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Voltaire: From Sacrificial to Judicial system in the play of The Orphan of China

By
Huichun Fang

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of French and Italian

Brigham Young University

August 2008

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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Abstract

Voltaire: From Sacrificial to Judicial System in The Orphan of China

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Voltaire started his career in literature with play writing. One of the plays he wrote The Orphan of China was an adaptation of a Chinese play The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao. Many critics contend that Voltaire is: 1. Propagating the spirit of the Enlightenment to the Europeans through the Chinese people; 2. Refuting Rousseau because he condemns civilization as the source of men's suffering and pain; and 3. Lacking in understanding of Chinese history during the Mongolian's invasion. This thesis will argue that the traditional critics have not touched the essential philosophical theory in The Orphan of China because the analysis of the sacrificial and judicial systems is lacking. In the first chapter, I will demonstrate Voltaire's theory of civilization by contrasting The Orphan of China with Rousseau's essays: Discourse on Arts and Science and On the Origin of Inequality. The succeeding chapters will illustrate Voltaire's ideal society which is supported by judicial system.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The creation of The Orphan of China.....	1
Chapter I: Primitive Rousseau and Civilized Voltaire.....	9
Chapter II: From Sacrificial to Judicial System.....	43
Conclusion.....	77
Bibliography.....	80

Introduction: The Creation of The Orphan of China

On August 20th 1755, The Orphan of China written by Voltaire, opened on stage in Paris with great success. At the time, the exoticism of China was intriguing to French society, and French *philosophes* were especially admiring of Chinese civilization because it is “le foyer de la morale laïque et philosophique”. (Trousseau and Vercruyse, 906). In his letter to Richelieu, Voltaire revealed how he was inspired by a Chinese play, The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, by Ji Junxiang, known as one of the four great tragedies in China. The original Chinese play was translated into French by a Jesuit missionary, Père Prémare, and made known to the European world.

In this thesis, I will compare the original Chinese classic, The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, by Ji Junxiang, and Voltaire’s eighteenth-century adaptation, The Orphan of China, and then analyze Voltaire’s modification in light of his interpretation of Rousseau’s Discourse on Arts and Sciences and On the Origin of Inequality. In particular, I will argue that Voltaire uses his adaptation of the play to illustrate his Enlightenment and civilizational ideal. This ideal civilization is demonstrated in the evolution from the sacrificial system shown in the original play to his ideal judicial system. In order to understand Voltaire’s adaptation, it is essential to know the plot

of the original Chinese play *The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao*.

The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao

The author, Ji Junxiang was a dramatist in the Yuan dynasty (1279~1368).

The story is based on historical events during the rule of Duke Jin Ling. In the beginning of the play, a vicious Chancellor Tu Angu states a longstanding conflict between himself and Tchao Shun, an upright minister. Then the minister's son, Tchao Shuo, marries Duke Jin Ling's daughter and Tu Angu becomes jealous of their power. The new Duke who succeeds Duke Jin Ling does not like the minister either, so Tu Angu has the chance to frame the minister and kills his whole clan except for his son, Tchao Shuo, and his wife, the princess. They are able to escape the massacre of over 300 people because they are royalty who live in the palace. Then Tchao Shuo, the son, commits suicide as an act of loyalty and obedience to the new Duke. Before Tchao Shuo dies, he asks the princess who is about to give birth, to raise their child so he can take revenge on the Tchao family after he grows up. Tu Angu plots to kill the last child of the Tchaos and the princess kills herself after giving birth to her son to show her loyalty to her husband. The kind doctor, Cheng Ying, tries to save the orphan, Tchaos. He hides the orphan in his medicine kit and attempts to escape from Tu Angu's army. Han Jue, a general for Tu Angu, catches

Cheng Ying and the orphan, but decides to release them to save the orphan. The general, Han Jue, then kills himself in front of the doctor to insure the secret will never be revealed.

The doctor Cheng Ying knows that Tu Angu will not stop looking for the orphan, so he plans to replace the orphan with his own son so the orphan can live. He asks Gongsun Chujiu, a retired law-abiding government official, to turn in the doctor and the supposed orphan to Tu Angu without telling him the truth. The purpose is to raise the orphan so he can live to avenge his family in the future. Gongsun Chujiu knew he would be ninety years old after twenty years in prison; therefore he volunteered to be turned in by the doctor so that Cheng Ying could live to take care of the orphan.

In the next scene, Cheng Ying, the doctor, goes to tell Tu Angu that Gongsun Chujiu, the government official, had hidden the orphan of the Tchaos and brings Tu Angu to find them. Tu Angu kills the supposed infant who is actually Cheng Ying's son. Gongsun Chujiu is forced to commit suicide in order to protect the orphan. Tu Angu is very happy and asks Cheng Ying to stay with him. Cheng Ying also takes Cheng Bo—the real orphan of the Tchaos—to live with Tu Angu as his own son.

After twenty years, Cheng Bo grows up to be a phenomenal young man. Tu Angu adopts him and names him Tu Cheng. Tu Angu has the ambition to usurp

the current Duke so he plans to send Tu Cheng to kill Duke Jin Ling. Cheng Ying then reveals the truth to Cheng Bo.

In the last scene, Cheng Bo leads a group of government officials to arrest Tu Angu. The orphan retakes his family name Tchao. The Duke honors the orphan and renames Cheng Bo with his own family name to Tchao Wu and commends everyone who has ever helped the Tchao family.

Voltaire's The Orphan of China

In eighteenth-century France, information about the history of China became more accessible through the Jesuit missionaries. The Jesuit missionaries went to China between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They not only introduced Western culture, science, and religion to the East, but also brought back some of China's great literary heritage to Europe. The play The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao in Yuan dynasty was published in 1735 in the third volume of Jean Baptiste du Halde's Description de la Chine, which was the original play Voltaire used as the basis and inspiration for his The Orphan of China.

In Voltaire's new adaptation, he imposed the three unities, which were lacking in the original Chinese play, most notably, the unity of time, which he condensed from twenty-five years to the requisite twenty-four hours. Voltaire also advanced the

historical period by two centuries, placing the action to the age when the Mongols, led by Genghis Khan, were taking over China. Finally, Voltaire switched the location to Beijing.

When the curtain opens, the Mongols are informing each other of their victory over China. Idamé, the wife of Zamti, and her friend, Asseli, are talking about the cruelty and atrocity of Genghis Khan's army. It is explained that before Genghis Khan becomes the ruler of Mongol Empire, he is a beggar in Beijing and in love with Idamé. He cannot marry her because of his poor birth and leaves for the North. Later, Idamé marries Zamti who is a noble government official. When the Mongols are looking for the prince of China, in order to protect the only royal blood, Zamti asks his friend, Etan, to switch the children- to hand his charge, the prince, to them and take the real orphan of China to Korea.

In the second scene, Etan returns and reports that they failed to escape because they went the wrong direction to find Korea. As he tries again to escape, Idamé stops Etan and rescues her own son, posing as the prince, before Etan can turn him in. She then blames Zamti for his cold-bloodedness in sacrificing his own son. After Genghis Khan discovers the prince was hidden by Zamti and Idamé, he is furious and becomes more determined to kill the prince.

In the third act, Genghis Khan catches Idamé's son, posing at the prince, and

she goes to the palace to tell Genghis Khan the child is actually her own son, not the prince. He decides to release her son but Zamti still refuses to reveal where the prince is. Genghis Khan is furious and decides to take Idamé to be his concubine.

In the fourth act, after some reflection, Genghis Khan starts to respect and admire the morality and civilization of China. His love for Idamé is growing stronger and stronger and asks her to divorce Zamti to be the queen of China. Zamti exhorts Idamé to sacrifice her own will in order to save the prince. During all this time the prince is hidden in the Kings' tomb and is starving. Idamé denounces the lack of humanity and morality. She turns down Genghis Khan's proposal and goes to the tomb to feed the prince.

In the beginning of the fifth act, Idamé and the prince are put in jail because she is followed by a spy on the way to the tomb. Genghis Khan expresses his unchanging admiration for Idamé. If she agrees to compromise, all of them, Zamti, Idamé, their son, and the prince will live. Genghis Khan reveals his struggles and pain in his heart but Idamé still is impervious. She requests to see Zamti for the last time before the execution and Genghis Khan agrees. Idamé asks Zamti to kill hers first then kill himself. Genghis Khan hears their conversation surreptitiously and is touched by their unmoving love. He is influenced by Chinese civilization unconsciously and spares everyone as the play ends.

