Cultural and Historical Differences of Surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English Perspectives

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Abstract

Surnames, functioning as indicators of familial ties within societal frameworks, play a pivotal role in differentiating individuals. They encapsulate the most vibrant, unified, and thought-provoking aspects of humanistic and historical intricacies within traditional cultures, serving as foundational elements that contribute to the manifestation of unique national cultures. Every individual globally possesses a distinct surname and given name. The space Chinese, Vietnamese, and English systems of surnames intricately intertwine with their corresponding national histories, religious beliefs, traditional cultures, and social customs. These systems distinctly reflect the images and evolution of their social histories, the origins and progression of ancient civilizations, the amalgamation and enrichment of Chinese, Vietnamese, and English societies, as well as the transformations and reforms in social norms. Furthermore, they provide valuable insights for delving into the histories and cultures of these nations. Chinese, Vietnamese, and English surnames have undergone evolution within two disparate social environments, enduring extensive periods of historical refinement and accrual. They manifest various cultural idiosyncrasies, emanating distinctive historical allure, spotlighting individual national traits, and revealing diverse valuable orientations and aesthetic standards. This thesis delves into the concepts and connotations of Chinese, Vietnamese, and English surnames. On one hand, it scrutinizes and dissects differences in their formation times, historical origins, developmental trajectories, cultural characteristics, national amalgamation, and cultural connotations. On the other hand, it aims to identify primary factors arising from social reforms, religious beliefs, national psychologies, valuable conceptions, and political and economic elements. The study explores the semantic significance of surnames, uncovering variations in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English histories and cultures while nurturing cross-cultural awareness. The examination of historical and cultural differences in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English surnames proves valuable in acknowledging both shared traits and unique distinctions in cultural customs, facilitating a more profound understanding of societal development. The analysis of these differences in cross-cultural communication is essential, serving as a pivotal means for expanding cultural awareness in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English contexts. Moreover, it plays a pragmatic role in enhancing historical knowledge, broadening traditional culture, fostering mutual understanding, and improving cultural communication.

1.   Setting the problem

A surname is a symbol of human identity, playing a crucial role in social communication, political activities, and economic life. Simultaneously, it carries a wealth of information about the language, history, politics, economics, geography, religion, and customs of a people, which is a linguistic phenomenon that all nations have. The identity associated with surnames, whether they belong to someone of Chinese, Vietnamese, or English descent, serves as a product of the cultural histories of the East and the West. The origins, development, structure, and significance of these identities all have close connections with the social history, cultural customs, values, beliefs, and ecological environment of these three ethnicities. Researching the historical and cultural differences in surnames among Chinese, Vietnamese, and English individuals not only helps us understand the existing differences in history, social development, and cultural essence but also enriches our knowledge of the social history of all three nations. This research can address factors causing cultural disturbances and lay the foundation for the robust development of cultural exchanges between the East and the West.

1.2. Research History of the Issue and Research Questions

1.2.1 History of Issue Research

For the Chinese, surnames are symbols of personal identity and family lineage, representing the traditional values of individuals. They also serve as a crucial means to inherit the cultural heritage of the family. Through the inheritance of surnames, it becomes possible to maintain the traditions of the family's cultural heritage. Numerous studies have been conducted on this topic, with notable examples such as "Hundred Family Surnames" (《中华百家姓》), one of the most important ancient books on Chinese surnames. This book lists about a hundred common surnames widely used throughout Chinese history. The "Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Surnames" (《中国姓氏大辞典》) by researcher Su Zhengxiao (苏正校) provides detailed descriptions of many Chinese surnames, including their history and origins. The "Cultural History of Chinese Surnames" (《中国姓氏文化史》) by researcher Pan Guangdan (潘光诞) extensively explores the cultural history of Chinese surnames and their significance in society. "Hundred Family Surnames" (《百家姓》) by researcher Zhang Hanchao (张汉超) helps in understanding the diversity and meaning of various surnames. The "Dictionary of Chinese Surnames Anecdotes" (《中国姓氏掌故辞典》) by author Lin Guozhi (林国直) focuses on stories, legends, and interesting information surrounding Chinese surnames.

Researching Vietnamese Family Lineages is a significant and fascinating challenge. Vietnam boasts a diverse array of family lineages—some well-documented in historical records with available resources,

while others remain relatively unknown, lacking substantial coverage in literature. Several notable works on this subject include: "Dòng họ Việt Nam" by Trần Trọng Kim, a classic work delving into the study of traditional family lineages in Vietnam. "Những họ người Việt Nam" by Lê Văn Quảng, a book that focuses on analyzing and explaining the origins, meanings, and societal significance of Vietnamese surnames. "Tìm hiểu về họ và tên Việt Nam" by Lê Dụ Tương, providing a profound insight into the art of naming and appellations in Vietnamese culture. "Những Họ Tên Việt Nam Hiện Nay" by Bùi Kiến Thanh, concentrating on the research of modern surnames in Vietnam, especially in the context of recent societal and historical developments. "Gia phả Việt Nam" by Bùi Kiến Thanh, a research work that traces and examines the origins and history of family names in Vietnam. This book helps readers gain a deeper understanding of family history and relationships through the exploration of surnames.

Regarding the research on the origins and development of surnames in English, significant achievements have been made, particularly focusing on compiling surname dictionaries and researching the ancestral roots of individuals in Ireland and Scotland. Notable accomplishments in this field include renowned surname dictionaries such as: "The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland" by Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates, and Peter McClure (2016). This work provides detailed information about family surnames in Britain and Ireland, including their history and origins. "A Dictionary of English Surnames" by Reaney and Wilson (2020). This comprehensive work describes English surnames in detail, offering explanations regarding their origins and meanings. "Surnames, DNA, and Family History" by George Redmonds, Turi King, and David Hey (2011). This research explores the relationship between DNA and surname history, providing a deeper understanding of the origins of English surnames. "The Penguin Dictionary of Surnames" by Basil Cottle (1984), discussing the origins and meanings of surnames.

1.2.2 Research Questions

How do the differences in the formation time and historical origins of surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English manifest?

How do the structural differences of surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English manifest?

What cultural characteristics differentiate surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English, and which factors contribute to these cultural differences in surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English?

