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### Chinese New Year: The Importance of Tradition and Impact of Governmental Regulation

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# Chinese New Year: The Importance of Tradition and Impact of Governmental Regulation

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## Abstract

With various developments and progress over time, the Chinese New Year has gradually developed into a globalized festival. The celebrants divided into three main groups, including Asians who live abroad in America and Europe, the older native Chinese, and the younger generation in China. Among the three major groups, the first two adhere to and follow traditions when celebrating this cultural festival. In particular, the last group contains two branches of people: those who respect traditional culture to celebrate Chinese New Year and those who use innovative methods to celebrate due to environmental pollution. This study examines academic books, journals, and videos, and also conducts interviews of older native Chinese and younger generation people in China. This study asserts that people should respect and implement the cultural traditions inherited by their ancestors, as many in these groups do.

Moreover, the Chinese government has promulgated the policy with a ban on the use of firecrackers to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Inspecting relevant information and analysis of the quantitative data shows that prohibition not only reduces the profits of firecracker manufacturers but also strictly controls their exports, resulting in an extreme decline in the quantity and profit of exports. In response, manufacturers should suggest that the government can properly regulate and control exports, keeping the volume and earnings of firecracker exports relatively stable. This project weighs the importance of culture with these environmental and economic concerns. It ultimately determines that we need to maintain these traditions and viable solutions to these environmental issues.

## Introduction

“Hey, Chen, let’s light the fireworks together!”

“Sure!” I answered.

When I was a young child, this was a typical conversation between my neighbor's kids and me during the Chinese New Year. During this time, my family and I made dumplings to celebrate this significant festival, and the children of the neighbors set off firecrackers with me.

We all immersed in this conventional Chinese New Year atmosphere. When midnight arrived, every family would sit together to eat dumplings that they made. And why did we eat dumplings at this particular time? The Chinese meaning of dumplings is 饺子

(jiaozi), which looks the similar to 交子 (jiaozi). In the conventional meaning of Chinese,

交 (jiao) means “exchange” and 子 (zi) means midnight hours<sup>1</sup>. These two words

together mean we exchange between the old year for the new year. When we eat dumplings, we bid farewell to the past year and welcome in the new one. We also usher in New Year with good fortune when we set off fireworks to drive away from the monsters.

Nowadays, plenty of festivals have become globalized, which has influenced our contemporary society and our traditions. Chinese New Year has successfully attracted more and more people globally to celebrate it. These celebrants are usually divided into three main groups. The first group, those who use traditional ways to celebrate Chinese New Year, are often Asians who live in a foreign country, such as Asian Americans, the British Chinese, and so forth. Although they are born and educated in foreign countries, they recognize the importance of culture and don’t forget to celebrate the cultural

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<sup>1</sup> “Chinese New Year Food – Chinese New Year 2020,” Chinese New Year 2018, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://chinesenewyear.net/food/>.

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traditions of the festival. When Chinese New Year is coming, they make dumplings, seal red envelopes, light fireworks and take part in the New Year's parade. The second group is the older native Chinese, who are born and live in China and follow the traditional celebration rituals. Even though they are aware that lighting fireworks will bring pollution to the environment, they still want to keep this tradition. For them, honoring their ancestors is a higher priority than these environmental concerns. The third group is the younger generation of native Chinese, who are also born and live in China like the second group. This main group contains two subgroups: one agrees with the use of essential traditional celebration methods. Those people, including me, are usually taught by our grandparents that we should comply with these cultural traditions.

In contrast, some advocate innovative approaches to celebration because they regard the fireworks as the cause of environmental pollution. They appeal for the use of illumination, which includes lanterns or colored lamps to celebrate Chinese New Year. These three main groups of people demonstrate the diverse ways of approaching Chinese New Year.

In recent years, a series of rules have been promulgated that impacts the celebrants, especially the second and the third group. The Chinese government has created the rules that prohibit people from setting off firecrackers in Chinese New Year. This policy has a damaging effect on the celebration, which has a history of thousands of years. As with other traditional rituals of Chinese New Year, a firecracker is an important symbol. Nevertheless, this Chinese government policy favors environmental concerns over culture and focuses more on protecting the environment and reducing pollution, which causes. As a result, the second group of people who respect and follow conventional rules is restricted. Moreover, because the modern younger native Chinese use innovative ways to celebrate, they may gradually forget the Chinese New Year's cultural traditions, and the celebration's intense atmosphere may gradually disappear.