Rousseau and Voltaire's The Orphan of China

Many critiques have been intrigued by the differences between these two plays, especially when Voltaire claims The Orphan of China was inspired by The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao.ⁱ Some critics focus on Voltaire's lack of understanding of China and the essence of its drama because they feel the spirit of the original play is missing in Voltaire's adaptation. Some think that Voltaire makes these changes in order to propagandize the spirit of the Enlightenment through Chinese civilization and Confucianism.

One of the critiques which is widely accepted is that the Voltaire's play was a reaction to Rousseau's essay which was awarded the prize by the Academy of Dijon in 1750 on the question: "*Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to refining moral practices?*" In this essay, Rousseau criticized the so-called civilization as the main reason for human suffering and corruption. The highly-civilized country China conquered by the Mongol nomad was one of the examples that Rousseau used in his essay. Voltaire on the other hand, based his play on the same historical event that Rousseau used in Discourse on Arts and Sciences and rearranged the plot to show how the Mongols were brought to the realm of reason and virtue through the refinements of the Chinese civilization.

It has become commonplace to suggest that Voltaire is simply following a vague interest in the exotic, popular in the eighteenth-century. I hope to demonstrate that the connection to China is in fact central to Voltaire's argument, that his understanding of Chinese culture perhaps runs deeper than critics have thought. Voltaire's admiration for China as an ideal society—because the Chinese effectively shifted away from sacrifice to a secular system of justice based on reason, societal virtue found in Confucianism.

¹ See, for example, the article "*Comparison between Orphan of the Zhao Family and Grand Orphan in Song Dynasty of China--On Misunderstanding of Confucianism by Voltaire*" in *Chinese Literature Research* (January 2002) by Huang Huijun, the article "*The Original Orphan of China*" in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Summer, 1953), pp. 193-212 by Liu Wu-Chi, *Voltaire et la Chine* by Song Shun-Ching, and *The story of civilization* by Will Durant.

羅錦堂，〈從趙氏孤兒到中國孤兒〉，《錦堂論曲》，台北：聯經，民66年，頁360-396；廖奔，〈十八世紀前後歐洲的中國戲劇文化熱〉，《戲劇：中國與東西方》，台北：學海，民88，頁193-216；陳受頤，〈十八世紀歐洲文學中的趙氏孤兒〉，《嶺南學報》第一卷第1期，民18年；尉天聰，〈趙氏孤兒與歐洲的古典精神〉，《幼獅月刊》，第45卷第5期，民66年5月，頁58-60；許玫芳，〈元雜劇趙氏孤兒與服爾德中國孤兒因緣關係之研究〉，《國立台灣師範大學國文研究所集刊》，第29期，民74年6月，頁911-998

Chapter I: Primitive Rousseau and Civilized Voltaire

Both Voltaire and Rousseau are considered outstanding and influential philosophers of the Enlightenment, and the rivalry between them is intense. They offer opposing viewpoints on the major intellectual movement of their time. The works that make Rousseau well-known among the French *philosophes* during the age of the Enlightenment are his Discourse on Arts and Science and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality. The theories found in these two discourses are also considered radical and even unacceptable among many religious institutions and some Enlightenment philosophers. One of Voltaire's most famous responses to his critics is his caustic remark in a letter to Rousseau:

I have received, sir, your new book against the human race; I thank you for it. You will please men, to whom you frankly tell their faults, but you will not correct them. It is impossible to paint in bolder colors the horrors of human society, from which our ignorance and weakness lead us to expect so much consolation. Never has anyone employed so much wit in trying to make us witless; the reading of your book makes us want to creep on all fours. However, as it is now more than sixty years since I lost that habit, I feel unfortunately that it is impossible for me to take it up again, and I leave

that natural attitude to those who are more worthy of it than you and I.
Neither can I embark to go and live with the savages of Canada: first,
because the ailments with which I am afflicted retain me by the side of the
greatest doctor of Europe and I could not find the same attentions among
the Missouri Indians; secondly, because war has been carried into those
countries, and the example of our civilized people has made the savages
almost as wicked as we. I content myself with being a peaceful savage in
the solitude that I have chosen near your native land, where you ought to be.

(Spirit of Voltaire 92)

Voltaire's response here points out the center of his philosophical theory —
civilization, a concept which is the complete opposite of Rousseau's ideal primitivism.
At the time of Voltaire's remark, he did not give any specific reason for his dislike.
Detailed and processed answers came when his play The Orphan of China was put on
stage in Paris three years after Rousseau's First Discourse on Arts and Science.
Even though Voltaire did not mention Rousseau or Rousseau's work in the letter to
Richelieu which explains his motive for writing The Orphan of China, it is still
evident that Voltaire is criticizing Rousseau's theories found in the Discourse on Arts
and Science and On the Origin of Inequality. In order to understand Voltaire's
reaction to Rousseau's theory, it is essential to analyze and examine Rousseau's

Discourse on Arts and Science and On the Origin of Inequality.

Rousseau's Theory in Discourse on Arts and Science

In 1750, Rousseau's article Discourse on the Arts and Sciences was awarded the prize by the Academy of Dijon, in response to the following question: "*Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to refining moral practices?*" In this essay, Rousseau argued that the arts and sciences corrupt human morality. His argument was controversial, and drew a great number of responses. He responded to the critics for about two years after he won the prize and thereby developed the fundamental principles of his new essay Discourse on Inequality by which he further declared that man, by nature good, is corrupted by civilization. Inequality, luxury, and the political life are identified as especially harmful.

Rousseau declares that men are intrinsically good. This goodness means that men are born happy and virtuous. Happiness of a man in a natural, unpolluted state comes from the satisfaction of their basic needs being satisfied, and a natural man is virtuous because he has no need or motivation to harm other people. Progress in art, science and technology tend to make human beings less virtuous and less happy, with the implication that supposedly primitive civilizations are in fact better off than

superficially advanced ones.

For Rousseau, an ideal society is built upon simplicity, honesty, frugality, diligence, sincerity, courage, integrity, public spiritedness, self-government and military strength. In the first part of his essay, he lists the growth and decline of great civilizations, including Egypt, Constantinople, China, and especially Greece and Rome, in order to show the inverse relationship between science and art on the one hand and the virtue and happiness on the other hand. The fact that these great civilizations were often destroyed by the people who were barbarous and less civilized is another evidence of his argument.

With specific examples, Rousseau describes four ways the sciences and arts corrupt *moeurs* of human society. First, Rousseau describes how they cause a loss of time and labor that could be put to better use:

If our sciences are vain in the objects they set for themselves, they are even more dangerous in the effects they produce. Born in idleness, they nourish it in their turn. And the irreparable loss of time is the first damage they necessarily inflict on society. In politics, as in morality, it is a great evil not to do good. And we could perhaps look on every useless citizen as a pernicious man.” (Arts and Sciences 12)

For Rousseau, it is a waste of time and energy to try to comprehend this great

universe since men can never achieve it. It is the pride that urges men to seek the knowledge of science. At the same time, some fundamental questions for the welfare of human beings are left unanswered by the scientists, because they have no capacity to do so, according to Rousseau.

Another damage that science causes according to Rousseau is when its theories are incorrect or incomplete, which can produce greater errors than if the theory had never been proposed. Rousseau proposes that greater danger has been introduced to the society because of men's false theories:

What dangers lurk! What false routes in an investigation of the sciences!

How many errors, a thousand times more dangerous than the truth is

useful, does one not have to get past to reach the truth? The

disadvantage is clear, for what is false is susceptible to an infinity of

combinations, but truth has only one form of being. Even with the

greatest good will, by what marks does one recognize it for certain? In

this crowd of different feelings, what will be our *criterium* to judge it

properly? And the most difficult point of all: if by luck we do end up

finding the truth, who among us will know how to make good use of it?

(Arts and Science, 6)

This statement echoes his first assertion that time should be dedicated to what is

most beneficial for human society instead of wasting time. But meanwhile, we still do not know what is most beneficial for men to be engaged in according to Rousseau.ⁱ

The answer could be that Rousseau believes few people are capable of knowing how to make good use of science, and for the majority of ordinary people to try is merely a waste of effort and time, which is not the worst waste of time yet; the worst is when the development of science is being used to create more problems for human society.

