

Chinese Culture of Family Names

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Abstract

Family names in China are numerous and have a long history to trace back. The surnames in the history of the Chinese nation have always said that there are hundreds of surnames. It is said that Zhao Qian Sun Li, Zhou Wu Zheng Wang, those family names had the biggest number of people. People often say that "hundred family names" are actually the general names used in Chinese culture. The use of hundred is to indicate a large number, covering wide meanings. China is a vast country with many ethnic groups. It is difficult to have accurate statistics on the number of surnames. The Hundred Family Surnames published in the Song Dynasty, which have been circulating so far, include 440 surnames, to the Qing Dynasty the number of family surnames has increased to 504. The Chinese surname originates from ancient times and continues to the present. In the long course of historical development, the evolution of the Chinese surname continued its heritage, forming a cultural system with rich content and inclusiveness at all levels of society. It has penetrated China with its universality and continuity from generation to generation. The process of civilization covers all aspects of Chinese society. In a sense, the 5,000-year-old Chinese civilization is the confluence of clan of different blood relatives in various historical periods. It is the trajectory of the evolution of Chinese civilization and the epitome of the development of society. Therefore, the Chinese surname has become a unique perspective and micro-window for inheriting civilization, interpreting history, and penetrating society. The surname of Li, according to the statistics of the sixth national census in 2010, shows that the surname of Li in mainland China is as high as 95 million, accounting for about 7.9% of the national Han population.

Keywords

Chinese Family Name, Civilization Process, Historical Interpretation, Li Surname.

1. Introduction

Chinese surnames have a long history of culture. Each surname contains its unique and rich cultural connotation, and each surname has its own representative. The surname reflects the inheritance of culture and also facilitates people's daily lives. As a saying goes, where there is water, there are Chinese, and where there is Chinese, there is family name Li. Surname Li is the largest family name in Henan, it is also the largest number in China. The world's No. 1 surname Li occupies more than 100 million people in the world.[1] Tracing their roots, they can be found in a common place-Luyi county, Henan province.

2. Chinese Family Name Li

On the tenth day of the eighth month in Chinese lunar calendar, Li Daofeng, a local Fujianese is busy according to the genealogical records, it is the anniversary ceremony of the worship of their ancestors. People from home and abroad, no matter how busy, try to participate. The 30-year-old Li Daofeng is from Yong'an county, Fujian. According to genealogical records, their family name Li originated from Li Yuan, the emperor in Tang Dynasty and was lined to him.

He is the forty-fifth grandson of Li Yuan. The branch of Li Daofeng is the descendant of Li Yuanxiang, the twentieth son of emperor Li Yuan. During Queen Wu Zetian's period, Li Zu, the grandson of Li Yuanxiang was exiled to Nan'an, Fujian, because empress Wu cracked down on many clans of Li family. In the old days, in front of the ancestral hall of the Li family, two couplets were often hanged to commemorate their ancestors. In addition to the two couplets, the previous couplet mentioned the emergence of the general Li Guang and famous poet LI Bai who was born in the prosperous Tang Dynasty. Today, Li 's descendants have spread all over the world with celebrities. The descendants of celebrities are mainly related to Li Yuanxiang, the fifteenth grandson of Li Yuan. Li Qihong moved from the palace to live near Yong'an, and his descendants turned to the west to expand. Some descendants then flew across the sea to thrive overseas. According to relevant statistics, Li Qihong's descendants are mainly in Fujian, but also in Guangdong, Guangxi and other places, as well as in Southeast Asia and the United States and Japan. Li Qihong's descendants were celebrities. During the heyday of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, there were 104 a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations.[2] Li Guangdi became the Prime Minister of Kangxi in the Qing Dynasty, Lee Kuan Yew promoted to be the former Prime Minister of Singapore, and Hong Kong wealth magnate Li Ka-shing are all descendants.

3. The Origin of the Li Family

In the history of development of Chinese surnames, the surname Li can be traced back to historical books after the Zhou dynasty. As the Historical Records wrote: "Since Zhou has a famous Lao Zi, the last name Li became popular. Since then, the surname of Li has gradually increased.

3.1. The Origin of Li

The origin of Li's surname is closely related to the simple habits of the ancients. The original "Li" refers to a certain plant, as stated in a traditional book: "Li, as recorded, is a member of the Rosaceae family, is a deciduous tree. The plum is the fruit of the plum tree, spherical, mature in summer, red and shiny, sweet and sour, for food.

When the surname Li was formed, the people lived in the area of Luyi county, Henan province today. In the Spring and Autumn Period, Li Er was the first Li surname appeared in the official history. Li Er, another name is Lao Zi, is a famous thinker in ancient China and the founder of the Taoist school. Lao Zi was a native of Quren county, Chu State during the Spring and Autumn Period. Lao Zi's famous work, Tao Te Ching, also known as Lao Zi Five Thousand Prose, is the main Taoist scripture book, using "Tao" to explain the evolution of all things in the universe. The essence of his work is simple dialectics, which advocates doing nothing. Its doctrine has a profound impact on the development of Chinese philosophy.

Another famous writer Sima Qian recorded in Historical Records of Laozi in detailed: Li Zong, the famous son of Laozi, who was a brave general.[3] The name of the son of Li Zong is LI Zhu, and the son of Li Zhu is Li Gong, and the grandson of LI Gong is Li Zhu who once served as an official in the imperial court of Han Dynasty.