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My Capstone project examines the cultural meaning and importance of New Year's for various Asian groups and native Chinese. First, the paper looks at how certain rituals and actions bring families together. Second, the analysis explores the phenomenon of community building and the importance of festivals. Third, this project looks at how particular groups attempt to reshape tradition while responding to government initiatives related to the environment. We can encourage the government to promulgate the best policies to reduce pollution yet honor this festival. Meanwhile, we can put limits on fireworks to protect the environment and keep the essential aspects of the celebration.

### **Methods and Views of Chinese New Year's Celebration**

Existing scholarly discourse illustrates the different methods and approaches people to use to celebrate Chinese New Year. The books *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown*<sup>2</sup>, and the article titled "Guanxi and the Organization of Chinese New Year festival in England"<sup>3</sup> demonstrate how some from the first group of people respect long-standing traditions and rules, including the lion dance and parade and lighting fireworks. In *Making an American Festival*<sup>4</sup>, the author explains how Chinese Americans organized an association that supported the celebration of Chinese New Year in the form of a traditional Lion Dance and parade. "Guanxi and the Organization of Chinese New Year Festivals in England"<sup>5</sup> outlines

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<sup>2</sup> Chiou-ling Yeh, *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown*, First edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Yi Fu, Philip Long, and Rhodri Thomas, "Guanxi and the Organization of Chinese New Year Festivals in England," *Event Management* 18, no. 3 (July 2014): 247.

<sup>4</sup> Yeh, *Making an American Festival*.

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how the British Chinese established an association in their community to support the celebration of Chinese New Year. It demonstrates that the local British Chinese use their relationship to build the association to sponsor the celebration of Chinese New Year and comply with the conventional Chinese New Year rituals such as martial arts and lion dance to celebrate. Through these two references, there is a clear connection: if people want to retain the tradition of celebrating the Lunar New Year, they must establish a community or association to support it, which, in turn, has the power to unite people together in celebration.

Besides the scholarly discourse about the first group, interviews offer perspective. Also, a person named Liu Meifui in the article “Unchanged Feelings”<sup>6</sup> is a native Chinese about the age of 70 who describes how she celebrated Chinese New Year traditionally when she was young. She mentioned that in her memories, for example, “steaming huge buns decorated with red dates and sending them to relatives as gifts.”<sup>7</sup>

Among the final group of people, the younger generation native Chinese, some are opposed to the conventional ways of celebrating the Chinese New Year due to their environmental concerns. The article “Regulatory Effects on Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year”<sup>8</sup> explains why people should not follow traditions such as lighting fireworks due to the severe environmental pollution they create. Among the many scholarly references that examine the pollution caused by firecrackers during the Chinese New Year, this article is the most obvious in encouraging people to celebrate in a

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<sup>5</sup> Yi Fu, Long, and Thomas, “Guanxi and the Organization of Chinese New Year Festivals in England.”

<sup>6</sup> Wang Hairong et al., “UNCHANGED FEELINGS. (Cover Story),” *Beijing Review* 62, no. 6/7 (February 7, 2019): 12–15.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Hairong et al.

<sup>8</sup> Y. Lai and P. Brimblecombe, “Regulatory Effects on Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year, 2015,” *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* 189, no. 9 (01 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-017-6167-0>.

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new, pollution-free way. According to Lai and Brimblecombe, we can “use various other forms of illumination instead of lighting fireworks to celebrate Chinese New Year”<sup>9</sup>.

Other scholars describe the negative impact on Chinese Year with a government ban on fireworks. An article called “As Lunar New Year approaches, Beijing considers fireworks ban to curb pollution”<sup>10</sup> uses the city of Beijing as an example and describes that when city authorities issued an edict forbidding firecrackers during the time of Chinese New Year, a large number of netizens found this unacceptable: “In their eyes, the government didn’t do a great job of environmental protection with industrial, instead of blaming the small number of firecrackers”<sup>11</sup>. Also, in the article “China’s millennium-old fireworks hub grapples with bans and shifting traditions,”<sup>12</sup> the author interviews local factory workers, who describe how China's millennium tradition has been changed due to the ban on fireworks issued by the Chinese government. “Chinese government forbidden us to set off the fireworks and nobody will buy them in here. We change to make firecrackers to export to other countries. Other foreign countries allowed their citizens to light fireworks during the time of Chinese New Year, however, we can’t. This is unfair for us,” stated one the local factory workers.<sup>13</sup>

The existing literature shows how different people celebrate the Chinese New Year and some of their views about government policies. However, many sources only focus

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<sup>9</sup> Lai and Brimblecombe.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Leavenworth-McClatchy Foreign Staff, “As Lunar New Year Approaches, Beijing Considers Fireworks Ban to Curb Pollution,” *mcclatchydc*, accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24762340.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Staff.