The decline of military virtues is another side effect of the development of science and art. He states: “While the commodities of life multiply, while the arts perfect themselves, and while luxury spreads, true courage grows enervated and military virtues vanish—once again the work of the sciences and all those arts which are practiced in the shadows of the study.” (Rousseau Arts and Science, 9) The vanity and luxury of the civilization is what Rousseau refutes because they weaken people’s physical strength and spirit. They are the ultimate causes of a civilization’s destruction. Sparta was Rousseau’s ideal community. Nevertheless, it was still corrupted by Athens. He mourns: “O Sparta! How you eternally shame a vain doctrine! While the vices led along by the fine arts were introduced together with them in Athens, while a tyrant there collected with so much care the works of the prince of poets, you were chasing the arts, artists, the sciences, and learned men from your walls.” (Rousseau, Arts and Science, 8) Rome is another example. Rousseau

despises the Romans for becoming like the Greeks and “embraced factions and forgot about their fatherland” (Rousseau, Arts and Science, 9) Then he makes another astonishing comment:

What fatal splendor has succeeded Roman simplicity? What is this strange language? What are these effeminate customs? What do these statues signify, these paintings, these buildings? You mad people, what have you done? You, masters of nations, have you turned yourself into the slaves of the frivolous men you conquered? Are you now governed by rhetoricians? Was it to enrich architects, painters, sculptors, and comic actors that you soaked Greece and Asia with your blood? Are the spoils of Carthage trophies for a flute player? Romans, hurry up and tear down these amphitheatres, break up these marbles, burn these paintings, chase out these slaves who are subjugating you, whose fatal arts are corrupting you. Let other hands distinguish themselves with vain talents. The only talent worthy of Rome is that of conquering the world and making virtue reign there. (Rousseau, Arts and Science 6)

It is not difficult for people to accept the idea that the military virtue and physical dynamic can be weakened by sciences and arts, but to take it further to promote military force to invade and conquer others so that other nations can be

governed by so called “virtue” is a very bold move. Physical and military strength can be used for self-protection, but it can also be used to vanquish other people and nations. One could argue that conquering other people and occupying their land is an act of vanity typical of the civilization Rousseau claims to reject, yet Rousseau fails to justify his military virtue. Another problematic element of Rousseau’s philosophy is the control of violence. To what extent is the natural goodness of man of Rousseau able to manage violence? How should men keep self-protection from turning into a cycle of vengeance? It is another matter that Rousseau does not address.

Another of Rousseau’s arguments is that science and art draw people’s attention to the trivial and insignificant matters. Worse than the loss of time is how people’s ability to judge correctly is impaired:

If cultivating the sciences is detrimental to warrior qualities, it is even more so to moral qualities. From our very first years our inane education decorates our minds and corrupts our judgment. I see all over the place immense establishments where young people are raised at great expense to learn everything except their obligations....From where do all these abuses arise if it is not the fatal inequality introduced among men by distinctions among their talents and by the degradation of their virtues?

There you have the most obvious effect of all our studies, and the most dangerous of all their consequences. We no longer ask if a man has integrity, but if he has talent, nor whether a book is useful but if it is well written. The rewards for a witty man are enormous while virtue remains without honour. (Arts and Science 16)

Rousseau thinks true virtue and uprightness have been misjudged by civilized society and ideology. Therefore, the way science is cultivated, people's education is heading in the wrong direction because their primitive pure qualities are being degraded.

Rousseau feels the effort to civilize the society is a waste of time and energy and this effort creates more inequalities among men.

In the beginning of the essay, Rousseau states: "I am not mistreating science, I told myself; I am defending virtue in front of virtuous men." (3) He believes that men are born virtuous, but the development of science and art corrupts their virtue by creating petty and luxurious needs for human community. In other words, being virtuous is not about knowing good and bad, right and wrong, but simply having one's basic and natural physical needs satisfied. This is the reason why virtue can hardly be found in civilized societies, because by developing men, society awakens vicious tendencies. In addition to the damage to human mind and will, this development also weakens the natural physical strength of men which is used for self-protection

and survival in the natural state of being human. When modern society criticizes the primitive savages' violence, Rousseau points to the guile and hypocrisy of the civilization.

Primitive Theories in Rousseau's Discourse On the Origin of Inequality

The ideas of virtue and violence from the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences are taken further in his next discourse On the Origin of Inequality. This is a response to another Dijon Academy's question: "*What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by the natural law?*" Even though this essay did not win this time nor did it have immediate impact like his first Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Rousseau articulated his philosophical theory with more depth and breadth.

To expand on the virtue of physical strength mentioned in the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Rousseau points out how a part of civilization, such as industry, loses its force and agility so it even loses its capability to protect itself:

The body of a savage man being the only instrument he understands, he uses it for various purposes, of which ours, for want of practice, are incapable: for our industry deprives us of that force and agility, which necessity obliges him to acquire. If he had had an axe, would he have

been able with his naked arm to break so large a branch from a tree? If he had had a sling, would he have been able to throw a stone with so great velocity?...Give civilized man time to gather all his machines about him, and he will no doubt easily beat the savage; but if you would see a still more unequal contest, set them together naked and unarmed, and you will soon see the advantage of having all our forces constantly at our disposal, of being always prepared for every event, and of carrying one's self, as it were, perpetually whole and entire about one. (Inequality 5)

Rousseau attempts to elaborate his point of view on the advantage of physical strength versus violence. His emphasis is on the security that physical strength can bring. The way that modern society deals with violence is by developing technology and weapons to arm oneself which mitigates the need for physical strength. When the technology and science provide convenience and comfort, people no longer need much time to satisfy their physical needs and safety in a civilized society. They have more time, desires and needs to be satisfied. This is when the problems of vanity and excessive violence start. Without development of art and science for men's expediency, people would be too busy to think about vengeance, therefore there would be no need to develop a legal system to restrict human behavior.

According to the doctrines of Christianity, violence is both condemned and

tolerated. As the New Testament states:

But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twine. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. (Matthew 5:39-42)

Here it shows that even though the perpetrator of the violence is wrong, the Christian victim learns to endure without retaliation. Violence can be tolerated because Christians believe in the final judgment and the power of the Passion to bring everything to justice in the end. For Rousseau, such tolerance is simply against human nature. He does not claim that either the judicial system or religious observance is not beneficial; they are signs or indicators of corruption among men. In the discourse On the Origin of Inequality, Rousseau strives to find the real virtues in the primitive society before the development of religious institutions and the modern judicial system. When a man lives in a primitive state, his mind and needs are very simple, similar to animals. His actions are motivated by two key principles: compassion and self-preservation. Hence, when Rousseau responds to the question of natural inequality among men, he shifts his focus to talk about “moral inequality.”

It is useless to ask what the source of natural inequality is, because that question is answered by the simple definition of the word. Again, it is still more useless to inquire whether there is any essential connection between the two inequalities; for this would be only asking, in other words, whether those who command are necessarily better than those who obey, and if strength of body or of mind, wisdom or virtue are always found in particular individuals, in proportion to their power or wealth: a question fit perhaps to be discussed by slaves in the hearing of their masters, but highly unbecoming to reasonable and free men in search of the truth. (Inequality 5)

Moral inequality can be understood as political inequality based upon unnatural foundations. It is created not by Nature but by a convention or agreement between consenting men. Differences in wealth, power, status or class are moral inequalities; they involve one person benefiting at the expense of another.

In Rousseau's imaginary natural state of man, humans were not so-called "social animals". Having a family was not part of their nature. Because there are no connections among each other, there is no virtue and vice, even the necessity for the existence of morality, law, and government. But once humans are brought together and form a community, they start to develop "perfectibility". Perfectibility

is man's inexhaustible ability to improve himself, to shape and to be shaped by his environment. This is the chief characteristic that distinguishes him from other animals. The development of reason and language are both functions of perfectibility. This development creates enlightenment and man's virtues, but also creates all of his vices. Perfectibility is the beginning of moral or political inequality:

However, even if the difficulties attending all these questions should still leave room for difference in this respect between men and brutes, there is another very specific quality which distinguishes them, and which will admit of no dispute. This is the faculty of self-improvement, which, by the help of circumstances, gradually develops all the rest of our faculties, and is inherent in the species as in the individual... Why is man alone liable to grow into a dotard? Is it not because he returns, in this, to his primitive state; and that, while the brute, which has acquired nothing and has therefore nothing to lose, still retains the force of instinct, man, who loses, by age or accident, all that his perfectibility had enabled him to gain, falls by this means lower than the brutes themselves? It would be melancholy, were we forced to admit that this distinctive and almost unlimited faculty is the source of all human misfortunes; that it is this

which, in time, draws man out of his original state, in which he would have spent his days in peace and innocence; that it is this faculty, which successively producing in different ages his discoveries and his errors, his vices and his virtues, makes him at length a tyrant both over himself and over nature. (Inequality 9)

The development of reason and language are both functions of perfectibility. For man to "perfect himself" is not necessarily for him to become perfect, but rather for his physical and mental capacities to be remolded, time and time again. Perfectibility draws man out of his original condition, and is responsible for his extraordinary adaptability, but it is also the source of all his miseries. It creates enlightenment and man's virtues, but also all of his vices.ⁱⁱ

The legal system and government is the stem of perfectibility. Even though perfectibility can create not only vices but also virtues, men are more likely to develop vices than virtues as Rousseau has already stated in the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences. The Judicial system is not capable of solving human vices. Thus, men are better-off avoiding development of reason and law.

