every member of society ought to adopt its most treasured attitudes and forms of behaviour and make them their own⁴⁶, and thus attain an ideal personality. In a sense, personality is nothing else than an "internalised culture,"⁴⁷ where individual traits are being acquired through learning those norms of behaviour that are proposed by the society. Marxists call it the "law of matrix" which man should emulate⁴⁸.

The Marxist idea of morality did not raise many eyebrows among Chinese, well schooled in accepting whatever social order the current rulers might tell them to accept and always prepared to conform to a new one if the circumstances changed. The Chinese are quite at home with the notion that morality should be practical and – to a certain extent – relative.

3. Confucianism in the Communist China in Practice

The Chinese society has always been very ethnocentric, with a strong sense of its own superiority and aversion to outsiders. Perhaps, some degree of collective egotism is not wholly exceptional to the Chinese, since every culture or nation sometimes displays signs of excessive attention to its own importance in the world. Ethnocentrism in the Chinese version owns a lot to Confucianism and its vision of the ideal society. Drawing heavily on the nation's collective egotism, Confucianism contributed to and strengthened hostility to everything that smacked of foreignness. Suffice it to learn from the *Analecks* that "barbarian tribes, whether from the East or from the North, with rulers are not as viable as the various Chinese states without them" (III. 5, p. 49)⁴⁹.

It was only a matter of time before ethnocentrism, already deeply rooted in the Chinese culture, married with Confucian contempt for

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 45-47.

⁴⁶ See A. Jasińska, R. Siemieńska, *Wzory osobowe socjalizmu*, Warszawa 1975, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹ Quoted [after:] M.J. Künstler, *Konfucjanizm...*, op. cit., p. 145.

non-Chinese, bare fruit in the form of not infrequent outbursts of persecution of foreigners. For example, an edict from 836 AD forbade any contacts between Chinese and the so-called "coloured people," i.e. Sogdians, Arabs, Hindus, Iranians, and the inhabitants of Southeast Asia. In 879 AD, there was a massacre of foreign merchants in Canton, when about 120,000 people were killed⁵⁰.

Though sinocentrism remains a constant feature of the Chinese culture, modern-day instigators of xenophobic acts are not adherents of Confucianism, but of Communism⁵¹. They practice it both in their domestic and international policy, individually and collectively⁵². On a domestic level, it finds expression in the treatment of ethnic minorities like Tibetans. Precise figures of Tibetans killed since 1950 vary, but most estimates speak of more than 1,200,000 out of six million total population. Almost all Tibetan religious communities, famous for their religion, culture, science, medicine, and art, have been destroyed. Demographic policy of the Chinese government, regarding Tibetans, and mass relocations of the local population, have reduced Tibetans to the minority status in their own country⁵³.

The Chinese policy towards ethnic minorities aims at their assimilation rather than preservation of their cultures and traditions which are regarded as nothing more than useful curiosities to add splendour to state occasions⁵⁴.

Another interesting example of the influence of the Confucian theory on the Communist practice is the way of staffing the state apparatus. When Confucianism was recognised as the official philosophical system of China during the Han dynasty (third century B.C.), Confucian scholars devised an elaborate procedure for the recruitment of state bureaucracy. Candidates for administrative posts had to pass an exam evaluating their suitability for the job. They did not have to display a particularly impressive expertise in whatever profession they claimed to be suitable for, be it military or civil service. What was expected of them instead, was thorough knowledge of the Confucian doctrine. In due course, the administration was full of amateurs whose chief skill lay in being well versed in the official ideology⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 145.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 146.

⁵³ Tibet and China, www.wolnytybet.info/tybet-chiny/ [accessed: 26.06.2013].

⁵⁴ See M.J. Künstler, *Konfucjanizm...*, op. cit., p. 146.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

Communists in China adopted the same yardstick against which to measure one's fitness for a public post. The only difference being the fact that it was the knowledge of Marxism rather than Confucianism that was valued most. The ever present Communist nomenclature in China, which today counts in the millions and sits at key administrative positions, does not meet with any real opposition precisely because it has been present since time immemorial.

A cult of personality is yet another strand that features prominently in both Confucianism and Communism. The former built it on the old Chinese cult of the dead, though never elevated it to the social, collective level, keeping it rather within the confines of the family. It basically served the needs of the close relatives of the dead, in their belief that the souls of their ancestors existed as long as they received due offerings and could influence the fate of their descendants⁵⁶.

Personality cult in Communism is universally and internationally bonding. For instance, the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Mao Tse-tung were dubbed as near sacred books and accorded infallibility. Political leaders, such as Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung and others, enjoyed unquestionable authority and a Divine-like status. They had their birthdays universally celebrated, with sumptuous displays of their portraits set up on main squares and avenues, much like little folk chapels. After the death their mortal remains were revered almost like relics⁵⁷.

Confucianism taught that only a male member of the family could make offerings to the ancestors. He was the priest of the cult and nobody was allowed to stand for him⁵⁸. That was why it was so important to have a male offspring who would take over the responsibility for the family when his father died. While it can shed an interesting light on the one-child policy in China⁵⁹, it would be premature to conclude that it had had a direct and decisive impact on the preference of boys over girls in population control measures⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 149-150.

⁵⁷ See A. Zwoliński, *Wobec komunizmu*, op. cit., p. 134.

⁵⁸ See M.J. Künstler, *Sprawa Konfucjusza*, op. cit., p. 129.

⁵⁹ Cf. T. Żbikowski, *Konfucjusz*, art. cit., p. 134.

