Good research paper on japanese culture

JAPANESE CULTURE & POLITICAL SYSTEM

In Japan, the natives follow the Confucian-inherited cultural practices and this has also slowly seeped into their political system as well. It would be inappropriate to say that the Chinese philosopher had no bearing on the country's political system today, and so, in order to understand the influence of his teachings on Japanese culture and politics, the idea of understanding the concept of political culture can be studied. According to Sugino (1994), " political culture consists of both the constant and dynamic elements of a polity, maintained and transformed by the process of political socialization." The Chinese philosopher's teachings make sense, and from what one sees how this has shaped Japan's cultural and political system, their Confucian religious believes are based on their values and attitudes such as piety, propriety, emphasis on education, hierarchy, and harmony, continues Sugino (1994).

A lot of importance is given to family and hierarchy. As Sugino (1994), says, " The most important features of the Japanese political culture are derived from the Confucian values based on group-centeredness, hierarchy based on moral authority, dualistic orientation," and, " the bureaucracy which is allowed to maintain the Confucian principle of hierarchical rule based on moral authority." What this means is that the Japanese political culture shows a strong norm of preserving group harmony. The Japanese are known to be hard working and this is reflected from their teachings that stress the importance of sacrifice for hard life and groupism. They are willing to accept hard work, and live a comparatively simple life. So entrenched are the Japanese by their Confucian practices that they stress on the human

relationships based on the ideology of a family model for all other relationships. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that their social and political philosophies are modeled on a family model which is hierarchical and paternalistic. This system is quite in contrast to western practices, where " Western political philosophy is more about individualism and human rights" (bates. edu, p. 5). So strong is their bonding that the Japanese family system is one strong united entity. The man heads the family and whatever the family runs; it is passed on to the next head of the family by default. Sadly, this system does not go well in politics, as this system mandates that " social harmony must come from within oneself, and cannot be imposed on unruly people through force of coercive methods." It's not difficult to understand why the majority of Japanese are polite and kind. However, this has its repercussions as well, as was seen in the gas attacks in Japan by certain extremists sometime back. This is not to say that the Western culture is barbaric or hasn't witnessed such attacks in the past either, but what is different is that the Japanese public did not foresee such an attack coming from within their own land.

Japan's constitutional monarchy is headed by the emperor as the symbol of state, while a parliamentary system of government runs the country. The country maintains cordial relations with all the countries across the world after WWII. The attitude of the Japanese people towards the government is shaped by the Confucianism practices, where loyalty precedes benevolence. While the government was the authority, businesses looked to the government for guidance in running their businesses. This amalgamation of the government and businesses reflected the Confucian theory of a family,

and because of this, the government could influence businesses to not only work hard for their profitability, but to generate revenue for the nation as a whole. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese pledged to develop the country from ashes to an economic superpower and this they did with élan. They were willing to sacrifice their happiness and health for the development of the country and they worked as a close-knit family. Thus, one sees the political culture in Japan as one that is build around the foundation of a family.

The principle of ' Mandate of Heaven,' is what binds the moral authority in Japan. " Its core idea is that virtue and benevolence are prerequisites of political authority and of the right to rule" (GME, n. d, p. 3). This is a cause of major concern as the government has the power to ' dictate' and order what it feels is right for the country. This is contrary to western practices where it is the business that has the free hand to do what it feels is right under the constitutional act. And as businesses see the government as a head that has to be heard and obeyed, the structure of businesses continues to be ruled by the government. This can have a serious impact how business with the outside world will happen. What one sees here is that " the ruler is the benevolent parent and the subjects owe obedience and loyalty. However, unlike the relationship between parents and their children which is built around love and affection, in this case it is one of justice and righteousness" (GME, n. d, p. 3). Such an arrangement can only harm business development as it would be the view of the government that governs the way business has to be done.

Ishida (1985) argues that " the dual strains of conformity and competition in

Japan integrated into a form of competition to prove one's loyalty, which in the prewar period meant loyalty to the emperor and in the postwar period loyalty to one's company or other group." In the study, Ishida traced the difficulties the prewar elites experienced in checking the radical excesses of ultra-nationalists which fed the ' system of irresponsibility.' The emperor was seen as the head of the family and those who were close to the hierarchy could do all that they liked without being questioned. They lived on the pain and suffering of the common Japanese who believed and followed the Confucian ideology with fervor. After the war, he reiterates that, " the lack of universalistic ideas in Japan coupled with strong group loyalties created a kind of Social Darwinist orientation which tended to justify acts of the strong at the expense of the weak in both domestic and international contexts." Therefore, Japan was more of an opportunistic nation that was bent on working its way up through their Darwinist beliefs. However, Marshall (1984), in Collective Decision Making in Rural Japan, says that, " given that in the corporate rural hamlet ' group decision making is routinely undertaken as a search for consensus rather than a confrontation of adversaries' (p. 1), the process often results in division rather than unanimity." This could be the author's reflection of the change in the way the Japanese had begun to think. While most Japanese continued to follow the popular Confucian principle of leadership and culture, there could be a gradual change that seemed to be following a westernized model of governance, perhaps.

Conclusion

Given the strong belief and practice of the Confucian style of life, the Japanese political system and the culture affect solutions as well as and the

development of policies regarding business. Unless an attempt is made to change the mindset of the Japanese takes place, it would be difficult to break the ideology they follow when it comes to doing business with them. The Japanese continue to believe in personal success and does not favor the policy of ' give-and-take.' Globalization has enhanced partnerships, and they work on the principle of shared interests and profits. This is still nonexistent in Japan and this social culture where they believe in only themselves, and prospering at the expense of others goes, it would be difficult for subsequent governments to change their philosophy. Such has been the impact of their Confucian ideology that it would be difficult to transform the Japanese and their culture will resist any attempt to modify or change their strong beliefs.

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