Besides the legal system, religion is another source of regulation in human society. People who are engaged in religious practice are motivated to do good and urged to avoid evil acts according to the dogma and teaching which have been set

through a spiritual leader. In many ways, religious men are required to do things which are against their own nature and will. It will not come as a surprise when we find Rousseau's disagreement. He reminds his reader of the compassion that men and even animals are born with:

I am speaking of compassion, which is a disposition suitable to creatures so weak and subject to so many evils as we certainly are: so much the more universal and useful to mankind, as it comes before any kind of reflection; and at the same time so natural, that they very brutes themselves, sometimes give evident proofs of it. Not to mention the tenderness of mothers for their offspring and the perils they encounter to save them from danger, it is well known that horses show a reluctance to trample on living bodies. One animal never passes by the dead body of another of its species: there are even some which give their fellows a sort of burial; while the mournful lowings of the cattle when they enter the slaughter-house show the impressions made on them by the horrible spectacle which meets them". (Rousseau, Inequality 18)

It is because men are losing their natural ability to be compassionate that it has to become a commandment or a teaching to inspire people to exercise it. As Rousseau has already explained in both discourses, the development of civilization

impairs men's natural goodness and ability to judge, so they can no longer feel the impulse to show compassion towards others and maintain enough physical strength for self-preservation instead of relying on waiting for the law to give protection.

Voltaire's Reaction in the Orphan of China to Rousseau's Discourse on the Arts and Sciences

In the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Rousseau acknowledges the superiority of the Chinese in culture and development over the neighboring tribes. Then he points out how China was conquered by the Tartars who were considered barbarous and undeveloped to support his thesis of how the development of arts and science corrupt society along with accepted examples intrinsically known by European countries. Voltaire does not attempt to use evidence from other countries to prove his point; instead he extends from Rousseau's own example, China, to express his rejection in The Orphan of China.

According to Jack Rochford Vrooman, a scholar of Voltaire's theater, when Voltaire creates a play based on historical events, he is not seeking to evoke with historical accuracy one day or even three hours from the past. Instead, he is bent upon showing the whole spirit of a people via its laws and customs at a particular stage in civilization.ⁱⁱⁱ His aim as a dramatist in the tragedies is much the same as his

aim as a historian in the Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations:

Vous voudriez que des philosophes eussent écrit l'histoire ancienne, parce que vous voulez la lire en philosophe. Vous ne cherchez que des vérités utiles, et vous n'avez guère trouvé, dites-vous, que d'inutiles erreurs.

Tâchons de nous éclairer ensemble; essayons de déterrer quelques monuments précieux sous les ruines des siècles. (Dictionnaire

Philosophique 786)

Voltaire uses history to furnish himself with a certain number of details he scatters throughout his plays to give reality to the characters and events. He frequently demonstrates a fairly exact knowledge of the past, but often misuses history by changing the chronology to suit his purpose or by attributing to events causes for which there is no historical justification. He interweaves the true and the false so that his characters may not always think and feel in places assigned them, but they do think and feel as human beings. He superimposes his own philosophical viewpoint upon exotic lands and foreign customs. And since the study of the past is to be of practical value to the present, he frequently includes veiled allusions to contemporary events. In a sense he is writing not only of past ages but of his own as well. His use of legend and other literary models parallels his use of history and makes changes to illustrate some truth according to his needs.

In his letter to Richelieu, Voltaire states that he has “endeavored to describe the manners of the Tartars and Chinese” (Orphan of China 177). Voltaire observes that whenever China is conquered by other nations, China always remains superior in civilization to the conquering countries:

This piece was written in the fourteenth century, and under the dynasty of Genghis Khan; an additional proof, that the Tartar conquerors did not change the manners of the conquered nation; on the other hand, they protected and encouraged all the arts established in China, and adopted their laws: an extraordinary instance of the natural superiority which reason and genius have over blind force and barbarism. Twice have the Tartars acted in this manners; for when they had once more subdued this great empire, the beginning of last century, they submitted a second time to the wisdom of the conquered, and the two nations formed but one people, governed by the most ancient laws in the world; a most remarkable event,…” (176)

China is one of the great ancient civilizations and it retained its superiority through the rise of Imperialism, the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Voltaire’s goal is to show the power of civilization which overcomes the inferiority in political situation, and most of the invaders were

assimilated and acculturated by the native Chinese people to prove that intelligence empowers men more than the physical strength and army force do in the long run. Voltaire's observations and conclusions about Chinese history were impressively accurate. This social phenomenon of civilization drew greater attention from Chinese historians later in the twentieth century.

Civilization and The Orphan of China

Voltaire's interest in civilization was en route to England when he was exiled there between 1726 and 1729. A Voltaire scholar, Ira Wade describes how Voltaire's exile in England influences his focus on civilization:

What challenged Voltaire's curiosity the most was the acquaintance with a new civilization. England as an organic culture, rather than English philosophy or English letters, offered to Voltaire an opportunity for maturing, equipping himself, and reorienting himself. It was this factor which opened up to him a whole new approach to life, and he was intelligent enough to analyze it advantageously and to ask the proper questions concerning its significance. (Intellectual Development 186)

The differences between French and English civilizations intrigued Voltaire. With the focus of civilization in mind, Voltaire starts his conversation in The Orphan of

China with Rousseau's discourses. In the beginning of the play, the dialogue between Idame and her friend Asseli introduces the barbaric conqueror, Genghis Khan, and this conversation illustrates Voltaire's disapprobation for the cruelty and brutality of primitivism:

Idame: Who is this great destroyer, this dire scourge

Of Catai's sinking empire?

Asseli: He is called

The king of kings, the fiery Genghis Khan,

Who lays the fertile fields of Asia waste,

And makes it but a monument of ruin:

Already Oclar, his successful chief,

Has stormed the palace; this once powerful empire,

The mistress of the world, is bathed in blood! (213)

In Voltaire's play, Genghis Khan is the model of the uncivilized. He had lived in China when he was younger as a beggar. For an unexplained reason, Genghis Khan and Idame had met earlier and he had fallen in love with her, but Idame married Zamti, a learned Mandarin. Genghis Khan left China and then became the leader of the Tartar then conquered China by force. When he first occupied China, he was described as a cruel and lawless tyrant.