<sup>12</sup> “China’s Millennium-Old Fireworks Hub Grapples with Bans and Shifting Traditions,” *Reuters*, February 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lunar-newyear-china-fireworks-idUSKBN1FV100>.

<sup>13</sup> “China’s Millennium-Old Fireworks Hub Grapples with Bans and Shifting Traditions.”



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on particular groups and themes. *Making an American Festival* focuses on how Chinese Americans follow conventional ways in celebrating Chinese New Year; “Regulatory Effects on Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year”<sup>14</sup> focuses on the environmental reasons why people should not use fireworks to celebrate; “China’s millennium-old fireworks hub grapples with bans and shifting traditions”<sup>15</sup> discuss the negative impact of the government ban. This project analyzes and compares different groups, their celebration methods, and further considers the effect of the ban on firecrackers. Additionally, this research employs the methodology of an interview with an older native Chinese to get their view and interviews with peers to obtain the younger generation's opinion about the traditional celebration of the Chinese New Year.

### **The First Group: Celebrating Chinese New Year Traditions to Respect Your Culture and Ancestors**

The first group uses traditional ways to celebrate the Chinese New Year. In their eyes, these traditions demonstrate respect for their ancestors and culture. For these overseas Asian groups, this strengthens their connection to their cultural roots. In an interview with Chinese-born Connie Leung, who was born locally in San Francisco, I asked how she and her family think about and celebrate Chinese New Year. She replied:

I believe my ancestor is Chinese, and we should not forget our most important national cultural festival, the Chinese New Year. We should abide by its traditional rules to celebrate it. For example, on the day of the festival, we firstly post Spring Festival couplets outside the door of our house, and it means we are ready to prepare to usher a good fortune year. Then, our family will sit together to make

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<sup>14</sup> Lai and Brimblecombe, “Regulatory Effects on Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year, 2015.”

<sup>15</sup> “China’s Millennium-Old Fireworks Hub Grapples with Bans and Shifting Traditions.”

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dumplings and eat New Year's Eve dinner together. We will also prepare red envelopes for our children. At the same time, our family will participate in the Chinese New Year celebration parade every year in San Francisco's Chinatown. We will not forget this important holiday because I and my family's root is Chinese. Because it is extremely important in our hearts.<sup>16</sup>

To be honest, Leung's reply surprised me. I can hardly imagine a Chinese American who has such deep respect and love for the traditional festival left by her ancestors. Because those like Leung are not geographically situated in China, to celebrate this significant festival traditionally, they will face pressure and challenges. After all, the Chinese New Year did not originate in the United States. When they celebrate, for example, sticking Spring Festival couplets outside the door of their house, they may be met with confused looks cast by residents and neighbors. At the same time, they need to use Western ingredients to make the traditional Chinese New Year's Eve dinner. These are stressful and challenging things for them. Despite these challenges, they still choose to celebrate it most traditionally. Leung mentioned in my interview that the traditional celebration methods used by her and her family along with participation in the celebration parade in Chinatown are enough to prove that she and her family attach great importance to the conventions their ancestors passed down to them. As she said in the interview, she believes that she and her family are Chinese, and the Chinese New Year occupies a significant position in their hearts. This is very commendable.

Leung also told me that her education and dissemination of her children's national cultural awareness would enable them to form respect and admiration for national

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<sup>16</sup> Connie L, interviewed by Chen, Zoom, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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culture from an early age. She states:

I educated them on their roots in traditional culture when they were young because I wanted them always to remember that their most rooted ancestors left us with their original cultural traditions. I don't want my children to forget their original cultural traditions because they are not in China. I hope they can continue this cultural tradition from generation to generation.<sup>17</sup>

In this interview with her, I learned that she and her family value the Chinese New Year so much and celebrate and participate in related festival parades in their traditional ways. She also values the education of her children's traditional culture. She said that she wanted to educate her children so that they remember the traditions handed down from their ancestors when they were young. As a mother, she uses this kind of education to help her children develop respect for their root culture. As she said, she hopes that her children can pass on this cultural tradition from generation to generation. Leung also said at the end of my interview that not only did she and her family follow this path, her Chinese American friends also celebrate these traditions. They use similar educated approaches to educate their children. Their spirit of respect is well worth learning.