⁶⁰ Cf. Dramatyczne konsekwencje polityki jednego dziecka w Chinach, [Dramatic consequences of the one-child policy in China], www.niewiarygodne.pl/kat,1031987,title,Dramatyczne-konsekwencje-polityki-jednego-dziecka-w-Chinach,wid,15243132,wiadomosc.html [accessed: 15.04.2013]. Anti-natalist policy in China has led to a dramatic decrease in the birthrate of girls. One of the consequences of this are the generations of the so-called "little emperors," i.e. boys who, as the result of their overprotective upbringing, exhibit excessive egocentric qualities. Cf. *ibid.*

In most parts of the world, Communism collapsed in late 1980's. This begs an obvious question: Why has it survived in China? Part of the answer may lay in the measures which the Chinese government took in 1990 to counterattack what it saw plainly happening in other Communist countries. Any voice of dissent with the official party line (dubbed as the "Polish disease") was treated as an attempt to destroy the whole fabric of the Chinese society and a direct threat to the security of the state, and dealt with accordingly. In the defense of the status quo, the government invoked Confucian values and appealed to Chinese traditional ethnocentrism. Children were educated in patriotism and in praising the merits of Communism in beating off the enemies of the country. On a more perceptible level, the government took a number of effective measures to improve the standard of living of their citizens. It visibly consolidated its authority and helped to preserve its hierarchical, Confucian model⁶¹.

In December 1978, the People's Republic of China has begun a careful process of disentangling itself from its attachment to Communist orthodoxy and embarked on a slow journey towards the free market economy. This process accelerated after the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. The principles of 'real socialism' were discarded and replaced by the time-tested and effective rules of the free market competition. The government privatised large part of the Chinese industry and opened up domestic market to free trade.

What has actually caused this major shift in China, this drifting away from the up-to-then cherished Communist and Marxist economic principles? According to B. Góralczyk, the Chinese government has quite simply taken a pragmatic approach to the new economic situation in the world and timely seized the opportunities to make some handsome profit from it for their country. Góralczyk highlights the active role of the state in shaping and controlling the course of various economic processes in China, contrary to the neoliberal, "weak state" approach of some Western governments⁶². Confucianism teaches that the paramount obligation of every ruler and every citizen is building a strong state, with a stable social and political order. It steers clear of ideological dogmatism and commends working towards the achieve-

⁶¹ See K. Janicki, *Dlaczego w Chinach przetrwał komunizm? Czyli o walce ChRL z... polską chorobą*, www.histmag.org/Dlaczego-w-Chinach-przetrwal-komunizm-Czyli-o-walce-ChRL-z-polska-choroba-3489 [accessed: 16.04.2013].

⁶² B. Góralczyk, *Chiny a nowy ład gospodarczy w świecie*, www.azja-pacyfik.edu.pl/konferencja-2-goralczyk.pdf [accessed: 25.05.2013].

ment of desired and useful results. In the light of the above, it does not seem too far-fetched an explanation of why the government of the People's Republic of China has abandoned for good all the teaching on economy of Marx and Lenin and even the recommendations of its own native son, Mao Tse-tung, all the while steadfastly adhering to the Marxist ideology in other respects.

Conclusion

Confucianism and Communism have a lot in common. Both systems are materialistic, with very visible anti-individualistic, anti-humanistic strands and moral relativism. Both understand the world in terms of dialectical struggle of polar opposites. They share the ambition to build the ideal society. It is near impossible to discern, with anything even approaching a well-substantiated precision, how far Confucianism eased the reception of Communism in China. But, it is equally hard to escape the conclusion that it did help to create formidable ideological grounds for it. Willingly or not, Confucianism was the springboard for the worldview which claimed it possessed the right and the means to create a new, better world.

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ANTONI JUCEWICZ SVD

Confucianism versus the Reception of Communism in China

Abstract

The present article studies the communist regime in China, analysed in terms of Confucian tradition existing in this country for centuries. It indicates the similarities between Confucianism and Marxism and the influence of Confucianism on the reception of communism in China. Both Confucianism and Marxism do not focus on ontological issues, but the practical and sociological ones, perceiving them in the context of building a model of a perfect society and effective governance of the country. Both trends describe the origins of the world and society, pointing to the dialectic clash of opposing forces. They are characterised by materialistic view of the world, anti-individualism, antipersonalism, collectivism, and ethical relativism. As stated in the Conclusion, Confucianism has created a strong philosophical back-

ground to the implementation of communist ideas and became the ideological basis for this belief.

Key words: China, Confucianism, communism, Marxism.

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ANTONI JUCEWICZ SVD

Konfucjanizm a recepcja komunizmu w Chinach

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule przedmiotem refleksji był ustrój komunistyczny w Chinach, analizowany pod kątem istniejącej od wieków tradycji konfucjańskiej w tym państwie. Ukazano podobieństwa pomiędzy konfucjanizmem a marksizmem oraz wpływ konfucjanizmu na recepcję komunizmu w Chinach. Zarówno konfucjanizm jak i marksizm nie koncentrują się na zagadnieniach ontologicznych, ale praktycznych i socjologicznych, podejmując je w kontekście budowania modelu idealnego społeczeństwa i efektywnego sprawowania rządów w państwie. Oba nurty mówią o genezie świata i społeczeństwa, wskazując na dialektykę ścierania się przeciwstawnych sił. Charakteryzuje je materialistyczna wizja świata, antyindywidualizm, antypersonalizm, kolektywizm i relatywizm etyczny. We wniosku stwierdzono, że konfucjanizm stworzył silne filozoficzne tło do wdrożenia komunistycznych idei i stał się ideologiczną podstawą tego światopoglądu.

Słowa kluczowe: Chiny, konfucjanizm, komunizm, marksizm.