1.3. Research Methods and Academic Significance of the Study

1.3.1 Research Methods

The study employs data collection methods, predominantly utilizing historical documents, books, and existing research on surnames in each respective country. Through extensive reading and exploration, the aim is to grasp content relevant to the research topic. Subsequently, the study applies historical analysis methods to investigate the historical development of surnames in each country, seeking to understand their origins and evolution. Following this, a comparative method is employed from a historical perspective,

examining the structure and cultural aspects of surnames to identify similarities and differences among the three countries.

1.3.2 Academic Significance of the Study

This article focuses on studying the differences in surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English, making an effort from a fresh perspective to explore the cultural distinctions among East and West ethnicities. Through a comparative examination of the historical development, structure, and cultural characteristics of surnames in these three countries, the article holds the following academic values:

Cultural Perspective: Contrasting surnames across the three nations can reveal the diversity and similarities in cultural values, beliefs, and histories of each country.

Linguistic Perspective: The research can offer insights into the use of language and vocabulary in surnames, reflecting the linguistic characteristics of each country. This may be linked to factors such as linguistic origins and cultural influences. Through the study, one can observe the diversity and inheritability of surnames within families and communities, which may be connected to the historical and societal realities of each nation.

The study also addresses the historical cultural differences between China, Vietnam, and England, contributing to a deeper understanding of their long histories, rich cultures, and unique values. This not only enriches historical knowledge but also honors traditional cultures, enhances cultural awareness, and promotes cultural exchange.

2. Concept of Surname

In China, the character for "surname" (姓 xìng) belongs to the ideogram category, combining the character "woman" (女 nǚ, representing a woman) and the character "birth" (生 shēng, signifying the act of giving birth). This implies that children inherit their mother's surname. In "甲骨文" (jiǎ gǔ wén: oracle bone script) and "诅楚文" (zǔ chǔ wén: Chu script), the character "姓" is formed by combining "女" (woman) and "生" (birth), originally meaning "born by a woman." According to 许慎 (许慎, 1988, p.183), it is stated: "姓, 人所 生也。古之神圣母,感天而生子, 故称天子,从女, 从生, 生亦声" (Meaning: A surname comes from the act of a woman giving birth). The concept of "surname" is often used to denote a family name or lineage. It is typically placed in front of an individual's given name, reflecting the significance of family and lineage in Chinese culture, where familial relationships are highly esteemed. For example, in the name "王小明" (Wáng Xiǎomíng), "王" (Wáng) is the surname, and "小明" (Xiǎomíng) is the given name. The surname "王" may represent a specific lineage, encompassing various members who share the same family name.

In Vietnam, the surname is not merely a simple designation but also an integral part of personal and familial identity. Each name encapsulates a story of origin, history, and cultural values. It is typically placed first, signifying family and origin, and is often shared among members of the same family. The given name comes next, placed after the surname usually indicating the individual and serving to distinguish among family members. For example, in the name "Trần Quang Vũ," "Trần" is the surname, and "Quang Vũ" is the given name.

In English culture, and Western culture in general, the concept of "surname" often refers to the shared part of a name within a family or lineage. This name is typically inherited from one generation to the next and is commonly placed after the individual's name. It is known as a "surname," also referred to as a "family name" or "last name." According to the explanation provided by the Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (2020, p.1539), "Surname/Family name/Last name means the sign or signal shared by all the members of a family." For example, in the name "John Smith," "Smith" is the surname, representing the family or lineage to which John belongs. For the English, the surname can be a source of heritage and is often considered an integral part of personal identity.

3. Historical Differences in Surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English

3.1 Differences in Formation Time

3.1.1 History of Surname Formation in Chinese

Surnames in the Chinese language have a deep-rooted history and serve as a significant symbol of Chinese culture, representing a precious cultural treasure for the Chinese people. China is the first country in the world to use surnames, with the appearance of surnames in China dating back over ten thousand years. According to 庄子 (Zhuāngzǐ, 2005, p.28), surnames began to emerge in matriarchal society, following the mother's surname, and people "only knew the mother, not the father." In the early stages of the Neolithic era, due to low labor productivity, people lived collectively, and a family consisted of a female ancestor and her female descendants.

During the middle period of the Neolithic era, 左丘明 (Zuǒqiū Míng, 1997, p.45) argued that people at that time realized that "not marrying within the same surname made it difficult for the lineage to prosper" and "when men and women share the same surname, the lineage does not develop." This recognition led to the need for a common system of identification for those with blood relations. Consequently, surnames emerged as an initial expression of a shared identity within blood relations. Historical evidence indicates that Chinese surnames such as 姬 (Ji), 姜 (Jiang), 嬀 (Gui), 姒 (Si), 嬴 (Ying), 姞 (Ji), 姚 (Yao), 妘 (Yun) were referred to as "上古八姓" (eight ancient surnames), all related to "female" (女: woman), deeply emphasizing the notion that "surnames" appeared in China during the matriarchal era.

However, during the time of Qin Shi Huang, China entered a society that valued men, with men dividing and distributing territories, taking pride in their possessions. They adopted surnames to name their territories. Therefore, by the Han Dynasty, after a long process of development and transformation, the Chinese surname system gradually stabilized, forming the foundation of the Chinese surname system.

3.1.2 Formation Period of Vietnamese Surnames

The formation and development of the Vietnamese surname system took place through various historical stages, primarily influenced by the cultural, social, and historical factors of the Vietnamese people. In the prehistoric and ancient periods, the Vietnamese lived in tribal forms, practiced spiritual rituals, and maintained blood relationships. Personal names mainly consisted of given names, and surnames as they are known today did not exist.

During the medieval period, Vietnamese people had some surname systems used in different dynasties and large clans, but these were often less common and unstable across periods.

In the Le-Nguyen period, the surname system became more widespread. Under the Nguyen and Le dynasties, officials, soldiers, and common people could have personal surnames, often combined with given names and self-designations.