The YouTube video of *Chinese New Year Celebrations around the World*<sup>18</sup> records how Asian groups of various countries celebrated in the traditional way on the New Year. In Malaysia, Vietnam, and Australia, these Asian groups watch fireworks displays and participate in traditional Chinese lion dance performances. They really look at these as essential rituals. The article "How Southeast Asian Countries Celebrate Chinese New

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<sup>17</sup> Connie L, interviewed by Chen, Zoom, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> "Chinese New Year Celebrations around the World - YouTube," accessed November 20, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DM\\_MNWB1wnY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DM_MNWB1wnY).

Year”<sup>19</sup> mentions that in Malaysia, “nearly a quarter of the Malaysian population being of Chinese descent, Chinese New Year celebrations here are grand and vibrant.”<sup>20</sup> Here, the conventional rituals of celebration, including the lion dance performance, takes about two weeks. Moreover, the YouTube video of *Chinese Community counts down to celebrate New Year*<sup>21</sup> demonstrates that Asian groups in Australia attend the live lion dance performance and eat dumplings together. Just as fireworks drive away from the monsters, the lion dance also has its own meaning. In Chinese culture, “lion play an important role in Chinese mythology, and represent joy and happiness.”<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, the lion also represents the power, superiority, and wisdom. When people join the lion performance, it means this dance could bring them good fortune and expel the evil. Besides, they will go to the temple with their families to pray for their families and hope that God will bless the family. The traditional activities of these Asian groups during the Chinese New Year show respect for their ancestors. Although they are abroad, they have not forgotten their roots.

### **Traditional Festivals: A Vehicle for Unity and Community**

What is the deeper meaning and purpose of traditional festivals for Asians who are born and live abroad? Overseas Asian groups celebrate Chinese New Year not only to respect their ancestors and traditional culture but also to form a sense of community and group unity. They do so by having a part in organizing the festival. A traditional festival is

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<sup>19</sup> Katrina Escalona, “How Southeast Asian Countries Celebrate Chinese New Year,” Culture Trip, accessed May 16, 2020, <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/articles/how-southeast-asian-countries-celebrate-chinese-new-year/>.

<sup>20</sup> Escalona.

<sup>21</sup> *Chinese Community Counts down to Celebrate New Year* | Nine News Australia, accessed May 16, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ypSBJSo5sA>.

<sup>22</sup> “LION DANCE,” accessed May 16, 2020, <http://ag.china-embassy.org/eng/zggk/t1063972.htm>.

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intended to have people use and preserve the original ways of celebrating their ethnic and cultural roots. This includes conventional costumes, conventional festival performances, and parades. *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown*<sup>23</sup> by Yeh Chiou-ling asserts that, on the day of Chinese New Year, many Chinese Americans come to the San Francisco's Chinatown to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The community has a special parade, and some put on facial makeup with the Beijing Opera. There are also Chinese art shows, Chinese dance performance and martial arts in the parade. The Asian Groups use the traditional Chinese New Year's parade to preserve the important meaning of this festival with the help of the local community.

Chiou-ling describes how Asian Groups unite to establish a community to celebrate Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown. To make the parade go smoothly, the local Chinese Americans decided to build the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CCBA), which later became an official organization. The founder of CCBA, Wong, initially set up this Chinese New Year Parade to free Chinatown from the stereotype of gambling. He said, "I always saw the newspaper headlines 'Chinatown Gambling Raid' ... in the pre-Chinese New Year Festival days. I always grumbled. 'What's the matter with them? That are so many good things about Chinese and our Chinatown. Why do they play up this gambling?'"<sup>24</sup> Wong wanted to show traditional Chinese art, music, and dance in the parade during the Chinese New Year and to share with Chinese culture with local people. At the same time, this could help reduce stereotypes. The efforts of Wong and other members were not in vain. A parade full of traditional Chinese culture attracted many residents who joined them happily. CCBA

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<sup>23</sup> Yeh, *Making an American Festival*.

<sup>24</sup> Yeh, 31.

