



American Social Culture 美国社会文化

侯萍萍 [美] Jack Masson 著

山东大学出版社



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前言

18年前,加拿大阿尔伯塔大学荣退教授 Jack Masson 先生在山东大学教授研究生英语课程。当时,我经常向 Masson 教授请教英语方面的问题。我们很自然地谈到了各自教授的课程以及对教材的看法和感受等。当时,关于英语国家文化的教材仅有几种,而且内容较为陈旧,往往只注重介绍这些国家的历史,却很少谈及这些国家的现状,这对我们真正了解英语国家的文化是远远不够的。于是,我和 Masson 教授达成了一个初步意向:合编一本反映美国当代文化的教材,内容一定是最新的。我们共同拟定了教材的内容框架,然后从英国、美国、加拿大和澳大利亚的主流报纸上搜集最新的反映这些国家文化的文章,归纳成八个部分,每一部分辅以编者的阅读导言,每一篇文章后面给出了注释和讨论问题。这本题为《报刊英语学习》的教材获得了山东大学出版基金的资助,并由石油大学出版社于1999年7月出版。该教材获得了山东大学2000年哲学社会科学研究三等奖。

2007~2010年间,Masson教授再次在山大任教,先后在外国语学院和政治学与公共管理学院教授本科和研究生课程。期间,我协助 Masson 教授为外国语学院的学生做了关于美国文化的系列讲座。在准备讲座内容的过程中,我们酝酿着合著一部有关美国社会文化的书。于是,几年后的今天,便有了这部《美国社会文化》。本书详尽地介绍了美国的历史发展和社会文化,内容涵盖了美国社会文化的各个方面,其中包括美国国家的建立、早期经济与移民情况、宪法的产生及早期政治、内战及工业革命、进步主义运动、宗教及政治价值观的改变、医疗、教育、住房与交通、流行文化以及美国卓异主义等。同时,力求展现当今最新的美国社会文化状况,例如,补遗部分(Addendum)讨论了美国政府和社会当前所面临的严峻问题:不断上升的财政赤字和居高不下的失业率、非法移民、枪支暴力和无人机的使用等。

本书既可用作研究美国历史文化的参考书,也可作为本科高年级和研究生



阶段的教材使用。为了便于读者更好地理解书中内容,我们在每一章的后面加了汉语注释,同时,在本书的最后部分给出了英汉对照词汇表。

本书在写作和出版过程中得到了山东大学外国语学院院长王俊菊教授的鼓励和支持,在此表示衷心的感谢! 2011 级部分 MTI 同学参与了注释和词汇表的整理工作,在此一并表示感谢!

希望本书能够帮助读者全面深入地了解美国的政治经济与历史文化,也希望通过对彼此文化的了解,中美两国可以建立起更好的政治、文化和经济关系。

侯萍萍

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Introduction

The title of this book is *American Social Culture*. This is a fine sounding name for a book, but we need to ask ourselves what we are discussing when we use the term *culture*. Social scientists, newspaper reporters and academics use the term *culture* when describing how new immigrants to America differ from Americans born in the country. Teenagers and young adults use the term *culture* when describing the clothes they wear, the music they listen to, and how they differ from their parents. But then what is the definition of *culture*? The answer is that *culture* is a complex concept involving the way a group of people live, work, think, talk and deal with others socially in and outside the family as well as what they believe politically and whether they are religious and how they carry out their religious beliefs.

When America was still a British colony, the colonists' culture slowly evolved. However, the majority of colonists thought of their culture primarily in religious terms for their life revolved around their church. Protestant church members who had been persecuted in the British Isles and Europe immigrated to America in the 17th and 18th centuries so they could freely practice their religion. The vast majority of them were committed to absolute freedom to practice their religion as they saw fit. Consequently, freedom of religion was written into the American Constitution and is an integral part of American culture today. This is particularly true since about 82 percent of Americans identify themselves as being Christians. At the same time, there is a sub-culture of American Protestants who have always been suspicious of any other religion that is unlike their own. In the 19th and 20th centuries these Protestants were predominantly fundamentalists who believed the Bible should be interpreted literally, word for word. Each church relied on specific biblical



verses not only to justify its beliefs, but also to attack other churches whose ministers and church members held different beliefs.