3.1.3 Formation Period of English Surnames

According to Bollinger and Sears (1981), modern English surnames (surname, family name, last name) primarily originated from the medieval period. For a long time in history, the English only had given names without surnames. Zachrisson (1927) states that in the 5th century, when the ancestors of the English set foot on Britannia, they "built a tribal society according to their own will and manner, each member of the tribes gave themselves a name to distinguish from those of other tribes. During that period, "having a name without a surname" could fully meet the primitive lifestyle. Moreover, the naming system of "having a name without a surname" can be confirmed through the Bible. When we read the Christian scriptures, we often find that not only the ancestor Adam but also saints and other figures are known only by their given names without surnames. Based on this, it can be assumed that the phenomenon of "having a name without a surname" may have existed since the 17th century BCE. This practice persisted until the 11th century. In 1066, when the Normans invaded Britannia, their surname system was introduced to England, marking the end of the era of "having a name without a surname." As Morgan (1981, p.162) pointed out in the book "Ancient Society," "By the time our ancestors, the Saxons, were conquered by the Normans, they only had given names, no surnames."

Surnames in English were initially the privilege of the nobility and the wealthy. In the early stages of surname formation, it was often seen as a symbol of honor and status. With the development of feudal society and the rapid growth of the English population, the choices for surnames became extremely limited, and the phenomenon of name duplication increased, forcing individuals to add a language explanation

(second designation) based on their given name to clarify the difference. Over the next few centuries, some nobility started using land names and estate names as aliases. Subsequently, later generations inherited these practices, gradually forming their own complete surname system.

3.2 Differences in the Historical Origin of Surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English

3.2.1 Historical Origin of Chinese Surnames

3.2.1.1 Formation of Totem - Historical Origin of Ancient Surnames in Chinese

Ancient Chinese people regarded natural elements such as the sun, moon, stars, wind, rain, thunder, bears, dragons, tigers, leopards, and other natural factors as symbols of tribes and family lines. These natural objects were not only beloved and protected by the people but also revered and praised as deities. Many ancient Chinese surnames bear traces of the totem system. For instance, the surname 秦赢/qín yíng/ represents a sacred animal, and the surname 姬/ji/ during the Chu period signifies a fish. The surname 姒 /sì/ during the Hạ period is associated with herbs, and so on. These surnames are the result of the totem system, and remnants of it can still be seen in contemporary Chinese characters. 风 (wind) represents the totem of the 风 surname; 羊 (sheep) is the totem of the 姜 surname; 扈鸟 (a type of bird) is the totem of the 扈 surname; 蛇 (snake) is the totem of the 己 surname; 龙 (dragon) is the totem of the 董 surname; 虫 (insect) is the totem of the 妘 surname; 鼓 (drum) is the totem of the 彭 surname. As indicated by 曹涛 in the work "Hundred Family Surnames," many ancient Chinese surnames still retain traces of primitive totem names such as 牛 (Niu: ox), 马 (Ma: horse), 羊 (Yang: sheep), 鸟 (Niao: bird), 风 (Feng: wind), 梅 (Mei: plum blossom), 李 (Li: plum tree), 桃 (Tao: peach tree), 花 (Hua: flower), 叶 (Ye: leaf), 林 (Lin: forest), 河 (He: river), 山 (Shān: mountain), 水 (Shui: water), 云 (Yun: cloud), 沙 (Shā: sand), 石 (Shi: stone), 毛 (Mao: fur), 皮 (Pi: skin), 龙 (Long: dragon), 冯, 蛇 (She: snake), and so on.

3.2.1.2 Using Country Names as Surnames

In the Xia, Shang and Zhu dynasties, land titles were granted to princes and deserving vassals, resulting in the establishment of numerous states of varying sizes. The names of these states later became the surnames of the descendants of princes and vassals. For example, the son of 周文王 (King Wen of Zhou) during the Chu period was granted land in the state of 管叔 (Guan shu), so he adopted 管 (Guan) as his surname, becoming the first ancestor of the Guan lineage. Similarly, the son of 周武王 (King Wu of Zhou) was granted land in the state of 秦国 (State of Qin), so he adopted 秦 (Qin) as his surname, becoming the

first ancestor of the Qin lineage. This pattern is repeated for many surnames, such as 齐 (Qi), 鲁 (Lu), 晋 (Jin), 卫 (Wei), 陈 (Chen), 楚 (Chu), 韩 (Han), 魏 (Wei), 管 (Guan), 蔡 (Cai), and so on.

3.2.1.3 Using Land Titles as Surnames

Since the Chu dynasty implemented a policy of granting land titles to prominent officials and those with merit, the regions of land received became the living and economic centers for the individuals. These areas were known as "食邑" (places for growing grains) or "采邑" (places for cultivating vegetables). For example, the country of Tong originally had the surname 子 (Zi), granted by the king for a region named 萧邑. Later, they changed and adopted the surname 萧 (Xiao). Many other surnames followed a similar pattern, such as 刘 (Liu), 白 (Bai), 杨 (Yang), 苏 (Su), 温 (Wen), 贾 (Jia), and so on.

3.2.1.4 Using Place Names as Surnames

Some lineages use the natural environment of their residence or habitation as their surname. (王符, 1997, p. 165) explains that "taking the place of residence as the surname, for example: 东门 (Dong men: East Gate), 西门 (Ximen: West Gate), 南郭 (Nanguo: South Wall), 北郭 (Beiguo: North Wall)," for instance, during the Spring and Autumn period, major officials of the state 郑国 (Zhengguo) lived near the West Gate of the capital, and their descendants later chose 西门 (Ximen: West Gate) as their surname. Surnames of this type also include 城 (Cheng: city), 池 (Chi: pond), 南宫 (Nan gong: southern palace), 柳下 (Liu xia: under the willow tree), 北丘 (Beiqiu: northern hill), and so on.

3.2.1.5 Using Official Titles as Surnames

Being conferred with an official title is an honor, so officials sometimes choose their conferred titles as surnames. For example, during the Warring States period, Tu Lan of the state of Chu was conferred the title 上官 (Shangguan: a noble title), and later, his descendants used "上官" as their surname. Similar compound surnames include "司马" (Sima: an official in charge of horses), "司徒" (Situ: an official in charge of rituals), "司空" (Sikong: an official in charge of waterways and construction), "太史" (Dashi: an official in charge of recording history), and many others.

3.2.1.6 Using Birth Orders as Surnames

Using birth order as a surname involves using the birth order of ancestors as the surname. In ancient times, terms such as 伯 (Bo: elder), 仲 (Zhong: middle), 叔 (Shu: younger) were often used to indicate the

order of siblings from the eldest to the youngest, creating surnames like 仲孙 (Zhong Sun), 孟孙 (Meng Sen), 叔孙 (Shu Sun), and so on. Using the chronological order of time as a surname is another approach.