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successfully became the most favorable support association for the large-scale conventional Chinese New Year parade. These Asian Groups have a strong nationalist spirit, and they have not forgotten their original roots. This shows that traditionally celebrating the Chinese New Year can allow overseas Chinese to be united. Through this union, the Asian Groups will develop their networks so that more Asians in foreign countries will join the organization to celebrate.

The Asian Groups established a community not only in San Francisco's Chinatown but also in England. "Guanxi and the Organization of Chinese New Year Festivals in England"<sup>25</sup> describes how Asian Groups formed an organization to support local Asian groups to celebrate Chinese New Year. The source states, "Chinese groups of Hong Kong origin and mainland China origin are the two largest ethnic Chinese communities in England. Some of them previously working in the hospitality business and later become the students."<sup>26</sup> As the Chinese Diaspora, they want to hold a celebration here, but this requires an organization to support it. At this moment, these Chinese people are in the UK, and it is not a simple matter to celebrate their national cultural festivals in a foreign country. Therefore, they decided to use their connections, contacting more British Chinese, and establishing a Chinese group to support the traditional Chinese New Year. The establishment of this Chinese Community is significant because it marks the beginning of Chinese New Year celebrations in the United Kingdom from that time. In this community, there are not only Chinese from mainland China but also Chinese from Hong Kong. They united to build a Chinese community in the UK to support the celebration of traditional Chinese New Year.

For the overseas Chinese group, their love for national traditional cultural festivals is

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<sup>25</sup> Yi Fu, Long, and Thomas, "Guanxi and the Organization of Chinese New Year Festivals in England."

<sup>26</sup> Yi Fu, Long, and Thomas.

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solid. The organization established in San Francisco Chinatown to celebrate the Chinese New Year and the organization established by the Chinese in the UK help to honor the traditions of their ancestors. While the organization in San Francisco Chinatown has developed into an official organization, the Chinese organization established in the UK is a small personal group.

### **The Second Group: The Older Generation Chinese Who Maintain Respect for Culture**

While the first group of foreign Chinese people organize and observe the traditional culture in a relatively free environment to celebrate the Chinese New Year, the Chinese born and raised in China will have recently faced new restrictions. One group is the older generation like our grandparents; the other is the newer generation who are now growing up. In recent years, due to an increase in the environmental pollution index, the Chinese government has issued a series of policies. One of them is to ban people from setting off firecrackers during Chinese New Year to reduce air pollution. The promulgation of this policy made many people upset, especially our grandparents. As members of the older generation, they are accustomed to using firecrackers as one of the main ways to celebrate the Chinese New Year from childhood to the present. To learn more about their views, I interviewed my grandfather. "Grandpa, how do you feel about the prohibition policy promulgated by the Chinese government on setting off firecrackers in recent years?" I asked.

My grandpa frowned, and then said,

I don't support this policy. When I was young, I participated in lion dance performance and set off firecrackers on the day of Chinese New Year. Those traditional rituals, which I regard as the essential celebrative rituals that means I can drive away from the monsters and greet a new year. At that time, my parents always taught me that those are the most precious tradition left to us by our ancestors, and we must remember them every moment. I always keep them in my mind. After spending so many Spring Festivals, I also use those traditional ways to celebrate Chinese New Year. However, I know in recent years, because of environmental pollution, the Chinese government forbidden one of the essential celebrative rituals, which is setting off fireworks. To be honest, this is very

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unfair to me. I spent my whole life following this indispensable ritual for celebrating Chinese New Year. Now, it faces the prohibition. I don't believe the fireworks become the leading cause of environmental pollution. Because people who set off firecrackers only during the time of Chinese New Year!<sup>27</sup>

My grandpa's tone was excited and angry. But it is somewhat contradictory. He wanted to do his part for environmental issues, such as distributing flyers about protecting the environment so that the residents of the community pay attention to the issues, but he couldn't give up the cultural tradition passed down from his ancestors. Finally, my grandfather said that he still believed that firecrackers should be set off during the Chinese New Year. He believes that the government can impose a certain number of restrictions, but it cannot prohibit them all. Because this tradition has a history of thousands of years, it cannot be allowed to disappear. After interviewing my grandfather, I interviewed other neighbors in the community where my grandfather lives in his age group. I asked them about the Chinese government's prohibition on setting off firecrackers in the Chinese New Year in recent years. I also asked them my grandpa's views on this policy, one of the neighbors' grandfather Liu answered,

My opinion is the same as your grandfather. As an older generation born and raised in China, we started with memories in our childhood that every Chinese New Year celebrated with firecrackers. Until now, I will still buy legal crackers to celebrate the Chinese New Year. It is a traditional culture, and culture passed down to us by our ancestors. We all know that on this day, firecrackers used to drive out demons and greet the new year. But now the government wants to ban this cultural tradition with thousands of years of history. Our generation is tough to accept as your grandfather said, firecrackers are not the leading cause of environmental pollution. There are many reasons for environmental pollution, and I think coal combustion is the main reason. I hope the government can re-enact new and appropriate policies instead of banning firecrackers completely.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Grandpa, interviewed by Chen, Zoom, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Neighbor Grandpa, interviewed by Chen, Zoom, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.



