**happiness/福(Fú)**

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| Chinese Perspective | WENG Naiqun | 13 May 2022 |

The Chinese character “福” consists of two radicals. The radical“礻（示（*shi*））”on the left side refers to " Heaven show a sign of good or bad luck for people through astronomical phenomena/celestial phenomena（“天垂象见吉凶所以示人也”）". It can also means worshiping the gods.The one on the right “畐（*fu*）”denotes its pronunciation in this case. “福（*fu*）”means“祐（*you*）”, however“祐（*you*）”means "助（*zhu*）（help）".（《说文解字》。p.7）. In addition, the character of “畐（*fu*）”is composed of three characters : “一（*yi*）”，“口（*kou*）”，“田（*tian*）”. As a phrase“一口田”means a piece of land that can be used for agricultural production. In other words, a piece of land that can be used to support a family. The word "福（*fu*）" can also be referred to “神祐（*shen you*）”, that is“God blessing”.It also means “to pray for good fortune".The antonym of “福（*fu*）”is "祸（*huo*）(misfortune/disaster)".

《礼记•祭统（*liji-jitong*）(Ritual Book • Sacrifice System)》(《小戴礼记（*xiao-dai-li-ji*）》，a book compiled by戴圣（*dai sheng*）in the Han Dynasty) in which it is said: "“福（*fu*）”means “备（*bei*）”， means “百顺（*baisun*）." The meaning of this "福（*fu*）" is the same as that of "备（*bei*）", that is, the host must act conscientiously and strictly in accordance with the Confucian Heavenly Principles of ethics and morality. For example, loyal officers have to serve the monarch, and filial piety to parents，both are the first thing for being "百顺（*bai-shun*）". For metaphysical ghosts and gods, people should also act in accordance with the "百顺（*bai-shun*）", showing awe and worshipping with reverence. For ordinary people, it is necessary to obey the monarch; For the family members, it is necessary to honor the parents. Only by achieving "*baishun*" can be reached "*bei*". And only in this way can be possible for gaining successful in the blessing for good fortune.（《礼记今注今译》（下）p.841.王云五主编, 王梦鸥註释，台湾商务印书馆）.

In ancient times, "福（*fu*）" mainly included “五福（*wufu*）(five "*fu*")”: the first is “寿（*shou*）”means longevity; the second is“富（*fu*）”means wealthy; the third is “康宁（*kangning*）means healthy and peaceful ; the fourth is“攸好德（*you hao de*）”means good virtue; the fifth is“考终命（*kao-zhong-ming*）”means the elderly in the family enjoy the end of the day and longevity. Huan, Tan (c. 23 BC – 56 AD), a philosopher and expert on Confucian Classics during Eastern Han Dynasty, changed "kao-zhong-ming" to "many descendants" in his book entitled《新论•辨惑第十三（*xinlun-bianhuo dishisan*）》.

Obviously, for individuals, "福（*fu*）(blessedness; blessing for good fortune)" and "福气（*fuqi*）(happy lot/good luck/good fortune)" is closely associated with “家（house）”. For the house based Chinese society, "福（*fu*）" is the most important pursuit and purpose of people's lives. In the New Year's Festival，and all kinds of family celebrations, such wedding, a full month birthday of a new baby, the birthday celebration of the elderly member, and the etiquette of daily social interactions, including expressing one’s congratulation, condolences and make a greetings often contain the word "福（*fu*）" or the metaphor of "福（*fu*）". Such as“祈福（*qifu*）（pray for happiness）”; “福气（*fuqi*）（good fortune）”;“福祉（*fuzhi*）（well-being）”；“祝福（*zhufu*）（blessing）”；“福利（*fuli*）（welfare）”；“享福（*xiangfu*）（enjoy a happy life）”; “鸿福（*hongfu*）(great luck)”; “托福（*tuofu*）（Thank for bringing good fortune/good luck）”; “五福临门（*wu-fu-lin-men*）（the five blessings have descended upon the house）”; “多子多福（*duozi-duofu*）（the more son, the more good fortune）”；“福如东海（*fu-ru-dong-hai*）（blessedness as immense as the Eastern Sea）; “福寿无疆（*fu-shou-wu-jiang*）（longevity）”etc.

In the present, if the parents, siblings, children, and grandchildren in the house are in good health, they gain various achievements and honors in their careers, such as their children and grandchildren gain good grades in the school, being admitted to collages or universities, getting a master’s or PhD degree, getting promotion in their professional job, make breakthroughs in scientific research, win medals in sports competitions, the family is well-off, the relationship between the members is close and harmonious, filial piety to the elderly, love for the younger generation etc, the house will be considered by others to be blessed with“福气（*fuqi*）”.

It can be seen that the meaning of the word“福（*fu*）”also changes with the change of historical context. But among them, the unchanging essence is that family members live a long and healthy life, love each other, respect the elderly and love children, and live a prosperous life. That is, its ideological foundation is still the ethical and moral concept of Confucianism.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, large-scale ancestor worship activities in Chinese mainland have decreased, not only in cities but also in rural areas. Especially during the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism, including its concept of ethics and morality, was severely criticized. It turned out that various ritual activities related to the traditional "福（*fu*）" character, such as ancestor worship and blessings, have been seriously impacted, and led to the near completely disappearance of the those ritual activities. It was not until many years after the reform and opening up that these ceremonial activities were restored in moderation in some rural areas. After entering the beginning of the 21st century, in some places, large-scale memorial ceremonies were held for real and legendary important historical figures such as“炎帝（*yandi*）(*Yan* Emperor)”, “黄帝（*huangdi*）(*Huang* Emperor)“孔子Confucius”and“妈祖（*mazu*）”in some cities. For example, in 2008, the State Council identified the “新郑（*xinzheng*）（a *Henan*（河南）provincial county-level city）黄帝拜祖祭典*Huang* Emperor Mausoleum Worshiping Ancestor Ceremony” as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage expansion projects. These kinds of ancestor worship ceremonies usually include the process of praying for the "blessedness" of the local and even national people.

In the "Opinions on the Implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy", as the Central No. 1 Document in 2018, issued by the Central Government called on "prospering rural culture, rejuvenating the new atmosphere of rural style and civilization", and "shaping a new style of beautiful countryside" and so on. From August 21 to 22 of the same year in his speech at the National Propaganda and Ideological Work Conference, Xi Jinping pointed out "China's excellent traditional culture is the cultural root of the Chinese nation, and the ideological concepts, humanistic spirit and moral norms it contains are not only the core of our Chinese thoughts and spirits, but also have important value for solving human problems. It is necessary to refine and display the spiritual identity of excellent traditional culture, and to extract and display the cultural essence of excellent traditional culture with contemporary value and world significance.” Since then, in the work of revitalizing the rural development strategy, it has vigorously implemented the promotion of the protection and revival of the "Chinese excellent traditional culture" and its inheritance and development as an important task in the vast rural areas. In addition, in the planning to vigorously revitalize the rural economy in recent years, promoting the development of rural tourism has become an important innovative path. Taking this as an opportunity, many rural areas, especially in the southeast and southwest regions, have revived various traditional rituals, including ancestor worship activities, on the one hand, to enhance the cohesion of rural communities, on the other hand, to enrich cultural content for rural tourism development. At the same time, these traditional ritual activities are often commercially "packaged" and turned into "cultural goods" for marketing. Of course, it is inevitable that "alienation" will occur as a result.