Despite the underlying hostility among many of the churches, their ministers preached that God had blessed America by providing religious churchgoing families with free land and an opportunity to have a good life. On the settled east coast and the newly settled western frontier people talked about America as being a very special place. A culture began to develop that one might call “America is a special country in the world”. The irony is that tens of thousands of native Indians had to be brutally massacred before the colonists had a special place to live, a special place to work, and a special place to raise a family. Much has been written about an exceptional America that is uniquely virtuous, loves peace, liberty and human rights, and embraces the law. The average American seldom, if ever, thinks about or discusses American culture with family or friends. Nevertheless, Americans become very patriotic on America’s Independence Day when prominent politicians recite the second sentence of the *Declaration of Independence* written in 1776. Very often the words of that sentence, “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” bring tears to the listeners’ eyes.

Occasionally a politician recites the official Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning or the end of a patriotic holiday. The words that seem to be almost sacred are, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty, and justice for all.” After this recitation the politician and the listeners swell up with pride and believe more than ever that being an American is very special. Both the *Declaration of Independence* and the Pledge of Allegiance have become an integral part of American culture. Moreover, over time the ideas in these patriotic phrases have been extended. The Pledge of Allegiance that was formerly adopted by Congress in 1942 did not include the words “under God”. But then shortly after its adoption the members of churches and religious organizations began to insert “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance to indicate America was not just any religious country, but rather it

was an exceptional religious country.

Other terms that patriots, politicians and ordinary citizens came to use along with “liberty” and “justice” are “freedom”, “individualism” and even “capitalism”. During America’s early period, the term “liberty” was employed in a number of different ways. Since “liberty” and “rights” were used interchangeably it was common for an American colonist to proclaim that America needed to break with Britain because the British wouldn’t guarantee colonists such basic rights, or liberties, as being allowed to practice their own religion. While the terms “freedom” and “liberty” are used by most Americans today, when America was established, many people were hesitant to use the term “freedom” because not only was slavery condoned in America, but also it was a mainstay of the American economy and a concept mentioned in the American Constitution. Freedom was neither mentioned in the *Declaration of Independence* nor was it a term used by the rebellious colonists. However, during the 1840s and 1850s the abolitionists, the opponents of slavery, freely used the term “freedom”, but often were dismissed by others as being nothing more than anti-government rabble-rousers.

Today even the definition of “liberty” has changed somewhat and has become a part of American culture as a right to exercise one’s own free will in doing such things as speaking out politically and being involved in a political protest march. However, now political conservatives, bankers and economic conservatives have adopted the expression “economic liberty” to mean everyone should be free to do as they see fit in business and in the economic sphere, with absolutely no government interference. Much thought was given to reusing the somewhat older term “individualism”, which was adopted to identify the kinds of people who made social choices regardless of what people think about them. This term was then used with “economic liberty” to identify a person as “an individualist”, often a “rugged individualist”, who makes economic choices without being bothered by the warnings and concerns of others.

Why was the term “individualist” turned into the term “rugged individualist”? Here the answer is surprising for the term had been popularly used by many people in America to describe the male heroes of cowboy movies who had to rely totally on themselves to survive in what the movies described



as an ambivalent and spineless society. The business community often described in the past as being deceitful and “money grubbing”, was quick to adopt a new and respectable term for a businessperson—a capitalist, a “rugged individualist” having to constantly make tough economic decisions in a free market unfettered by an often-uninformed public. The business community was delighted for this conception of the modern business person has become a major part of American culture. There are both academics and business people who argue the reason why America is special and exceptional is that it has always been a capitalist society. On the very rare occasion when a Democratic Socialist has been elected to a public office in America, newspapers screamed with such headlines as “Anti-Americans Elect Socialist/Communist to Public Office”. In actual fact there have been thousands of local, state and national elections that have been held over 220 years in America. However, only an infinitesimally small number of Democratic Socialists have ever been elected to any political office and almost no Communists have been elected to a political office in America.