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I admired their determination to maintain respect for their cultural traditions. My grandpa and his generation of Chinese always put the inheritance of traditional culture first. As they stated in the interview, setting off firecrackers on Chinese New Year's Day is a tradition they have followed since childhood. Today, when the government wants to ban this tradition, this generation can feel quite uncomfortable. For my grandfather's generation, the celebration of the Lunar New Year has become a part of their lives. Respect for tradition is to respect ancestors.

### **The Third Group: Younger Generation Native Chinese Create Modernized Approaches to Celebration**

In the third group of younger generation native Chinese, some, like the older generation, follow traditional celebration rules & others advocate innovative methods that help the environment. The first sub-group, which includes me, is educated by their grandparents to learn and understand the importance of celebrating Chinese New Year in traditional ways. To better understand the thinking of this group, I interviewed someone my age. Her name is Xinxin, and she is my high school classmate. "Xinxin, I want to interview you about celebrating with firecrackers in one of the traditional ways. Do you have any views?" I asked.

Her response was as follows:

As a young generation in China, I very much agree and support the traditional way to celebrate the Chinese New Year. My grandparents always taught me that I should inherit and respect the cultural traditions left by our ancestors because it is very precious. But because of the cause of environmental pollution, the policy of prohibiting firecrackers issued by the government in recent years has gradually weakened our cultural tradition. And, it is facing the disappearance. I hope that the government can re-appropriate an appropriate policy for firecrackers, instead of this tradition disappears

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completely<sup>29</sup>.

At the end of the interview, Xinxin told me that her peers around her kept the same view of this matter as she did. She said that her friends are basically like her, educated by their grandparents at home to respect their cultural heritage. Over time, a strong sense of respect for traditional culture has formed. Xinxin also told me that her friends also believed that the government should issue appropriate policies for the tradition of setting off firecrackers to celebrate the Chinese New Year. For example, certain restrictions imposed, but this tradition should not be completely abolished.

In this interview with Xinxin, her words made me happy and gratified. She and I, and some of our younger native Chinese friends, grew up under the influence of the older generation, as Xinxin said, and were taught by our grandparents to respect our cultural traditions. We are very grateful for the older generation's education, so let us always keep this important cultural tradition in mind. She also mentioned that she hopes that the government will formulate appropriate policies again, and I agree. Just like her, I do not want this tradition inherited from my ancestors to disappear instantly due to environmental pollution.

However, not all young people in China have the same ideas as us. Other members of our generation believe that firecrackers are the leading cause of environmental pollution and advocate innovative celebration approaches. "Regulatory Effects on Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year"<sup>30</sup> states that due to a large number of fireworks and firecrackers that were released during the Chinese New Year, most of China's cities have increased pollutants. According to "Regulatory Effects on

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<sup>29</sup> Xinxin, interviewed by Chen, Zoom, April 20, 2020

<sup>30</sup> Lai and Brimblecombe, "Regulatory Effects on Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year, 2015."

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Particulate Pollution in the Early Hours of Chinese New Year”<sup>31</sup>, “Fireworks lead to short-term peaks in the concentration of PM10, PM2.5, and SO2.”<sup>32</sup> Simultaneously, the pollution caused by fireworks caused people in many Chinese cities to go out and not breathe normally. Even with the traditional way of celebrating the Chinese New Year, younger Chinese are opposed to setting off fireworks and firecrackers during the Chinese New Year. Most of them very much advocate the use of illumination—like festive lights or lanterns to replace firecrackers.

It does pollute the environment to set off firecrackers during the Chinese New Year, but is it good to replace the crackers with lights? Since ancient times, the firecrackers have used to expel evil things. On this holiday, they are used to expel evil and welcome a beautiful new year. If lighting is used instead of firecrackers, some of the significance of celebrating the Chinese New Year is lost, and the festive atmosphere is greatly reduced. This may lead to people gradually forget the ancestral ways of celebrating the Chinese New Year tradition.