Voltaire criticizes the cruelty and selfishness of the barbarians. Genghis Khan makes Asia “a monument of ruin,” not only in reality but also in cultural and academic development. Voltaire uses many strong words to describe Genghis Khan’s brutal destruction of China throughout the first Act, such as “destructive tyrant”, “lawless rioter”, and “fierce savage”. In Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Rousseau points out how several ancient civilizations were conquered by some much less civilized nations and tribes. Voltaire’s response is to show how cruel and inhuman these less civilized nations were in the process of conquering. He shows how they would kill an infant to stabilize their power and authority and how this is not a virtuous action, through this description Voltaire was attacking Rousseau because Rousseau praises these less civilized countries and proposes that we should follow their examples:

Let us contrast these pictures with those of the morals of a small number of people who, protected from this contagion of vain knowledge, have by their virtues created their own happiness and become an example to other nations. Such were the first Persians, a remarkable nation, in which people learned virtue the way people learn science among us, which conquered Asia so easily, and which was the only one to acquire the glory of having the history of its institutions taken for a philosophical novel. Such were the Scythians to whom we have been left such magnificent

tributes. Such were the Germans, in whom a writer who had grown weary of tracing the crimes and baseness of an educated, opulent, and voluptuous people found relief by describing their simplicity, innocence, and virtues. Rome had been like that, especially in the time of its poverty and ignorance. And finally up to the present day that rustic nation has shown itself to be like this, so lauded for its courage, which adversity has not been able to defeat, and for its fidelity which bad examples could not corrupt. (Art and Science 4)

Rousseau praises how these rustic nations are moral and “by their virtues created their own happiness and have become an example to other nations”, that they were courageous and undefeatable. Voltaire points out how the happiness they create by so-called virtues is built upon seeing other people suffer when their countries are destroyed by other undefeated rustic nations. For Voltaire, if men only follow their natural instincts and impulses, as those primitive nations do, it will lead them to vice, not virtue. Thus, to Voltaire, men are not born virtuous. These violent primitive people are therefore not worthy to be an example to other nations. True virtues will bring peace, not destruction and chaos. Voltaire criticizes Rousseau’s virtue through Zamti: “We are undone: our empire is no more; a prey to robbers: what hath it availed us that we have trod in the fair paths of virtue? We shone illustrious in the rolls of time, and gave a bright example to mankind.” (198)

Through Zamti's voice, Voltaire expresses how the light of civilization will not be dimmed by brutal primitive conquerors.

In Discourse on Arts and Science, Rousseau promoted the development of personal physical strength, and then in Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, in response to the critic's reprimand of the violence promoted in Discourse on Arts and Science, he again promoted the idea of self-protection. He claimed that men should not be condemned and punished for guarding their own lives. Voltaire did not overthrow Rousseau's premises, but he analyzed this historical event from a different perspective to show the lack of Rousseau's understanding through the concept of sacrifice in The Orphan of China.

In the original Chinese play from Yuan dynasty, The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, sacrificing one's own life for the sake of another's righteous desire is the pivotal noble virtue, especially in Confucianism. It is the root of the whole play. Voltaire changes the original play inside-out when he writes The Orphan of China, but the central spirit of sacrifice as the height of morality is still preserved. In act IV, we see Zamti is prepared to sacrifice his son in order to save the royal blood because he has promised the King. Similar to the role of the Doctor, Ying in The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, Zamti, in The Orphan of China, demonstrates a high level of morality through his willingness to sacrifice his own blood:

Idame: O dreadful message!

For what are we reserved? Alas! My lord,

Ne'er till this day of blood did crimes like this

Affright my soul: you answer not, but send

Your fruitless sighs to heaven. Sweet innocent,

Must we then give thee up a sacrifice

To brutal rage?

Zamti: I've promised, sworn to save him.

Idame: What can thy oaths, thy promises avail?

Thou canst not keep them; every hope is lost.

Zamti: And wouldst thou have me sacrifice the son

Of my loved sovereign?

Idame: O dreadful message!

For what are we reserved? Alas! My lord,

Ne'er till this day of blood did crimes like this

Affright my soul: you answer not, but send

Your fruitless sighs to heaven. Sweet innocent,

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Zamti: I've promised, sworn to save him.

Idame: What can thy oaths, thy promises avail?

Thou canst not keep them; every hope is lost.

Zamti: And wouldst thou have me sacrifice the son

Of my loved sovereign? (219)

Zamti's willingness to sacrifice his son is definitely not because he is cold-blooded and does not love his son. He demonstrates how men can keep a promise even though the situation is against his natural desire. This willingness to sacrifice is not a natural instinct. At this point, Zamti's wife Idame cannot accept Zamti's idea, but later in Act II, Idame is prepared to follow Zamti's example enough to sacrifice even herself:

Idame: I own, my lord, I feel

A mother's weakness, and a mother's sorrows;

Yet may I boast a heart as firm as thine;

Away, and lead me on to death: I'm ready

To perish for my son.

Zamti: I know thy virtues. (236)

The example of Idame shows the development of a human standard of value. As Idame expresses her willingness to sacrifice, Zamti compliments her and expresses his

agreement for her decision. Eventually, the example of Zamti and Idame touches Genghis Khan. At the end of the play, Idame is able to meet with Zamti for the last time under Genghis Khan's permission. Zamti and Idame decide to die together because they are not willing to submit themselves to tyranny:

Idame: Hear me then;

Is there no path to death but from the palace?

Bulls bleed at the altar; criminals are dragged

To punishment; but generous minds are masters

Of their own fate: why meet it from the hands

Of Genghis? Were we born dependent thus

On others' wills? No; let us imitate

Our bolder neighbors, live with ease, and die

When life grows burdensome: wrongs unrevenged

To them are insupportable, and death

More welcome far than infamy: they wait not

For a proud tyrant's nod, but meet their fate:

We've taught these islanders some useful arts,

And therefore deign we not to learn from them

Some necessary virtues?—let us die.

Zamti: Yes: I approve thy noble resolution,
And think, extremity of sorrow mocks
The power of laws; but wretched slaves, disarmed
As we are, and bowed down beneath our tyrants,
Must wait the blow. (238)

In these three dialogues, Zamti and Idame praise each other to be virtuous for their willingness to sacrifice. As an anti-Christian, Voltaire does not believe the effect of the sacrificial rituals in both the Old and New Testaments, but he does consider the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others, such as Christ's, is a noble desire. It differs from Rousseau's idea of each taking care of his own business without interacting with others; Voltaire thinks that it is noble of men to be willing to sacrifice for other. This willingness shows the triumph over death, which is what Rousseau uses to justify violent acts as protection from others. From these passages, Voltaire has evolved from self-interested love in to selfless love, which is a form of morality. It seems Rousseau demonstrates more confidence in human nature when he claims the natural goodness of man and blames human corruption to the development in a community and civilization, but Voltaire's belief in human potential has been well-illustrated through his description of charity. His faith in human beings is also shown in his belief in the judicial system. However, the traces Voltaire leaves in The

Orphan of China indicate that Voltaire still disagrees with sacrificial practices which intend to please God. Even though Zamti and Idame talk about sacrificing their lives to save the royal orphan consistently throughout the play, no one dies in the end which is different from the sacrificial system in the primitive society that death is a necessity. Voltaire demonstrates that sacrificial rituals are not needed for a civilized society.

Voltaire states his ambition in the letter to Richelieu, he desires to paint “a most remarkable event”. This event is the union of the conquered and the conquering nations “by the most ancient laws in the world” (Orphan of China 177). In The Orphan of China, law is what sets China apart from the barbarous tartars. It is what the Chinese people are proud of. Voltaire expresses this idea through Etan’s conversation with Idame describing the destruction caused by the Tartars in the beginning of the play

Etan: This northern tyrant, whom the wrath of heaven
Hath sent for our destruction, once condemned
And spurned at by our court, returns to glut
His vengeance on us: these wild sons of rapine,
Who live in tents, in chariots, and in fields,
Will never brook confinement ‘midst the walls
Of this close city: they detest our arts,

Our customs, and our laws; and therefore mean
To change them all; to make this splendid seat
Of empire one vast desert, like their own. (198)

For Voltaire, the legal system is an indicator of the development of the human ability to reason. It is natural for men to have their own way to reason and have different opinions. Legal systems require men to come to a consensus, which means men will have to give up part of their personal desires or preference for public welfare. But for Rousseau, law is what underpins the corruption caused by science and art:

The mind has its needs, just as the body does. The latter are the foundations of society; from the former emerge the pleasures of society. While government and laws take care of the security and the well being of men in groups, the sciences, letters, and the arts, less despotic and perhaps more powerful, spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains which weigh men down, snuffing out in them the feeling of that original liberty for which they appear to have been born, and make them love their slavery by turning them into what are called civilized people.” (Art and science 4)

According to Rousseau, the development of civilization only brings more misery to human community. Law makes the strong stronger and more powerful and the weak

weaker. The limited advantages of law should not be the reason to increase men's suffering.

When Rousseau responds to the question of human's natural inequality, instead of answering directly, he switches the focus to attack the moral law or the governmental law that natural inequality would not be a concern if there were no moral law. In addition, law is used to suppress the violence caused by excessive passion, and establishing moral law cannot resolve the original problem of passion. In the Discourse On the Origin of Inequality Rousseau claims that law fails to achieve the purpose of its design to get rid of crimes:

It must, in the first place, be allowed that, the more violent passions are, the more are laws necessary to keep them under restraint. But, setting aside the inadequacy of laws to effect this purpose, which is evident from the crimes and disorders to which these passions daily give rise among us, we should do well to inquire if these evils did not spring up with the laws themselves; for in this case, even if the laws were capable of repressing such evils, it is the least that could be expected from them, that they should check a mischief which would not have arisen without them.