At the end of the 19th century it seemed that the American working class was in such despair that a mild socialist party would attract a sizable number of Republican and Democratic political party members. It did not. During the Great Depression in the 1930s the Democratic Party carefully put together social programs that would benefit the working class, but at the same time the Democratic President, Franklin Roosevelt, a member of a very wealthy family, was also committed to saving capitalism. Today, as always, the two political parties differ over political issues, however, their major concern simply is to get their party candidates elected to office. The public is proud that a major component of American culture is having two parties that may fight with one another politically, but overall share roughly the same socio-economic values.

A closely related political cultural value and one that the public believes makes America exceptional is that neither a socialist party nor a socialist program has ever had widespread support in America. Yet another component of American political culture giving Americans great pride is that democracy, liberty and freedom work so well in America that the country almost has a moral and religious obligation to bring its form of government and values to

other countries in the world. This concept, labeled “Manifest Destiny”, was first used in the mid-19th century to justify invading Mexico and making more than half of the land area in Mexico a part of America. As recently as 2003 George Bush, America’s President, time after time made speeches explaining to the people of America and of other countries that America was fighting a war in Iraq to bring democracy and freedom to the country. In particular, he used this important part of American culture to maintain the support of the American people at a time when the war was beginning to become unpopular.

The argument that America is exceptional is a very important part of American culture. It is used to justify not signing the international agreement to ban land mines because during a time of war America would never use such a weapon against civilians. The exceptional argument is used to justify not signing the Kyoto Protocol regulating environmental pollution because America would never knowingly contribute to pollution in the world. Finally the exceptional argument is used to justify not signing the international agreement banning the use of cluster bombs and napalm bombs during war because the American military would never do such a horrible thing although it did so during the Vietnam War. Perhaps the darkest period of American culture was at the country’s very beginning when human beings were openly bought and sold just as if they were animals. In early America almost every new immigrant was “white” in color as immigrants came from northern Europe. During this same period slave traders bought black slaves in Africa and the West Indies and sold them in America. Most of the white people whose families had emigrated from Europe did not consider black people to be humans let alone new immigrants. Even after the black slaves were freed in 1863, black people continued to be treated badly. Moreover, most whites proudly boasted of their color when they compared themselves with non-whites.

In the 19th and 20th centuries dark skin Mexicans and yellow-skin Asians immigrated to America but they were still greatly outnumbered by white-skin European immigrants who constituted more than 80 percent of the population. Today there is a far larger racial mix in America than there has been in the past, but still more than 75 percent of the population is white and today, as was the case in the past, a great many Americans still identify themselves on the basis of skin color.



America's civil war freed the millions of black slaves. Although their freedom was written into the Constitution, still it took more than 100 years before black people began to be treated as being equal to white people. Still there are millions of white people who will not associate with a black person even though a black person has been elected President of the United States. Moreover, even today there are many fair skinned Americans who would be upset if their children married a dark skinned person from Poland or Italy or even worse a much darker skinned Sicilian whose ancestors came from southern Italy. As it turns out, a great many of the dark skinned immigrants from central and southern Europe are members of the Catholic Church. Today, skin color continues to be a key part of American culture. Skin color and nationality, as well as race are all closely connected and so an American's nationality and racial background are also an integral part of American culture.

During the early 19th century immigrants from Britain, Germany, France, Norway and Sweden settled lands in the American west for the American government always welcomed white Central and Northern Europeans. Towards the end of the century all of the free land in the west had been taken up, but there was still a need for hundreds of thousands of new immigrants as the country was industrializing and new factories needed laborers to man them. Almost overnight the faces of new immigrants became somewhat darker as dark skinned Spaniards, Italians, and Sicilians and even a small number of Gypsies immigrated to America. This has made it quite easy for a unique multi-mix American culture to develop based on skin color, nationality, race and even religious preference. Since America's beginning, social class has been a major part of the country's culture. In 1787, 56 upper class men from the American states came together and wrote a Constitution that the states needed to ratify. In 12 of America's 13 states, it was upper class men who ratified the new Constitution. These men hailed the new country they created to be a democracy, but in the first national election black slaves could not vote, women could not vote and the only men who could vote needed to be property owners. The right to vote was slowly extended and by 1824 male farmers and working class men were allowed to vote. However, towards the end of the 19th century the upper class fought back and did everything possible to keep women from being allowed to vote, prevented working class whites from