Moreover, the Chinese New Year's celebration of firecrackers is only three days. We cannot say that these three days alone have brought enormous pollution to all cities in China. The pollution in our lives is also caused by exhaust from vehicles, emissions from manufacturing plants, and other sources. A better middle-ground solution would be for us to work with the government to promote a reasonable number of limits, such as controlling the number of fireworks and firecrackers during the Chinese New Year. In this way, we can continue to celebrate in the traditional ways and will causes less harm to our environment. Besides, we should also suggest that the government

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<sup>31</sup> Lai and Brimblecombe.

<sup>32</sup> Lai and Brimblecombe.

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implement policies that target automobile exhaust and emissions from manufacturing plants. For instance, the government could restrict the travel of vehicles to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions gradually, strictly control the coal-burning industry and reduce pollution to the environment.

### **New Policies Banning Fireworks: The Negative Effects on Manufacturers**

In addition to the negative cultural effects of the ban on celebrants, this also has a negative impact on fireworks manufacturers. "China's millennium-old fireworks hub grapples with bans and shifting traditions"<sup>33</sup> states, "Liuyang has been China's pyrotechnics capital ever since fireworks were said to be invented here nearly 1,400 years ago during the Tang dynasty. The city's hundreds of fireworks companies produce two-thirds of China's fireworks, according to Liuyang government data. "<sup>34</sup> Basically, a number of people in Liuyang rely on making firecrackers to make money. However, due to several accidental injuries caused by firecrackers in recent years, coupled with the government's ban on setting off firecrackers in the New Year, the situation for fireworks manufacturers has become very difficult. The ban has dramatically reduced firecrackers' domestic sales, which has a negative impact on various firecracker manufacturing plants.

Besides, due to the ban issued by the Chinese government on the display of fireworks in Chinese New Year, more intense supervision has been conducted on the export of local Chinese fireworks manufacturers. According to data, from 2013 to 2018, the number of fireworks exported from China showed a declining pattern. It fell by

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<sup>33</sup> "China's Millennium-Old Fireworks Hub Grapples with Bans and Shifting Traditions."

<sup>34</sup> "China's Millennium-Old Fireworks Hub Grapples with Bans and Shifting Traditions."

12.4%.<sup>35</sup> Following the statistics of the export value of fireworks, we see that from 2013 to 2018 the original 77148 thousand dollars fell to 180589 thousand dollars.<sup>36</sup>

From this, we can see that the government's ban on firecrackers and strict supervision of firecracker exports have led to decreased revenue for a large number of firecracker manufacturers. This is a massive blow to these manufacturers. In response, how should firecracker manufacturers maintain their factories' livelihoods? These manufacturers should take the initiative to get in touch with the government, explain their difficult situation, and suggest that the government properly regulate and control exports. This would help keep the quantity of and profits from firecracker exports relatively stable.



Statistic of China's fireworks and firecrackers export quantities from 2013 to 2018.

<sup>35</sup> “2018年1-4月中国烟花、爆竹出口数据统计：出口量下降12.4%” [Statistics of China's fireworks and firecrackers exports from January to April 2018: the export volume fell by 12.4%], accessed April 30, 2020, <https://kknews.cc/finance/mq5p3p2.html>.

<sup>36</sup> “2018年1-4月中国烟花、爆竹出口数据统计：出口量下降12.4%” [Statistics of China's fireworks and firecrackers exports from January to April 2018: the export volume fell by 12.4%].



Statistic of China's fireworks and firecrackers export value from 2013 to 2018.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, each country's cultural traditions are significant, and people and governments should respect them. Chinese New Year, a festival with a thousand-year history, is vital to various groups—Asians who live in other countries and native-born Chinese. As such, while the government policies to reduce pollution are understandable, they should not completely abolish the traditional use of fireworks because environmental pollution has various other sources, and there are other solutions. This current policy has a negative impact on multiple people and fireworks manufacturers. As the younger generation of native Chinese, we should keep in mind the cultural traditions inherited by our ancestors and not forget their meaning. We can encourage the government to promulgate the best policies to reduce pollution yet

honor this festival. We can put limits on fireworks to protect the environment and keep the essential aspects of the celebration. As a culture and society, together, this is the best thing we can do.

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