According to 李吉 & 王岳红 (2006, p.30), ancient texts such as 《史记》 (Records of the Grand Historian), 《姓苑》 (Explanation of Surnames), 《姓考》 (Study of Surnames), and 《姓解》 (Interpretation of Surnames) recorded the use of terms related to celestial stems such as 甲 (Jia), 乙 (Yi), 丙 (Bing), 丁 (Ding), 子 (Zi), 丑 (Chou), 寅 (Yin), 卯 (Mao) as surnames.

3.2.1.7 Using Occupations as Surnames

In Chinese history, the practice of children continuing their father's occupation served to avoid competition with others in the same profession and benefit from favorable policies of the ruling authorities. Therefore, some surnames are derived from occupations. For instance, the surname 卜 (Bu) is related to the occupation of divination, the surname 屠 (Tu) is associated with the profession of animal slaughtering, the surname 甄 (Zhen) is linked to the craft of making pottery and porcelain, and the surname 优 (You) is connected to the performing arts of traditional Chinese opera. Additionally, surnames like 工 (Gong), 农 (Nong), 药 (Yao) are based on various professions.

3.2.1.8 Choosing Surnames Based on Morality

Choosing surnames based on morality can be divided into two directions: one is selecting surnames based on "good qualities," such as the case of 赵衰 (Zhao Shuai) from the Tan Dynasty, a person with excellent moral qualities, who chose the surname 东日 (DongRi: East Sun) to honor his goodness, kindness, and warmth. Conversely, the second direction involves choosing surnames based on "bad qualities," like 王英布 (Wang Yingbu) during the Han Dynasty. He committed crimes, was executed, and his family was given the surname 邢 (Xing: execution), reflecting his evil deeds. Later, he rebelled, attempting to overthrow the Han Dynasty, was killed by soldiers, and his family's surname was changed to 黥 (Qing: meaning facial tattoo), symbolizing the consequences of his rebellious actions.

3.2.1.9 Bestowing Surnames and Changes in Surnames

赐姓 (Ban xing: bestowing a certain surname) was a practice by emperors after the Tang and Han dynasties to praise and reward meritorious officials. For example, during the Tang Dynasty, the Li surname (李, Li) was bestowed upon 16 noble families. In the Ming Dynasty, the emperor bestowed the surname 朱 (Zhu) upon the distinguished official 郑成功 (Zheng Chenggong).

3.2.2 Historical Origins of Vietnamese Surnames

The origin of Vietnamese surnames can be explained through several historical, social, and cultural factors as follows:

3.2.2.1. Ethnic Origin

Some surnames may originate from the name of a tribe, village, or region where that ethnic group resides. This could stem from the natural beauty, geographical features, or significant events in that area.

3.2.2.2. Occupational Origin

Some surnames may reflect the profession or main activity of the family. For example, the surname "Nguyễn" could have its roots in the word "nguyên" (meaning raw materials), related to the paper-making profession.

3.2.2.3. Historical and Symbolic Origin

Certain surnames may derive from important historical events or significant symbols in the national culture. For instance, the surname "Trần" might be related to the word "trấn" (meaning to protect, preserve), possibly reflecting a role in protecting the territory.

3.2.2.4. Geographic Origin

Some surnames may reflect the geographical location of the family. For example, the surname "Hà" (meaning river) could originate from living near a riverbank, symbolizing the family's relationship with that river.

3.2.2.5. Influence of China

In some cases, the influence of Chinese culture may be the origin of certain surnames, especially during historical periods when China had a significant impact on Vietnam.

Surnames often carry a wealth of information about the origin, culture, and history of a family. However, due to various influencing factors, not all surnames have a specific origin. Each surname is often a story of the family's connection to the community and its own past.

3.2.2 Historical Origin of English Surnames

Originally, English surnames had specific meanings, but over time, most have lost their original significance and become purely surnames. The origins of English surnames are primarily as follows:

3.2.2.1 Occupational and Skill-Based Origins

With the increase in the number of craftsmen in England, the names of professions became surnames for the English. These occupational surnames gained prominence over other types. Crafts, passed down from father to son, gradually evolved into relatively stable occupations within family members and later developed into family surname icons. Examples include Archer (one who shoots arrows), Barber (haircutter), Butcher (meat producer), Carpenter (woodworker), Clerk (office worker), Cook (cook), Laird (landlord), Palmer (pilgrim), Smith (blacksmith), Taylor (tailor), Weaver (weaver). According to Fransson

(1996, p. 272), statistics in England indicate that "the textile industry has 165 surnames, the metal industry has 108, and the food industry has 107, accounting for 15.16% of all surnames". These surnames reveal the ancestral professions and skills of the individuals.

3.2.2.2 Geographic Origin and Landscape Features as Surnames

Some English surnames have their origins in the names of countries, cities, or residential locations where they lived. According to 淮鲁 (1989, pp. 203-218), there are 695 English surnames, among which 129 originate from place names and geographical features, accounting for approximately 20%. Among them are surnames derived from Celtic place names such as Kent, Devon, Cumber, and city names like Dover, London, York, reflecting the living region of the family at that time. Additionally, some surnames stem from names of landscapes and geographical features, such as Hill (small hill), Lake (lake), Wood (forest), Bush (bushy area), Ford (ford), Field (field), expressing the geographical environment in which the ancestors of that individual lived.

3.2.2.3 Based on Personal Characteristics as Surnames

Westerners are often humorous and witty, and they tend to give nicknames to individuals with the same surname based on physical features, personalities, and particular interests to distinguish between individuals within a family. For example, John Black (John with dark skin), John Short (short John), John Lamb (John resembling a lamb), John Bright (intelligent John), John Armstrong (John with strong arms), John Gray (John with gray hair), John Fish (John good at swimming), John Lightfoot (John with light footsteps), and so on. According to 张荣建 (2002), over time, these nicknames gradually evolved from vocabulary describing personal characteristics into English surnames. This origin type constitutes approximately 9.48% of all English surnames. While some of these names carry positive meanings, others may have negative connotations. They exhibit a variety of peculiarities but collectively reflect strong personal characteristics and the interests of the ancestors of the English.