(Inequality 20)

Rousseau points out that, in the civilized society, law is not functioning as people

expect it to be, which is to restrain the violent passions and actions. Men's lives and safety are not really protected by law, and he thinks that law should correspond to "moeurs"—law of the heart. For Voltaire, he focuses on how men have developed their intelligence to create law of their own and how they value logic and reason to obey the law. It is through reason and intelligence that law is created, thus it becomes a symbol of human's progression in virtue, another fundamental reason why Voltaire admires China besides its noble morality. In The Orphan of China, Genghis Khan is touched and inspired by the aforementioned virtues and then changes his selfish mindset and violent behavior:

Genghis: Tis strange,
That sentiments like these, to us unknown,
Should rise in mortal breasts: without a groan,
A murmur, or complaint, a father breaks
The ties of nature, and would sacrifice
His child to please the manes of his sovereign,
And the fond wife would die to save her lord.
The more I see, the more must I admire
This wondrous people, great in arts and arms,
In learning and in manners great; their kings

On wisdom's basis founded all their power;
They gave the nations law, by virtue reigned,
And governed without conquest; naught hath heaven
Bestowed on us but force; our only art
Is cruel war; our business to destroy.
What have I gained by all my victories,
By all my guilty laurels stained with blood?
The tears, the sighs, the curses of mankind.
Perhaps, my friend, there is a nobler fame,
And worthier of our search: my heart in secret
Is jealous of their virtues; I would wish,
All conqueror as I am, to imitate
They vanquished. (210)

In the play, Genghis Khan started as a beggar with nothing in his possession and came back to China as a powerful conqueror destroying its civilization. Through the instances of his interaction with Zamti and Idame, his heart starts to soften. He transforms from being determined to kill the royal infant in order to possess his past lover, Idame, and secure his throne to taking the orphan for his own and asking Zamti to teach the law of China, the law of sacrifice, to the whole nation.

Genhis Khan's change is powerful not only because he is able to overcome his carnal lust and desire, but also because it brings peace and hope for thousands of people in China. This great transformation of Genghis Khan surprises Idame and she asks him the reason for this incredible change of heart. Genghis Khan's answer is simple and direct: "Thy virtues." Zamti and Idame's noble and dignified deeds and acts are the representation of Voltaire's ideal morality, this highly moral representation is what draws Voltaire's attention to China. In addition to responding to Rousseau's essays, Voltaire sees an image of his ideal civilization and its development in Chinese society.

ⁱ See Arthur M. Melzer's The Natural Goodness of Man

ⁱⁱ See Melzer's "Curing Humanity" in The Natural Goodness of Man

ⁱⁱⁱ See Jack Rochford Vrooman's Studies on Voltaire and The Eighteenth Century

Chapter II: From Sacrificial System to Judicial System

The Chinese civilization is known as the ideal among the philosophes during the age of the Enlightenment for many reasons, including, not only its ancient status, but also the duration of its civilized legacy. When we trace the origin of Chinese history and civilization, we can see the importance of the sacrificial system. In this chapter, I will first address the sacrificial system in ancient China and analyze its relationship with modern civilization. Then, I will examine how Voltaire demonstrates the evolution from the sacrificial system to the judicial system, and finally, compare the function of violence in René Girard's scapegoat mechanism theory and Voltaire's judicial system.

Sacrificial System in Ancient China

As one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations, the history of China can be traced back to the Yellow Emperor about 5000 years ago. One of the most important features to contribute to the development of a civilization is language, especially in its written form. Print culture can preserve and accumulate a society's sense of its own history. For Chinese culture, the prototype of the written language

dates back to 1500 BC during the Shang dynasty and is known as the oracle bone script. The oracle bone script is used to record sacrificial events. Oracle bones are animal bones or turtle shells used in divination and the vast majority of the bones are ox scapulae and tortoise plastrons which record the oracles from the pyromantic divinations of the late Shang dynasty. The inquiry of the oracles is a very important practice in the Shang dynasty for their agriculture and pasturage. The Yellow River Plain was the stronghold of the Shang dynasty. A great civilization cannot exist without consistent and sufficient water supply and the Yellow River has been the heart of the Chinese civilization from the beginning, and people's lives are closely attached to its every single beat. For these people praying for the oracles is usually closely related to river flooding and having sufficient rainfall.

The Shang dynasty occupied a large territory, encompassing the fertile alluvial plains of the Yellow River and its rice agriculture was the fundamental economic activity along with raising cattle. The control of water was crucial to maintaining social order for those who held political power. During this period of time, political power was shared by a dynasty of "kings" who supported a landed gentry of warriors as a kind of feudal system containing a social class hierarchy. The most important responsibilities among the kings was performing sacrificial rituals, waging ritual-related war and hunting in search of sacrificial supply.

In other parts of the world, most of the ancient agricultural states made sacrifices to the sun or the moon, but China was an exception. People in the Shang dynasty feared the capricious river much more than the sun. Therefore, the river god “He Bo” played the most significant role in the Chinese sacrificial system. When flood came or drought happened, a sacrifice of an animal or human would be offered to He Bo to appease his rage in order to restore harmony to the land. When men’s actions were disturbing to the natural and original order and tradition, or in other words, the social taboo, ancient Chinese people believed that flooding and drought came about due to angering the royal ancestors or nature’s deities.

As opposed to ideals from the Judaic or Christian practice, animal sacrifice in China was not based on obedience to a transcendent and unique deity, but was a ritual based on the logic of filial piety and the assertion of political authority. A blood sacrifice was supposed to end drought, flooding, and other natural calamities believed to originate from unsatisfied ancestors, or, to obtain from them the climactic conditions necessary for agriculture and human survival. The royal ancestors were believed to control the weather and the welfare of the state. They had the power to influence the course of nature. The king’s worldly authority seemed not only to depend upon, but to correspond to the ancestors’ spiritual power. Therefore, in order for the combined king/ancestor to have sufficient power to maintain the state’s order,

the ancestors had to be fed properly with nutritional sacrifice, such as meat. This was the starting point of animal sacrifice. Even today, animal meat is offered for ancestral worship as a way of showing respect, care and love.

For a king to maintain his state, he had to control access to his ancestors, who in turn, controlled natural calamities. Sacrifice and politics went hand in hand in Chinese society. If private sacrifice increased, the central power would be weakened. The king or emperor of China was acknowledged as the son of Heaven (Tian Zi). He was not only the successor to the royal lineage but also held the virtue and power of the dynasty's founder. Performing the ritual of sacrifice and other related activities was one of the most important ways for kings to show their legitimacy, power, and authority to be a leader. Especially, when a war or revolution took place in the society and a changing of the dynasty happened, the king's first act as emperor was to hold an elaborate sacrificial ritual to Heaven to establish or confirm his authority. Because the sacrifice could be accepted by Heaven and the royal ancestors, it was a proof of the king's virtue and morality. In essence, the mechanism of this sacrificial system reflected Chinese political ideology, that is, rather than establishing their own moral order, present rulers had to abide by the ethical standards established by the mythical founders. Thus, knowledge of the past, and a connection to the virtuous deeds of one's ancestors, became key pre-requisite of

political authority.

Human sacrifice was also practiced in the Shang dynasty. It is widely believed that the human sacrifice as a ritual started with the river god, He Bo. He played an important part in ancient Chinese rituals, requiring his own set of animal and human sacrifices which were sunk, or buried on the river banks. Archaeological research proved the reality of the folklore titled "He Bo's marriage". In the story, He Bo required a yearly sacrificial marriage with a select virgin who, in a place called Yeh, in the area of the Shang capital, was ritually sacrificed/married to the river god. The virgin was placed on a raft and drowned; thereby ensuring the well-being of her community. This practice was discontinued under pressure of Confucian "humanism" in the year 400 BC.

The teaching of humanity in Confucianism had great impact on archaic Chinese sacrificial practices. Besides discontinuing the virgin sacrifice to the river God, it also stopped the practice of burying humans alive along with the dead. This practice was mostly done among the royalty because it is a symbol of power and authority. In order to ensure that the nobles are still well-served after their death, the servants and concubines are buried with the dead in the tomb. With the rising of Confucianism, this practice was criticized and eventually, stopped completely in the sixteenth century. Instead of the living, precious treasures were buried as an emblem

of nobility.