voting, and kept freed blacks from voting. This was a time when America's upper class was almost in complete control of the country's financial institutions and businesses, as well as being in almost complete control of the political process. But then in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the working and middle classes began to fight back and ever so slowly regained the political and economic power they had lost. By the mid-20th century the middle class had become so large that academics maintained America was becoming a classless society. There were a great number of unskilled workers as well as the poor and the unemployed, but there was the expectation that everyone would live the life of a middle class person. When people were surveyed and asked their social class, about 75 percent of the respondents answered they belonged to the middle class. Ironically, since the 1970s the standard of living has been dropping in America for both the working and middle classes. Yet, it has become a part of American culture that most Americans are middle class and enjoy a middle class life style. Today, the culture of America is more fragmented than it ever has been. And yet in order to understand Americans and to understand why America favors one country over another it is necessary to understand American culture.

In the distant past white American businessmen looked down upon Chinese-American businessmen for it was thought Chinese were not good at doing business. Today, American entrepreneurs and businessmen closely follow China's financial market in Shanghai and Chinese entrepreneurs and businessmen closely follow what happens on America's Wall Street. Chinese political leaders pay close attention to what American leaders are saying and doing and vice versa. Hopefully, with a better understanding of American political culture, Chinese businessmen, teachers, and students will be able to develop better social, political and economic relations with Americans.

This book uses Political Science and bits and pieces of American politics to examine political culture in America. It also borrows ideas and theories from Economics and Sociology to understand the strengths and weaknesses of American society and how society has been recently developing in America. The authors use their academic picks and shovels to unearth the splits and fractures and hostilities in American society from a historical perspective.



Notes

1. Manifest Destiny: 昭昭天命(或神授天命)。作为一种理念,对美国在 19 世纪及以后的政策产生了重要的影响。该词由美国记者约翰·欧苏利文(John O'Sullivan)于 1845 年首次使用,其拥护者们认为美国在领土和影响力上的扩张不仅“昭昭”(Manifest),而且是“天命”(Destiny)。
2. Kyoto Protocol: 《京都议定书》,全称《联合国气候变化框架公约的京都议定书》,是《联合国气候变化框架公约》(United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC)的补充条款,是 1997 年 12 月在日本京都府京都市召开的联合国气候变化框架公约第三次缔约方大会上通过的国际性公约。该公约规定了各国的二氧化碳排放量标准,其目标是“将大气中的温室气体含量稳定在一个适当的水平,进而防止剧烈的气候改变对人类造成伤害”。

Questions

1. In your own words, what is your definition of culture?
2. What are the reasons why most Americans believe America and American society is exceptional? Explain why Chinese people believe or do not believe China and Chinese society is as exceptional, if not more exceptional, as American society.
3. Americans are very, very proud of the *Declaration of Independence* and the American Constitution. Put forward any reasons why being extremely proud of these two documents might cause at least some Americans to be in self-conflict with themselves.
4. In the Introduction it is argued, “American entrepreneurs and businessmen closely follow China’s financial market in Shanghai and Chinese entrepreneurs and businessmen closely follow what happens on America’s Wall Street.” Explain if it is really possible or not to do this unconcerned with each other’s culture.
5. Karl Marx wrote and fought his whole life to abolish capitalism and exploitation in order to have a classless society. Shortly after the mid-20th century many American teachers from those who taught in junior high schools to those teaching in universities were arguing America was entering a classless society. Had they suddenly become Marxists or were there other reasons why they were making this argument? Explain.

Chapter One

The Founding of America, Its Economy & Immigrants

America became the world's principal power at the end of the 20th century and now strives, not always successfully, to maintain its dominance in the 21st century. To understand how America became so powerful it is necessary to be familiar with its history, politics and social and economic make-up. Americans are particularly proud of their country's War of Independence that broke their tie with England. Eventually this led to the writing of a unique Constitution and the creation of the United States of America. The following chapter shows that the *Declaration of Independence* and the Constitution are key components of American culture today.