According to the records of the New Book of Tang Dynasty, during the Warring States Period, the eighth grandson of Laozi', Li Xun, moved to Zhao State and Qin State, and later divided into two branches: one was led by the eldest son Li Chong, lived in Longxi and became the ancestors of the Li family in Longxi; the other branch was the fourth son Li Zhi who lived in Zhao County and became the ancestor of the Zhao family. These two people are flourishing and they have become famous families.

Li family later emerged Li Mu, a famous general of the country, Li Zuoche, a general of the late Qin Dynasty, Li Jifu, a politician from the Tang Dynasty, and Li Yangbing, a writer. The Li

Family of Longxi has lived in Longxi county, Gansu province today for generations. The grandson of Li Xin, became the "general of the generals" Li Guang and his son Li Jiao, Li Gan and grandson Li Lingdu were famous officials in the western Han dynasty. By the time of the sixteenth-generation grandson of Li Guang, Li Hao established the Xiliang Kingdom. Li Hao was the sixteenth-generation grandson of the first emperor Li Yuan of Tang Dynasty.

3.2. The Growth of Family Name Li

The surname given by the Tang Dynasty led to a large-scale population growth. In 618 AD, Li Yuan established the Tang Dynasty. The Tang Dynasty was the heyday of Chinese feudal society. As Li became the "national surname", Li was the most honorable surname among all the people. It flourished in the Tang Dynasty. Therefore, the Tang Dynasty was also a golden period in the history of the development of Li.

In the Tang Dynasty, family name Li became a "national surname", and the population of surname Li showed unprecedented prosperity. There are two main reasons for the rapid expansion of Li's population.

The first reason was the prosperity of the sons of Li 's family, the royal family. The special political status of Li's royal family created superior conditions for their reproduction. There were nineteen emperors in the Tang Dynasty. The emperors had wives and concubines in groups, and their sons were naturally numerous. These princes were divided into various places, and all became local nobles.

In addition, there are dozens of prime ministers of the Li family, each of which is a branch, and their children and grandchildren multiply, and has expanded many people for the Li family.

The second reason is to give a surname. In order to consolidate his rule, the emperor often gave foreigners "national surnames" by means of rewards, favors, and enthusiasm to make them more loyal to the Li and Tang dynasties. This also added many new members to the Li surname. Due to the supreme status of the "national surname", it is also a supreme glory to those who have been given a surname.

According to incomplete statistics, the Tang Dynasty gave surnames involving nearly 10 ethnic groups and 16 different surnames, including Han and other foreign surnames.[4] The surname of the Emperor is regarded as a supreme glory. A large part of the surname objects of the Tang Dynasty were ethnic minorities. Once they were given the surname Li, it meant that they had entered the royal lineage and their identities and status were different from before. These minorities often received Li surname for the chief, and the entire tribe changed to the Li surname. This practice of taking the surname Li as a pride greatly expanded the Li clan, and the number of Li surnames in the Tang Dynasty was unprecedentedly expanded.

Carp were forbidden to eat in the Tang Dynasty: Emperor Tang's surname was Li, and the first pronunciation of carp in Chinese were homonymous with word Li. Therefore, carp was the most precious fish at the time. From emperors, officials, nobles, and ordinary people, carp was admired and people like raising red carp and breeding many new species. Although carp breeding is common, and carp is a delicious dish, people are not allowed to cook carp. Why? Because "carp" is the same as the emperor's last name, eating "carp" is equivalent to eating "li", so carp is naturally taboo; and because, since ancient times, carp and animals such as turtles, deer, cranes, dragons, and phoenixes, there is also an auspicious symbol. [5]There are many folk legends about carp. Therefore, people in the Tang Dynasty believed that it was ominous to kill the carp, and put the carp on the altar. Historical data contained in the Old Book of Tang Dynasty. The famous emperor in the Tang Dynasty, Li Longji had twice decreed the rules of forbidding catching carp to eat.

4. Conclusion

After the great development of the Tang Dynasty, Li's descendants began to move to the every corner of the country. The Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai once wrote a poem with the surname of Li, saying: "the surname of Li family are as numerous as stars in the central China." It can be seen that at that time, the distribution of the surname Li was already very wide. During the Song Dynasty, the surname of Li was about 5.6 million people, accounting for 7.2% of the country's population. It was the second largest surname of the Song Dynasty. The distribution throughout the country is mainly concentrated in Hebei, Sichuan, Henan, and Shandong. These four provinces account for about 44% of the country's total population. During the Ming Dynasty, Li had about 5.1 million people, accounting for 5.5% of the country's population.[6] It was only after the family of Wang and Zhang, and was the third largest surname of the Ming Dynasty. The comprehensive distribution is mainly concentrated in Jiangxi, Shanxi and Shandong.

According to the statistics of the sixth national census in 2010, the population of Li surname in China has reached more than 95 million, accounting for about 7.9% of the national population.[7]The distribution in the country is currently mainly concentrated in Henan, Sichuan and Shandong. The reason that the surname Li became the largest family name in China today is inseparable from the extensive surname given in the Tang Dynasty.

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