

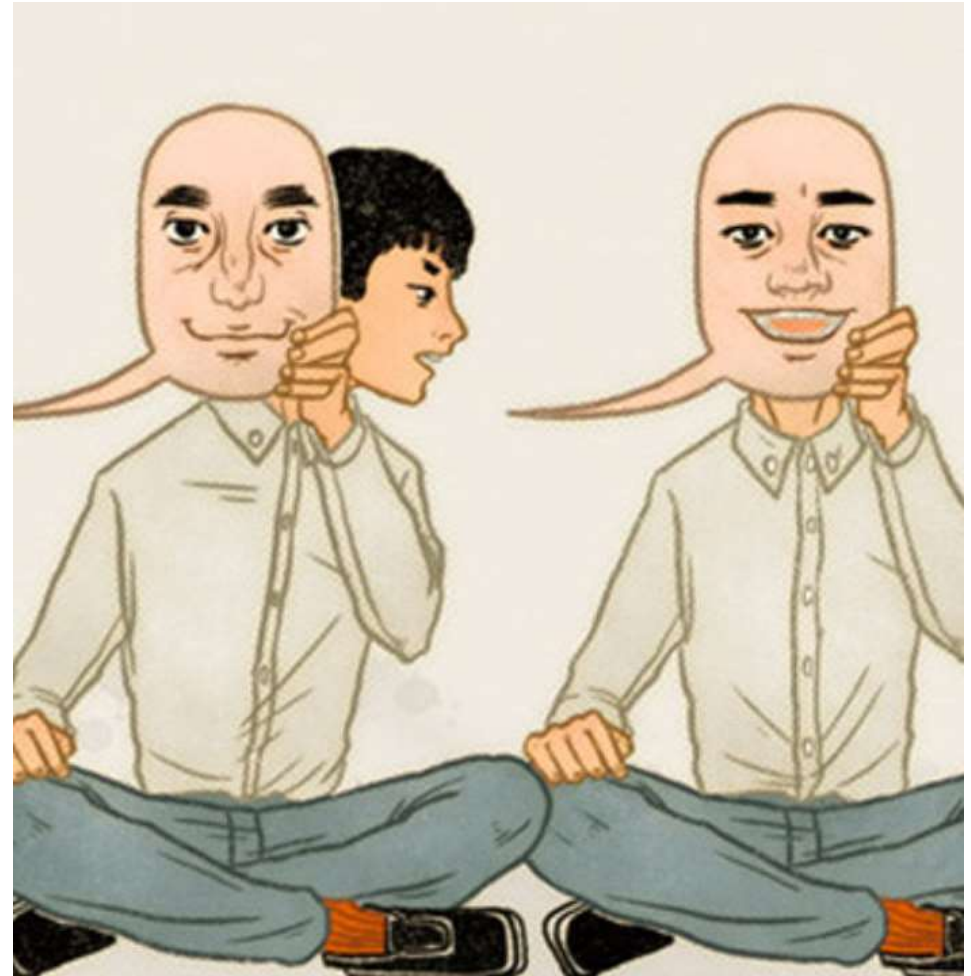
A photograph of a large, dense canopy of red lanterns hanging from a structure, likely a festival or celebration. The lanterns are illuminated, creating a warm, glowing effect against a dark blue night sky. The lanterns are arranged in many rows, creating a sense of depth and repetition. In the background, a traditional Chinese building with a tiled roof is visible, partially obscured by the lanterns. The overall atmosphere is festive and celebratory.

# Chinese Culture

Some key differences to Western culture

# Honour and Shame

- Honour is a key part of Chinese culture & has been for centuries
- Honourable actions/behaviours:
  - Personal integrity (having good morals, being honest & trustworthy)
  - Obedience to parents, respect for elders, respect for social status
  - Being successful and hardworking
  - Respect & consideration for others, never embarrass anyone else or cause them to lose face
  - Loyalty to family & country
- 'Face' (reputation) is not just about you, shame affects family & whole social circle





# Individualism vs Collectivism



Western culture:

- Good to stand out from the crowd
- Make your own way
- Individual needs more important than needs of family or country

Chinese culture:

- Good to fit in with the crowd
- Support the whole group
- Loyalty to family & country more important than individual needs

# Chi

- Chi/qi 气 is 'life energy'. It flows through ALL living beings
- Traditional Chinese acupuncture is supposed to activate points in your body where chi flows
- A common theme in kung fu movies ('wuxia') is the idea that you can gain supernatural abilities by cultivating your chi
- Chi is portrayed oddly in Mulan 2020 (probably due to western writers)
  - Powerful chi is achieved through training, not something you're born with
  - Chi is about balance and self-control, not honesty (deceit will not 'poison chi')
  - Powerful chi is used for combat & fighting (not 'forbidden to use in destructive ways')
  - Women & men both have it (film 'chi is for warriors, not women')





# Love and marriage

- Marriages were arranged by matchmaker and/or by parents (up until approx 1950s)
- Even today there's still some expectation that parents will help choose a suitable partner & have a say in who you marry
- Expected that you should marry someone from the same background as you – similar wealth, status, age, class etc



# Humour

## Western Culture

- Humour part of normal interactions
- Very few things can't be joked about
- Self-deprecating humour is good

## Chinese Culture

- Humour only acceptable in certain contexts
- Serious topics should not be joked about
- Laughing at yourself or teasing others lowers status/face



# Traditional gender roles



In ancient Chinese culture

- Women's role = marry, domestic duties, care for children.
- Men's role = work/provide money, fight in wars
- Cannot choose a different role, even if unsuited. Departing from traditional gender roles brings dishonour.
- Confucius taught strict adherence to roles would ensure social harmony. Everyone should know their place. "Men plough, women weave".
- Men & women = yin & yang, two parts of a whole
- China had feminist movement during Communist Revolution in 1950s – more accepted to choose a different role these days



# Talent vs Discipline



## **Western Culture**

- The idea that some people are born 'naturally gifted' is commonly believed
- Main characters in films or stories often have a special ability or magical power which comes easily to them
- Putting in lots of effort is sometimes scoffed at as 'trying too hard'

## **Chinese Culture**

- Generally understood that skill requires hard work & discipline
- Most protagonists in Chinese dramas have to study or train intensely and for a long time to earn their abilities
- Hard work and effort are highly valued & seen as the logical path to success



# Witches

## Western culture

- Women who could supposedly do magic were hated & feared in historical Europe
- Women found guilty of witchcraft were killed (often burned at the stake)

## Chinese culture

- Witches are a very Western concept and there is not really an equivalent in Chinese culture
- Historically they had shamans or sorcerers of both genders but these were generally respected not feared



# Ancestral Guardians

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- Ancestor worship is widespread, has been practiced for centuries, and is still practiced today.
- Many houses contain a shrine to ancestors
  - People offer fruit, flower & incense to them
- Spirits of ancestors are believed to watch over their descendants and bring them good fortune
  - Can sometimes take on the form of an animal
  - Dragons & phoenixes are both traditionally associated with the emperor