3.2.2.4 Based on Saint Names and the Bible as Surnames

As symbols of spiritual authority, churches in England have played a crucial role in political life. Specifically, the names of characters in the Bible and Christian saints have enriched the origins of English surnames. In English surnames, many directly use the names of saints. According to Jones (1926, pp. 267-403), there are 205 English surnames directly derived from saint names, constituting approximately 30%. Examples include Eden (Eden), Godman (Christ), Matthew (the disciple Matthew), Adams (son of Adam), Pope (Pope), James (blessed by God), Michael (impression of God), Grace (God's grace), and many others created from saint names, reflecting their origins from venerable saint names.

3.2.2.5 Based on Blood Relations as Surnames

Surnames arising from blood relations are often created by adding a suffix to the father's name. This method has been widely used in many European countries to denote blood relationships and family lines, becoming quite popular. According to Martin (1982, pp. 79-83), some surnames have prefixes added to the father's name, including prefixes in Celtic languages like Mac or Mc, creating surnames such as Macarthur, Macmillan, McDonald, indicating that these surnames belong to Scottish lineages. According to Maclysaght (1998, pp. 47-52), surnames with the prefix O', forming names like O'Brien, O'Connell, O'Hare, denote descendants of the Irish; the prefix Ap- (abbreviated as P-/B-) forms surnames like Aping, Prain, Badam, signifying Welsh descent.

3.2.2.6 Based on Animals and Plants as Surnames

In England, as surnames emerged relatively late, people already possessed sufficient scientific knowledge about the natural world. Out of love, reverence, or admiration for certain animal or plant species, they chose names of animals and plants as surnames. According to Hank & Hodges (1988, pp. 1-90), some surnames originate from the names of animals, such as Fox, Lamb, Lion, Fish, Bird, Swan, Wolf. Meanwhile, others come from the names of plants, including Rose, Apple, Flower, Reed, Peach, Pear. This is particularly evident, especially during the medieval period, when people liked to use certain characteristics of animals and plants to symbolize human qualities, such as strength, resilience, adaptability, intelligence, cleverness, steadfastness, kindness, beauty. Through these surnames, one can observe the high moral values of ancestors and their understanding of nature.

3.2.2.7 Based on Officials and Titles as Surnames

Some nobility in England, aiming to showcase their fame and political achievements, chose titles and official positions as their surnames. According to 田传茂 (1995), among them, surnames originating from official positions often have a direct or indirect connection to the church at that time. Examples include Pope, Archbishop, Bishop, Priest, Shiver (confessor priest), Beacon (church warden), Nor (head of a monastery), Dean, Master (head of a monastery). Additionally, some surnames originated from royal aristocratic titles, such as King, Queen, Prince, Constable (manager of the royal court), Lord, Duke, Marquis, Earl, Baron, Knight. These surnames reflect a history of grandeur and the religious beliefs of ancestors.

3.2.2.8 Based on Colors as Surnames

In England, the practice of choosing surnames based on descriptive words for colors is a very common phenomenon. For example, there are many surnames like Green, Red, Grey, White, Black, Brown, Pink, Silver, Orange, Scarlet, and many others. Those who first adopted these surnames may have had a particular affinity for a specific color, and they chose their surname based on their personal preference. Furthermore, through some color-related surnames, we can also infer the skin color of their ancestors.

3.2.2.9 Based on Nicknames as Surnames

To avoid surname duplication, the English often choose nicknames as surnames. Nicknames are often taken from a syllable in the original surname. According to 高玉华 (2002), nicknames like Will and Bill both originated from the surname William; Beth and Liza are taken from the surname Elizabeth. Because nicknames are often concise and flexible, they are often preferred among the common people, helping to create a sense of familiarity and endearment when reading names.

3.2.2.10 Based on Natural Phenomena and Everyday Objects as Surnames

In the history of England, people often chose names related to natural phenomena or everyday objects as surnames to express their appreciation and understanding of the surrounding world. According to Hook (1982, p. 89), they might choose names such as Agate (gemstone), Day, Frost, Ray (beam of light), Sparks, Snow, and many others. What is unique is that they also selected names from everyday objects, such as Bell, Buckle, Coke (coal), Flint, Glass, Lock, Peal (bell), Peel (fruit peel), Stein (beer mug), and so on. Through the origin of these surnames, we can observe the unique personal creativity and distinctiveness of the thought process of the English ancestors in choosing surnames in English.

4. The structural differences of surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English

4.1 Structural Characteristics of Chinese Surnames

Single Surnames: In Mandarin Chinese, surnames are often single characters. The work "百家姓" (Bǎi Jiā Xìng) records over 460 single-character surnames. Some major surnames, such as 张 (Zhāng), 王 (Wáng), 李 (Lǐ), and 赵 (Zhào), hold a significant proportion. According to data from 《人民日报》 (People's Daily, 1987), the surname 李 (Lǐ) alone accounts for 7.9% of the Han Chinese population, followed by 王 (Wáng) and 张 (Zhāng) with percentages of 7.4% and 7.1%, respectively.

Compound Surnames: Mandarin Chinese features a considerable number of compound surnames, consisting of two characters. While historical records mention over 1,700 compound surnames, only 58 are currently in use. 欧阳 (Ou Yang) is the most common compound surname. Other compound surnames, such as 上官 (Shàng Guān), 诸葛 (Zhū Gě), 司马 (Sī Mǎ), 夏侯 (Xià Hóu), 端木 (Duān Mù), 司徒 (Sī Tú), 公孙 (Gōng Sūn), 西门 (Xī Mén), and 令狐 (Líng Hú), are also prevalent, showcasing the diversity of Chinese surnames.

Surnames consist of the father's and mother's surnames combined: With the increase in population, the phenomenon of duplicate names and surnames is becoming more severe. To address this issue, a solution has been implemented by combining both the father's and mother's surnames to create a new

surname, known as a "compound surname." Examples include 张王 (Zhang Wang), 李陈 (Li Chen), 邓郭 (Deng Guo), etc.

Combination of two surnames: The combined surname is the result of adopting a child, leading to the combination of two single surnames to create a new one, often referred to as a combined surname. Unlike compound surnames, combined surnames can be passed down through multiple generations. For example, 陆费 (Lu Fei: meaning the adopted child of the Lu family adopted by the 费 family).

