Interview

Name

Course

Date

To fully understand our family roots, I decided to undertake an interview with my subject being my grandmother Deshi. She was born in the year 1935 in a rural town located in China. She grew up in the same town, by the name of Lufeng. The town is located next to the sea thus the main economic activity practiced there is fishing. My grandmother worked in a fish processing plant most of her life before she retired. She met my grandfather, her husband in the same town where they had their children and where my mother grew up, her wedding was a traditional Chinese one, which featured some elements of western ceremonies. Her heritage is one of ethnic Han Chinese, one of the largest groups in the country. This ethnic group is mainly concentrated on the eastern sides of the country and has existed for the longest time in the country. Moreover, it forms one of the largest population groups in the world altogether.

The ethnic Han group has influenced a number of traditions in the country. Our family also comprises of ethnic Han since my grandparents on my father’s side are also Han. Nevertheless, most foreigners incorrectly refer to the ethnic Han as the Chinese due to the dominance of their culture and language in the country. A lot of the people belonging to this ethnic group has confirmed to a western lifestyle over the years but has maintained some traditional elements. One of the key defining points in the manner of dressing. There are currently very few individuals who still wear traditional Han clothing on a regular basis. However, people tend to dress traditionally on some special occasions such as weddings. My grandmother described a popular fashion item by the name of cheongsam which is normally worn by women on these occasions. However, the normal clothing used by the Han people is a robe that can extend to full length or can reach the calf region.

Our family conforms to the traditional ethnic culture and lifestyle. Therefore, we live as an extended family under one household. The house is quite huge and is shaped like a rectangle. The basic layout of the house is divided into four main units that each serve an important purpose. There are the guest room and the kitchen which are located at the front of the house. Furthermore, the washroom and the servant quarters are also placed in this area of the house. At the back of the house is where the family lives, that is, where the bedrooms and other facilities are located. The grandparents live on one side of the house, and this is separated into three unique areas. They have two bedrooms assigned to them and one main room that they use for spiritual purposes among other things. In the case of our family, the eastern part of the house has been assigned to the eldest son. This is where he resides with his family when he comes to visit his grandparents. The other side of the house, that is, the west wing has been kept for the younger son and his family. The rooms are connected by a veranda which allows light to enter and illuminate the rooms. The center of the house features a courtyard. This is mainly used for personal spiritual reflection where anyone can use it for reading, exercising, prayer or whatever other reason.

Marriage in our family is monogamous, as no one has more than one wife at any point. The domestic partner comes to stay with the husband with his family. During wedding ceremonies, there are specific colors that play an important role in the family. Red is used commonly, especially in important ceremonies such as paying the bride price since it is believed to represent the love of the couple. Moreover, the bride service tends to dress in red to indicate loyalty to the husband and show fertility and honor to the family. The color red also extensively features as a part of the decorations in the ceremony. Gold is quite popular too since it depicts wealth and abundance. It shows the fortune of the family too. The wedding ceremonies tend to avoid dark colors and white too since it is commonly used in funeral settings.

Our family tracks its descents through a patrilineal line. Most of the elderly parents got married at around the ages of 20. However, millennials currently tend to wait longer since they prefer to finish their education first. Previously, arranged marriages were a common occurrence but this practice has died over a period of time. The parents used to have a dominant role to play in the marriage process, and essentially decided who one could get married to. This is because young people were discouraged from meeting freely, thus had to wait for the parents to make arrangements. Thus it was impossible for most of them to determine anything about their marriage. It happens that a lot of marriages were considered to be blind ones, that is, the bride and groom actually met for the first time on the day of the wedding. However, the changing times in the country and modern western influence has changed this altogether. The Cultural Revolution brought about by the communist rule in the country has been able to change this, making it possible for couples to date freely.

Over the course of time, many individuals tend to marry close relationships. This means that a lot of individuals meet their marriage partner in work settings or as neighbors or through their friends. This has changed the traditional aspect of marriage in society. For the case of my family, my uncles and aunts met through social events and none of them actually had a matchmaking process. The courtship period for their situation was less than a year in most instances. However, nowadays it takes longer to do so. This is because families prefer to learn more about each other at this point in time. Moreover, the family background plays an integral role since each side of the relationship prefers to get to know more about the other side, effectively prolonging the courtship period. Family relations tend to be conjugal in nature. The primordial ties of the family are still maintained and this allows for the family to have some level of autonomy.