Maintaining the social order and exemplifying the morality of filial piety are the roots of the Chinese sacrificial system. Faith in, or fear of, a Supreme Being is not the reason for altering the existing sacrificial ritual, but the development of human's ability to reason. The logic of the sacrificial system led to a certain hierarchy of sacrifice. The greater the calamity, the greater the required sacrifice; the greater the sacrifice the more likely it was answered; and the greater the bestowed favor of the deity, the greater thanksgiving sacrifice the living offered for it. Supernatural power seems to have depended not only on sacrifice, but on its amount; the greater the amount, the greater its effect. Sacrifice was also a necessity for construction. The most celebrated stories of the Great Wall and the great palaces were about those who lost their lives during construction. The link between the rituals, the existing systems and the socio-political organization is evident. Herbert Plutschow, a professor of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA explains the importance of ancestral worship in relation with the establishment of socio-political power:

The kind of archeological evidence [as summarized above] strongly suggests that the Shang state was held together by ritual. Ritual rules and obligations were in fact law, the legal system developing out of ritual

as in other cultures. The ancestral temple was the center of ritual and therefore the center of state affairs. In tune with the importance or “centrality” of ancestral worship, the ancestral shrine constituted a center of social and political activities, where divinatory questions were asked, the place where important decisions were made, where warriors received their portions of meat before going into battle, where, after the war, the prisoners of war were paraded, where those who were not enslaved for labor, were sacrificed, and where quarrels were mediated and judged. It was the sacred center of the state where most if not all “significant” activity took place. It was a place on which depended on the community’s very existence. (Anthropoetics n.d.)

Sacrificial rituals play a central role in Chinese society. They stand as the power to hold the society together and ensure the society functions well. Besides the usage of written language, we can find strong connection between the archaic Chinese sacrificial practice and the civilization’s political organization. As the civilization pressed forward, the formation of sacrifice has become more and more civilized, most notably under the influence of Confucianism. Chinese society becomes more and more civilized as the process of ritual practice changes. Plutschow describes the evolution of Chinese ritual practice:

Shang China seems to support (Eric) Gans' understanding that human sacrifice was not practiced in *illo tempore* only later in agricultural "high culture". Tsung-Tung Chan believes that human sacrifice was a relatively late practice belonging to an agrarian high culture and its centralized court and, therefore, cannot be found in more primitive local agricultural settings. There is also ample evidence of human funeral sacrifices which, by the tenth century BC, were gradually replaced by clay and wooden substitutions. (Plutschow, Anthropoetics n.d.)

Even though the practices of sacrifice were changing, the importance of rituals continued to increase in Chinese society. Since ritual performance was tied to political power, adherence to ritual practices became indistinguishable from obedience to any state laws. Understanding and knowing the way rituals are practiced were essential for graduation in scholastic education. Everyone who desired to become a government official would be tested on their knowledge of the Five Classics which include the Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Changes, The Spring and Autumn Annals, and The Book of Rites. In The Book of Rites, besides the record of the proper way to perform ritual, we find how virtue and morality are closely connected to the rituals:

According to the institutes of the sage kings about sacrifices; sacrifice

should be offered to him who had given good laws to the people; to him who had labored to the death in the discharge of his duties; to him who had boldly and successfully met great calamities; and to him who had warded off great evils... Only men and things of this character were admitted into the sacrificial canon. (Plutschow, Anthropoetics n.d.)

The essence of the Chinese sacrificial system, which is to maintain social order and exemplify the morality of filial piety, has not changed for thousands of years, but the ritual practices have been modified under the influence of Confucianism and the force of becoming civilized. The efficacy of the sacrificial rituals is not only about how they are performed, but related to the virtues of the kings who administer the rituals. The role of virtue starts to play a more significant role for the political authority when Confucianism becomes the commoners' beliefs through education. The influence of using clay and wooden substitutions to replace blood sacrifice was mainly affected by Confucian ideology. For example, blood sacrifice was substituted with language in post-Shang period and Taoism only offered words in their rituals. The Taoist written petition of rites is addressed orally to the Celestial Bureau of the government instead of animal sacrifice. In essence, ritual practice is alterable according to the evolution of civilization in human society. Anger of the gods due to the malpractice of ritual in archaic society no longer exists; the gods are also civilized along with human

society. This phenomenon shows that men have more control in ritual practices than the gods. Since men play such an important role in ritual practice, it is natural that virtue is demanded of the people who conduct these rituals. This idea is recorded in the Book of Rites:

[Rituals]...are not a thing common to a man from without; it issues from within him, and has its birth in the heart. When the heart is deeply moved, expression is given to it by ceremonies; and hence, only men of ability and virtue can give complete exhibition to the idea of [rituals].

(Plutschow, Anthropoetic n.d.)

When the last king of the Shang dynasty was defeated by the king of the Zhou dynasty (1066~770 BC), there was a drought. The king of Zhou claimed that he attacked and conquered the previous dynasty in the name of Heaven. He declared the drought was caused by previous neglect of the rites which proved the lack of the previous king's virtue during the Shang dynasty. The king of Zhou who overthrew the Shang dynasty was then legitimized by the people and Heaven. The first and second kings in the Zhou dynasty tried to establish their socio-political order by restoring the traditional rituals and making sure they reigned by virtues. The official who was in charge of the ritual ceremony, the Duke Zhou, was the ideal man in the mind of Confucius. He was praised for maintaining the social order by establishing

the rites of Zhou.

The association between blood sacrifice and rituals was replaced by the connection between virtues/morality and rituals. The Confucian theory of ethics as exemplified in rites is based on three important conceptual aspects of life: ceremonies associated with sacrifice to ancestors and deities of various types, social and political institutions, and the etiquette of daily behavior. In addition, the Confucian concept of filial piety developed out of ancestral worship/sacrifice. The value and standard of Chinese civilization were built upon Confucianism. It was never considered a religion, but its affect to the entire Chinese society was beyond any religious influence. Instead, the religions which are preserved and practiced now have the rituals and values which were supported originally by Confucian teaching.

The virtue of reason is the guiding principle in the changing process of the Chinese sacrificial practice, which has been the center of Chinese society. The adjustment in ritual practices influenced by Confucianism is not brutal since logic and reason are embedded in Chinese ideology. When Voltaire, who believes in reason whole-heartedly, is searching for his ideal civilization, it is not surprising that he is drawn to the Chinese civilization.

Voltaire's Search for the Ideal civilization

Voltaire's interest in civilization started to develop during his exile in England.

In England, Voltaire saw the spirit of the Enlightenment represented through a tolerant society that accepted different religious beliefs. The orthodoxy of Catholicism faded, and Protestantism was breaking up into feeble sects, while the deists challenged everything in Christianity except a belief in God.

When Voltaire arrived in England, he saw various sects of Christianity as well as other religions existing in harmony and said: "In France, I am looked upon as having too little religion; in England as having too much." (Voltaire, 116)

This phenomenon indicated the fragility of Christianity and his need for tolerance to embrace truths. In his letters on England, in Letter V, *On the Church of England*, he stated: "England is properly the country of sectarists. *Multae sunt mansiones in domo patris mei* (In my Father's house are many mansions). An Englishman, as one to whom liberty is natural, may go to heaven his own way." (Letter V) For Voltaire, England demonstrates the virtue of tolerance which is missing in French Catholic/Christian society.

In the spirit of the age of the Enlightenment, reason plays an essential role among the *philosophes*. For Voltaire, the virtue of reason is shown through the attribute of tolerance in a civilized society. England demonstrates this in the

freedom of religion. In France, only Catholics were free to practice their faith unimpeded, Protestantism had been outlawed by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. “If there were only one religion in England, there would be fear of despotism; if there were but two, the people would cut one another’s throats; but there are thirty and they all live happy and in peace.” (Letter V) This statement might have been exaggerated, but it showed the sufficient tolerance in England opposed to the old regime of France. Besides religion, there were also other intellectual freedoms in England. England’s scientists, artists, and intellectuals were honored and esteemed even though they were not nobles. In discussing these great men in England, Voltaire wrote. “We shall begin with Bacons, the Lockes, and the Newtons. The generals and ministers will come after them in turn.” (Eighteenth-century Europe 237)

Intellectual freedom is not only an indication of civilization, but also a catalyst for the connection of truth and religion in Voltaire’s mind. English society solidifies the idea he started to develop previously when he was in France, namely how religion should be in conformity with morality, *and* that every religion whose dogmas offend morality must be false. He examines eighteenth-century Christianity, and comes to the conclusion that the life of a Christian in France has no tolerance, reason or morality. Even though England had much more freedom than France and showed

great features of civilization, to Voltaire, it is still not freed from the corruption of Christianity at least not enough to be his ideal society. After all, British society is only open to different denominations, but not different religions. This limited tolerance does not qualify to be Voltaire's ideal virtue.