Three-character surnames: Currently, there are only about 100 three-character surnames in use. Some examples include 朱可浑 (Zhu Ke Hun), 步六孤 (Bu Liu Gu), and 候莫陈 (Hou Mo Chen), etc.

Four-character and multi-character surnames: The number of four-character surnames is less, mainly belonging to ethnic minorities such as 井疆六氏 (Jing Jiang Liu Shi), 矢黎婆罗 (Shi Li Po Luo), 爱新觉罗 (Ai Xin Jue Luo), etc. Due to the influence of ethnic minorities, Chinese surnames with multiple characters are more prevalent. For example, the surname 鹊提悉补野 (Que Ti Xi Bu Ye) is a typical case.

4.2 Characteristics of Surname Structure in Vietnamese

Single Surname: In Vietnam, a single surname consists of one character and is the majority. The most common surnames in Vietnam include Nguyễn, Phạm, Phan, Trần, Lê, Vũ/Võ, Trương, Huỳnh/Hoàng, etc. Many individuals sharing the same surname do not necessarily mean they have the same origin. In the past, especially in rural areas, people differentiated each other by saying "Nguyễn from Tiên Điền village," "Nguyễn from Tây Sơn village," etc.

Compound Surname: Many families have compound surnames, such as Vũ-Đỗ, Đặng-Trần, Trần-Lê, etc. However, it is essential to distinguish between two types of compound surnames:

(1) Surname Combined with Middle Name: Surnames like Đặng-Xuân, Đặng-Vũ, Ngô-Vi, Ngô-Thời, originate from a family with the Đặng and Ngô surnames. However, to distinguish themselves from previous generations, a middle name is added to the surname. This element is not a surname but serves as an intermediate middle name between the surname and the given name. Surnames accompanied by middle names like "Bá" or "Thúc" are considered single surnames because these middle names are only shared middle names, for example, Nguyễn Thúc, Trần Bá, etc.

(2) Compound Surnames Combined by Two Surnames: These are formal compound surnames. Examples include Vũ Đỗ, Nguyễn Trần, Trần Lê, Hồ Đặng, Lê Phan, Vũ Phạm, Đặng Trần, etc. For some reason, an individual adopts a compound surname and passes it on to subsequent generations. Initially, this might occur in the case of adopted children, where the family surname of the adoptive parents is added to

the original surname. The new surname precedes the original surname. This was the situation for the poet Đặng Trần Côn, who was adopted into a Đặng family but originally named Trần Côn. His descendants continued to maintain this compound surname.

(3) Surnames with Three or More Characters: Surnames with three or more characters are often related to royalty, such as the surnames Công tôn nữ (meaning grandchildren of the king), Công tằng tôn nữ (descendants of the king's uncle), Công huyền tôn nữ (descendants of the king's great-granduncle), and Lai huyền tôn nữ (child of the king's great-granduncle).

4.3 Structural Characteristics of English Surnames

The structure of English surnames is diverse, although most are single surnames. Some traditional surnames are formed by compound words, with specific characteristics such as:

Surnames combined with "son": According to Dunkling (1998, pp. 103-110), this surname structure indicates the father-son relationship. Examples include Johnson (son of John), Wilson (son of Will), Jackson (son of Jack), Jameson (son of James).

Surnames combined with "ing": According to Murray & Bradley (1933, pp. 1-190), this surname structure signifies blood relations. Examples include Willing, Wilding, Golding, Henning, representing descendants of Will, Wild, Gold, and Hen.

Surnames with the prefixes "Mac" and "Mc": According to Martin (1982, pp. 79-83), this surname structure indicates Scottish ancestry. Examples include MacArthur, MacMillan, McClellan.

Surnames with the prefix "O": According to Ouimette (1959), this surname structure indicates Irish lineage. Examples include O'Brien, O'Casey, O'Kelly.

Surnames with the suffix "man": Often indicates the relationship between the master and servant. Examples include Bowman, Whitman.

Surnames with the suffix "smith": Typically denotes the ancestor's occupation. Examples include Blacksmith, Goldsmith, etc.

Double surnames: Originating in the late 18th century in England, these often combine both parents' surnames. They are commonly used to avoid duplication and reflect the inheritance of property among the English aristocracy. According to 崔海燕 (2007, pp. 88-90), Edward Coley Burne-Jones is a famous English surname with "Burne" being the mother's surname and "Jones" being the father's surname.

4.3 Differences in the Structure of Surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English

4.3.1 Differences in Structure

Complexity of Structure: Chinese and Vietnamese surnames have a more complex structure compared to English surnames, including various types such as single surnames, compound surnames, double surnames, combined surnames, three-character surnames, four-character surnames, and multi-character

surnames. In contrast, English surnames are predominantly single surnames, with very few compound surnames.

4.3.2 Specific Characteristics of English and Chinese Surnames

(1) Richness of English Surnames

- English surnames exhibit diversity and can be formed by combining words.

- The structure of English surnames can reflect family relationships, blood relations, master-servant relationships, and even relationships between parents and children.

(2) Independence and Conciseness of English Surnames

- English surnames are often concise and independent, reflecting a preference for individuality and freedom.

- Due to their relatively short history and rapid development, English surnames often do not carry as much historical narrative as Chinese surnames.

(3) Uniqueness of Chinese and Vietnamese Surnames

- Chinese surnames are often more complex, with many unique and distinctive surnames.

- Each Chinese and Vietnamese surname is often accompanied by a deep and extensive history, reflecting the diversity of ethnicities.

5. Cultural Differences in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English Surnames

Surnames represent a cultural and social phenomenon, containing rich cultural content related to various fields of knowledge and reflecting the cultural characteristics of different ethnicities. By comparing the cultural characteristics of surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English, we can recognize the cultural differences among these three ethnicities. Through this, we can gain a deeper understanding of both the similarities and differences in cultural characteristics throughout their historical development, societal transformations, religious beliefs, ethnic psychology, and the value orientations of each ethnicity.

5.1 Cultural Characteristics of Chinese and English Surnames

5.1.1 Cultural Characteristics of Chinese Surnames

(1) *Stability*: A fundamental characteristic of Chinese surnames is their stability. A Chinese proverb states, "Your name remains unchanged as you travel or sit," emphasizing the enduring nature of a person's surname.

