

The Chinese Diaspora in Cuba and the Preservation of Confucian Tradition

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Abstract

In the following article, I evaluate, through a lens of Confucianism, the presence of elements of Chinese tradition in the activities of members of the Chinese diaspora in Cuba. I focus on the presence of traditional Chinese elements in the familial life of the third wave immigrants and their Cuban-born children and their attitude towards ritual practices. I find that the Chinese Confucian tradition has undoubtedly influenced the immigrants, as in their letters, they directly mention the impact of maintaining interpersonal relations, filial piety and harmony; the importance of education and ritual practices is also often emphasized. However, since the vast majority of the immigrating population was male, the diaspora was forced to open itself up to interethnic admixture with female locals, which led to extremely rapid assimilation. From the aspect of preserving ritual practices, I focus on the analysis of the Cuban god of Chinese origins San Fancón. Today, many descendants of immigrants are faced with – in the context of an artificial revival of the Chinese Quarter in Havana – re-ethnicizing, self-orientalization and decontextualized Confucianism, which, however, are not a direct result of the cultural heritage of the immigrants.