

The issue of cultural appropriation in the Anglo-Saxon world (on the material of Chinese culture)

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Cultural appropriation is a controversial topic in the modern society, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, where global cultural exchange is both extensive and highly scrutinized. Cultural appropriation refers to the adoption of elements from one culture by members of another, often dominant, culture without proper understanding or respect. When it comes to Chinese culture, this issue has manifested in various ways, ranging from fashion and cuisine to art, language, and philosophy.

The history of Western interactions with the Chinese culture dates back centuries, from the Silk Road trade to colonial encounters in the 19th century. The fascination with Chinese aesthetics, traditions, and philosophy has led to both appreciation and misrepresentation. For instance, during the 18th and 19th centuries, “Chinoiserie” became popular in Europe, with Western artists and designers incorporating Chinese motifs into architecture, furniture, and clothing. However, these representations often distorted Chinese culture, reducing it to exoticized imagery rather than an accurate reflection of its values and traditions [1].

In the modern Anglo-Saxon world, cultural appropriation of Chinese traditions can be seen in various fields.

The first field we would like to mention is Chinese traditional attire, such as the qipao (cheongsam), which has been frequently adopted by Western designers and celebrities. While some experts argue that wearing a qipao outside of its cultural context is a form of admiration, critics highlight that such usage often ignores the deep cultural significance of the garment. A well-known controversy occurred in 2018 when an American high school student wore a qipao as her prom dress, sparking debates about whether this was appreciation or appropriation. And here comes the most important issue: the line between appreciation and appropriation.

The second field is martial arts and philosophy. Chinese martial arts, particularly kung fu, have been widely appropriated in Hollywood films. While some movies, such as those starring Bruce Lee, have sought to authentically portray Chinese traditions, many Western productions have simplified or distorted these practices [2]. For example, films like Kung Fu Panda mix elements of Chinese philosophy and martial arts but present them through a Westernized lens, often reducing complex traditions to clichés.

Another field is food and commercialization. Chinese cuisine has been extensively adapted in the Anglo-Saxon world, often with significant modifications that stray from its original form. Dishes such as “General Tso’s chicken” and “fortune cookies” were created in the West rather than being authentic Chinese foods. While food adaptation is a natural part of cultural exchange, problems arise when Western businesses profit from these modified versions without acknowledging their origins.

One more field is calligraphy and tattoos: many Westerners adopt Chinese characters as tattoos or decorative elements without understanding their meaning. This often results in incorrect or misused symbols, diminishing their cultural and linguistic significance. The

commodification of Chinese script in fashion and home decor further exemplifies how traditional elements can be stripped of their original context.

While cultural exchange is inevitable in a globalized world, the difference between appreciation and appropriation lies in understanding, respect, and intent. Appreciation involves learning about a culture, engaging with it respectfully, and acknowledging its origins. Appropriation, on the other hand, often involves taking elements of a culture out of context, commercializing them, or using them in ways that reinforce stereotypes [3, 4].

One way to ensure respectful cultural exchange is through collaboration with Chinese creators and scholars. Engaging with native perspectives allows for a more authentic representation and prevents cultural elements from being exploited.

Additionally, education plays a crucial role in fostering awareness of cultural significance and historical context.

Cultural appropriation of Chinese traditions in the Anglo-Saxon world remains a complex issue. While interest in Chinese culture can be positive, it is essential to approach it with sensitivity and respect. By promoting cultural exchange based on mutual understanding, societies can move towards more ethical interactions that celebrate diversity without misrepresenting or exploiting cultural heritage.

Источники и литература

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