(2) *Ethnification*: Surnames serve as special symbols of lineage and record the formation and development of the Chinese and Vietnamese ethnicities in a distinctive way. They play a crucial role in the process of national unification. The Chinese and Vietnamese cultures highly value ancestors, emphasizing the preservation of family lines. Hence, the order of the given name and surname consistently places the surname first, reflecting the high collective consciousness of family values in Chinese and Vietnamese cultures.

(3) *Political Significance*: Another characteristic of Chinese and Vietnamese surnames is their political nature, demonstrated through imperial conferment of surnames. The conferral of surnames serves to reward meritorious officials and acts as a political tool to unite the hearts of the people, reinforcing the political stability of the nation.

(4) *Lineage Characteristics*: The fourth characteristic of Chinese and Vietnamese surnames is their lineage nature. Phrases like "lineage is noble" or more specifically "the head of the lineage is the most respected" indicate that a person within the family is considered a leader, representing the entire family.

5.1.2 Cultural Characteristics of English Surnames

(1) Transformative Nature

Although the history of English surnames is brief, their remarkable development rate is noteworthy. According to statistics in 1974, English has about 35,000 surnames. While surnames are symbols of family, many English people, either to express their uniqueness or due to the unfavorable meaning of their surnames, would rather change their surnames than their given names. They believe that a name belongs to them, whereas they do not belong to their name. Therefore, English surnames tend to be more diverse, unique, and rich compared to Chinese and Vietnamese surnames.

(2) Social Aspect

When exploring the origins of English surnames, one discovers their close connection with the society of that era. In a long period of English history, people only had given names without surnames. As society developed, the issue of name duplication became increasingly severe, prompting people to add descriptive elements to their communication to distinguish themselves. This laid the foundation for the formation of English surnames.

(3) Personality Description

Firstly, many English surnames depict an individual's image, vividly expressing their physical features and creating a lively picture in the listener's mind. Secondly, through specific language to convey certain meanings, they reveal the personality traits of the individual. Thirdly, the English often use nicknames as part of their surnames, incorporating color-related words from nature. This not only signifies the skin color and ethnicity of ancestors but also reflects their preferences for colors.

(4) Religious Aspect

In the West, religion represents a moral standpoint and is a crucial foundation for maintaining the existence of a community in life. According to Macgillivaray (1902), during historical development, English ancestors such as the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles gradually considered religion sacred, with the church influencing the thoughts of the people and dominating their spiritual world. This led to the creation of some surnames directly or indirectly related to the church, such as Pop (priest), Beacon (church overseer), Canter (leader of the choir), reflecting the religious characteristics of English surnames.

5.3 Cultural Differences in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English Surnames

5.3.1 Emphasis on Surnames and Disregard for Given Names

Chinese and Vietnamese names are composed of two main parts: the surname (họ) and the given name, with the surname placed first and the given name following. Influenced deeply by traditional culture, emphasizing family and lineage, surnames serve as symbols of the family, passed down through generations and categorized into various types such as single surnames, compound surnames, double surnames, three-character surnames, four-character surnames, and more. These surnames are often stable and exhibit clear relationships. The given name, representing individuality and personality, must be placed after the surname, clearly reflecting the cultural mindset of "valuing the surname, underestimating the given name" in Chinese and Vietnamese cultures.

In English, names are formed with the given name placed first and the surname following. The complete order of a person's name includes the given name, middle name, and surname. Here, the given name expressing individual views is positioned ahead, while the surname, symbolizing common family characteristics, is placed afterward. This arrangement reflects the national psyche of the English, where the given name is considered more important than the surname, echoing the cultural concept of "valuing the given name, underestimating the surname" in English culture.

The contrast in the surname structure among the Chinese, Vietnamese, and English ethnicities is not only a common phenomenon but also an expression of diverse cultural contexts and national psychologies among these three nations.

5.3.2 Clan and Religious Significance

Surnames in Chinese and Vietnamese are symbols of a family, representing a clan or lineage and considered sacred and inviolable. They symbolize the common characteristics of all family members and are meticulously tracked, with almost every clan recording the formation and development of their lineage.

In English, surnames reflect religious characteristics, starting from the year 597 when Pope Gregory the Great directed Augustine to evangelize England. Biblical names and saints' names in Christianity enriched English surnames, simultaneously emphasizing the significant position of Christianity in people's lives and its close connection to their daily existence.

5.3.3 Family Status and Individual Status

The tradition in China and Vietnam reflects a feudal society that always prioritizes collective interests, viewing the family as a bloodline connection. People's ideologies are deeply influenced by the patriarchal system, forming strong family beliefs and a high focus on blood relationships. These blood relationships are documented in writing. Thus, traditional Chinese and Vietnamese cultures value family, respect

collective consciousness, oppose individual expression, and emphasize "光宗耀祖" (honoring ancestors), promoting the inheritance of lineages and family traditions.

5.3.4 "Wife Carrying Husband's Surname" and "Wife Following Husband's Surname"

The emphasis on men and the depreciation of women is a deeply ingrained and enduring belief in the feudal societies of China and Vietnam. In feudal Chinese and Vietnamese societies, women only have a surname and no given name, and even if they do, it is rarely used. Due to their lower social status, women follow their father's surname before marriage. After marriage, they have two surnames—one from their father and one from their husband. Typically, the woman's surname after marriage is addressed as "husband's surname + father's surname + 氏," for example, 李王氏 (Li Wang Shi), 张何氏 (Zhang He Shi), etc.

In traditional English society, women also depend on men, facing discrimination and imposition. For example, according to traditional naming customs, if Mrs. Mary Smith marries Mr. Tom White, before marriage, she will follow her father's surname, which is Smith. However, after marriage, she will adopt her husband's surname, which is White, and be called Mary White. In formal situations in the West, this couple is often referred to as Mr. White and Mrs. White. By addressing them in this way, Western women not only lose their own surname but even their given name, reinforcing gender inequality in society.

However, one comforting aspect is that, along with the changing times, social progress, and the strong development of the women's rights movement, the societal status of women has seen some improvement. Awareness of gender equality is gradually being widely accepted, and the naming system has also been updated and refined over time.