In order to understand how and why the country was created as well as to understand how it became a world power it is necessary to examine the early settlement of North America, the New World as it was called. It is necessary to understand how the new immigrants treated the native people as well as the hundreds of thousands of black slaves that were brought from Africa and from islands in the Caribbean.

Birth of the Colonies

As early as the 16th century the English government and the merchant capitalists were anxious to expand foreign markets for their exports. To do this the English Crown gave exclusive contracts, called charters, to English trading



companies. The charters gave a trading company first the responsibility to colonize an area and then a monopoly to import goods to the colonists. Once a colony was established the trading company was also given a monopoly to purchase raw materials and farm goods from the colonists and export them. Moreover, England had become crowded with people, especially in the cities where there were far fewer jobs than there were people. New colonies would be an ideal place for the jobless to go to begin a new life and would also provide a solution as to what to do with the great number of criminals who were beginning to fill the English jails.

In 1534 King Henry VIII rejected the long-standing authority of the Roman Catholic Church in England and re-assembled the Church making the King of England its head. This new church, the Church of England, considered its doctrine to be close to Catholic Church doctrine but it did not accept the authority of the Catholic Church. It was also during the 16th and 17th centuries that Protestant churches in England and across Europe splintered over church teachings and battled with one another over which religion was the right one to achieve ever-lasting life in heaven. Many of their members were persecuted because of their religious beliefs. Consequently, a number of Protestant groups in England and in Europe saw the New World as an ideal place to live and practice their religion. Church members either traveled together to settle in North America or allied themselves with one of the trading companies establishing a new settlement in North America.

The first colony, Jamestown, was founded in 1607 and was located on Chesapeake Bay in what is now the state of Virginia. In less than a year the 104 men who first landed were reduced to 38 by disease and insufficient food. Nevertheless, the reorganized Virginia Company was determined to be successful and landed an additional 600 men, women and children in the spring of 1609. In order to survive they raided nearby Indian villages for food and kidnapped Indian men to be slaves. It wasn't long before the angry and revengeful Indians killed many of the new immigrants as well as destroyed their horses and livestock. Many people starved and in the following May there were only 60 people alive in Jamestown. This was the beginning of what became a continuing war between new immigrants who kept arriving on America's shores

and the Indians who were determined to preserve the wilderness areas for hunting.

Slowly, the southern part of the American continent along the coastline was colonized with people recruited by British land companies. Their first major crop was tobacco, a plant that the Indians had taught the new immigrants to grow. Europeans quickly became very fond of it. With a strong agricultural economic base the Virginia colony attracted increasing numbers of immigrants. By 1660 the population of the colony numbered 40,000. By the mid-18th century the colony had become a major tobacco exporter, but there were heavy social and economic costs. A great many Indians had been killed and a number had been enslaved to work in the tobacco fields. But the Indians were not willingly subservient and fought battle after battle with the new colonists to keep them from encroaching on their land. Ultimately the Indians were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Virginia white farmers didn't want to continually fight with the Indians. They soon turned to purchasing black people from slavers who brought them from the Caribbean or purchasing slaves shipped directly from Africa. With this slave labor the Virginia economy remained firmly rooted in agriculture.

The Carolina colony was carved from Virginia when the English King granted a number of his court favorites with charters. Each one of these court favorites was called a proprietor and given title to a vast territory that was held jointly with the King who expected to profit enormously. However, the profits were elusive. The first proprietor shipped 300 new settlers to Carolina but only slightly more than 100 survived the voyage. Then a plan to develop a well-planned system of land ownership and a highly organized social system failed. Poor and uneducated farmers settled the northern part of Carolina while white settlers from the Caribbean who brought along their own slaves settled the southern part. These two groups didn't get along with each other and in 1729 the King split the colony into North Carolina and South Carolina.

In the early 18th century Britain and Spain were involved in a number of military conflicts as both countries attempted to extend their military and commercial influence. With Spain holding Florida the English decided to establish an adjacent colony "right next door" to block the Spanish from