5.4 Primary Causes of Cultural Differences in Surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English

5.4.1 Differences in Ethnic Psychology:

The traditional ethnic psychology of the Chinese and Vietnamese people emphasizes honoring the family and upholding the moral traditions of "光宗耀祖" (meaning honoring the ancestors). Under the influence of this ethnic psychology, surnames represent a collective symbol for all members of a family, symbolizing a family lineage or a group with a common blood relationship. On the contrary, given names are symbols of individuality. Therefore, many Chinese and Vietnamese individuals studying abroad choose foreign names for convenience in communication, but they never change their surnames to avoid being seen as forgetting their ancestors or roots.

The English place a strong emphasis on individualism, endorse individualism, and value self-determination. Their names clearly reflect the characteristics of individualistic culture and democracy. This adherence to the essential principle of individual personality is inherited by Westerners. The spirit of individual creativity is respected and pursued. In line with their national psychology, they prefer to place

names that express individual ideas in the front, while surnames reflect shared ideas at the back. Hence, many foreigners who come to China to study, work, or settle follow this tradition, choosing Chinese names for themselves. It is noteworthy that their new names not only include the Chinese given name but also the Chinese surname.

5.4.2. Respect for Individuality and Democratic Culture

The English often emphasize individualism, encourage individualism, and value self-determination. They highly regard personal values and foster individual creative spirit. Therefore, they often put personal names that express character traits first, followed by the family name. In their national psychology, having a name that reflects individual character is highly valued. Hence, many people from abroad who come to China to study, work, or settle often adhere to this tradition and choose a Chinese name for themselves. However, what is noteworthy is that their new names are not just Chinese given names but also include a Chinese surname. This reflects the respect for and inheritance of the individualistic spirit of the English within Chinese culture.

5.4.3 Different Value Orientations

In Chinese and Vietnamese cultures, Chinese surnames reflect a perspective focused on family, embodying collective values where Chinese and Vietnamese individuals are taught from a young age to prioritize the interests of the collective over individual interests. The crucial aspects include the inheritance of family lineage, the preservation of blood ties, and the willingness to sacrifice personal and family interests for the honor of the nation and the community. Everything is oriented towards prioritizing the interests of the nation, society, and the collective, emphasizing a spirit of cooperation. Personal interests are always subordinated to the interests of the family, collective, and political regime.

In English culture, democratic values and the respect for individual values are highlighted. Westerners place themselves at the center, pursue personal freedom, champion individual innovation, and support individual achievements. They advocate for personal interests over everything and may sacrifice the interests of the collective to achieve personal benefits. Guan Shijie (1995) once wrote that in Western culture, the individual is supreme, individualism is the primary value, and a positive value.

5.4.4 Different Perspectives on Respect and Discrimination

Confucianism has always dominated the educational system in China, and Vietnam has also been influenced by this. In the history of feudal society and the education system, the Chinese highly value blood relations, particularly emphasizing the respect for hierarchical order, respecting the elderly, and caring for the young. The perspective on respect and reverence is evident, with a significant emphasis on valuing men over women. In feudal Chinese society, women only have a family name and no personal name. Even if they have a name, it is rarely called.

In England, traditionally, women often use their husband's surname after marriage. The use of the husband's surname reflects a cultural phenomenon of traditional gender inequality. However, with the development of society and the women's liberation movement, many advocates for women's rights have proposed that after marriage, women should still use their own surname to express the new perspective on gender equality and the independence of women. As a result, the phenomenon of using both the wife's and husband's surnames has emerged.

In summary: By comparing the cultural differences regarding surnames in Chinese, Vietnamese, and English, we can better understand the significance of surnames. This deepens our understanding of the differences in national psychology, value orientations, and perspectives on respect and discrimination among the three countries. Understanding the cultural perspectives of China, Vietnam, and England, their rich and diverse historical origins, and the profound significance of surnames enhances our broad cultural awareness, promoting cultural exchange between these three nations.

6. Conclusion

As history progressed, the surnames of China, Vietnam, and England underwent a process of inheritance, development, change, and enrichment. They became diverse, complete, and transcended time, encompassing various social strata. The surnames of China, Vietnam, and England are products of political, economic, cultural, and historical development in human society, accumulating the civilization of humanity and representing an inevitable result of human understanding of the world and society. Like any other cultural phenomenon, surnames have undergone a process from emergence, development, stability to sophistication. Their quantity varies, originating from simple to diverse, and the perception of multiculturalism leaves a profound impact. Developed in different social environments and over many centuries of history, the surnames of each country have their uniqueness, creating a distinct appeal.

Through the comparative study of the cultural aspects of surnames in China, Vietnam, and England, we can see that the history of Chinese and Vietnamese surnames is lengthy, complex, and deeply influenced by the feudal system, closely related to the political and moral views of feudal society. In contrast, the history of English surnames is short-term, rapidly evolving, has a rich origin, and reflects the national perspective of pursuing freedom and emphasizing the individual. From the perspective of surname structure, Chinese and Vietnamese surnames have complex and diverse structures, clearly showing the diversity of ethnic combinations. In contrast, the structure of English surnames is simple and rich, revealing complex relationships between generations, lineage, bloodline, and master-servant relationships. From a cultural perspective, Chinese and Vietnamese surnames are more stable, with the views of "valuing names over surnames," "honoring ancestors," "prioritizing family," and "respecting hierarchy." In contrast, English surnames express "valuing names over surnames," "respecting religion," "individual freedom," and "prioritizing men." By analyzing and comparing the historical cultural differences of surnames in China,

Vietnam, and England, we can gain a deeper understanding of the development of surnames in these three countries. This helps us have a clearer understanding of the differences in national psychology, value orientations, and views on respect and discrimination. This is useful in promoting and preserving traditional culture, enriching historical knowledge, enhancing cultural awareness, and promoting cultural exchange.

7. Recommendations

The research can continue to expand on issues related to surnames, such as studying the role of surnames in building and maintaining genealogy and family relationships. Comparing changes in how Chinese, Vietnamese, and English people choose surnames over different historical periods. Investigating how societal, economic, and technological changes have influenced the traditions and values of surnames. Comparing how surnames are chosen and their meanings in expressing culture and ethnic identity.

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