Voltaire's Biblical Criticism

In the section of *tolérance* in his Dictionnaire Philosophique, Voltaire describes the importance of tolerance: "Qu'est-ce que la tolérance? C'est l'apanage de l'humanité. Nous sommes tous pétris de faiblesse, et d'erreurs; pardonnons-nous réciproquement nos sottises, c'est la première loi de la nature."(558) Voltaire believes in the power of tolerance to bring the world into peace and tranquility. In his Dictionnaire Philosophique, Voltaire specifically targets Christianity for its lack of tolerance. He says: "De toutes les religions, la chrétienne est sans doute celle qui doit inspirer la plus de tolérance, quoique jusqu'ici les chrétiens aient été les plus intolérants de tous les hommes." (599) Voltaire's argument emphasizes the differences between biblical teachings and eighteenth-century practices. Voltaire condemns Christianity and Catholicism in particular for not allowing other religions to freely worship. Furthermore, Voltaire warns against the dangers of a political system too intertwined with religious institutions, especially when these religions lack

the virtue of tolerance. Torrey explains the importance of tolerance for intellectual development for Voltaire:

Voltaire looked on libels and calumny as very practical legal matters and on intentionally vicious parodies as matters that the law should consider in any civilized country in which literature was to be held in esteem.

Tolerance itself was an entirely practical matter, signifying the abolition of persecution; intolerance on the part of philosophers was thus a purely academic question, for how could they be intolerant unless they had an army, a police force, and courts to allow them to persecute? Intellectual intolerance is another thing, or rather is a phrase without meaning, for if a man has an intellect he will naturally agree or disagree with expressed opinions; the whole question is whether he could be friendly to those with whom he disagreed.” (137)

Tolerance is the key for intellectual development for Voltaire because it determines the acceptance and openness to different opinions. Acceptance to ideas opens the possibility of progression in civilization. In The Orphan of China, the virtue of tolerance preserves the lives of many and leads the play to a happy and harmonious ending. In the beginning of the play, Genghis Khan’s army is about to annihilate the capital of China. But the growth of tolerance towards each other

becomes the lifesaver. The royal orphan, Zamti, Idame, and millions of people's lives are preserved because they are willing to overlook the differences between races, customs and culture and accept each other. Genghis Khan is touched by the morality, loyalty, love and the spirit of sacrifice that Zamti and Idame show and decides to set everyone free. He accepts the inferiority of his culture, law, and political system, then embraces a new civilization by overcoming his pride as conqueror. As for Zamti, his king is killed by the Tartar and his country is destroyed. When he tries to protect the only royal blood, his wife is taken by Genghis Khan. The situation only gets worse for him to the point where his only choice is to kill himself, but even then he thanks heaven for the virtuous Idame instead of complaining. When Genghis Khan reveals himself to stop Zamti and Idame killing themselves and spares everyone's life, Zamti accepts his new king and promises to serve for "reason, justice, and morality". These three words Voltaire uses to describe the Zamti's convictions sum up his ideal civilization. But even more appealing to Voltaire, was its non-Christian background.

Scholars of Voltaire continue to debate the nature of his religious inclinations.

Professor of French Literature, University of Paris IV, René Pomeau describes the complexity of Voltaire's religious theory:

Je ne savais pas, avant de commencer, ce qu'il fallait penser de la religion

de Voltaire. Je constatais que les critiques qui la prennent au sérieux se recrutent parmi ceux qui croient au ciel et parmi ceux qui croient au ciel et parmi ceux qui n’y croient pas, et qu’inversement des esprits de partis opposés se rencontrent pour lui refuser toute sincérité. (249)

Even though we cannot pinpoint the religious beliefs of Voltaire, a general consensus is that Voltaire was a deist. In the words of Merle Perkins: “Voltaire is a deist who knew God, no more, no less. By this is meant that he is not Christian, for he refused to believe in the divinity of Christ.” (The Modern Language Journal 148) Voltaire was educated by the Jesuits, but in the midst of the quarrel between the Jansenism and the Jesuit, Voltaire found a bifurcation from contemporary Christianity. As Christianity lays down the foundation of the European political system in the eighteenth century, there are a number of clandestine writers who questioned the accuracy, the validity, and the reliability of the whole Bible. Under this influence, with Mme du Châtelet, Voltaire starts to write his opinion of Christianity, specifically the account in the Bible, such as “Examen de la genèse and Examen important” and so on. Voltaire refuses to believe the divinity of Christ and the redemptive power of his sacrifice. What interests him is the virtue and morality which he could not find in the current Christian religion.

Although not evident at first glance, Voltaire’s criticism of eighteenth-century

religious beliefs is linked to his preference for the seventeenth-century literary form. In seventeenth century classicism, Voltaire found that a focus on reason and its problematic relation to human passion could be expressed with admirable sincerity. When comparing it to the age of Enlightenment, though the core philosophical ideology is reason, society, especially in its religion, shows the opposite. When Voltaire claims to be a deist and challenges the Christian faith, his ambition is to restore human reason as a humanist, not a religionist. As Torrey states, Voltaire urges people to search for the truth and laws that are plain, personal and can be engraved in the heart:

We may define it (Voltaire's deism), as consisting in the acceptance of a natural religion based on common ideas of morality and including the worship of an impersonal deity, whose laws are plain and engraved in the hearts of all men, as opposed to revealed religions with their supernatural doctrines and specific religious duties." (218)

Instead of claiming that he is a deist, Voltaire spends more time explaining that he is not an atheist. It is because Voltaire is not defending his belief and faith, but the ability to reason. Believing the existence of God requires faith and cannot merely be supported by reason, because there are always reasons to question God's existence. But claiming to be a non-atheist Voltaire could get away from faith and be supported

by the reasoning that no one could unequivocally disapprove God's existence. The point is not whether God exists or not, but how people decide to believe or disbelieve. Voltaire strives to help men to embrace the virtue of reason. His deism is meant for the purpose of oneness; for humanity to attribute reason to their beliefs. Then, his ideals can be heard and accepted more easily by his audience and readers since the majority of these people believe in God. For Voltaire, deism is often only a useful weapon to attack Christianity. Torrey points out how the Christian God is jealous and given to anger in Voltaire's mind:

The impious man who supposes the great being to be jealous, proud, malicious, and vindictive, is more dangerous. I should not like to sleep under the same roof with such a man...But how will you treat the impious man who says to you: "See only through my eyes and do not think. I announce to thee a tyrannical God who has made me thy tyrant; I am his well-beloved. He will torment through all eternity millions of his creatures, whom he detests, in order to make me happy. I will be thy master in this world, and I will laugh at thy sufferings in the next world."

(232)

Voltaire believes that a Supreme Being must have all the virtuous, intellectual, and moral qualities of the universe that human beings can possibly imagine, or this god

would not be worth reverence as the ultimate source of truth.

For Voltaire, a religion and its Supreme Being should not define or restrict the development of civilization, but it does not mean they should be independent from each other, either. In eighteenth-century French society, Voltaire sees the rigidity and limitation of people's ability to think freely and to reason effectively as affected by their religion. In England, he sees more religious, political and commercial freedom in their society, but the development of science and civilization is still not freed from responding to and dealing with Christianity, human progression is reflected on, but not supported by, the deism of Christianity. English society is indeed closer but still not the ideal for Voltaire.

Voltaire's Interest in Chinese Civilization

This search for the ideal explained Voltaire's admiration for ancient civilizations. Ancient Greece, China, and Egypt are the earliest luminous civilizations which did not start with or relate to the Old Testament. Among these civilizations, China remained its advancement and advantage for centuries and still stood strong during the age of Voltaire. With the increasing information regarding China through Jesuit missionaries, Voltaire is able to examine the essence of Chinese civilization and see how it outshines other ancient cultures in time. Voltaire's ideal

civilization is built upon ultimate truth and morality, the way to reason which crosses all religions and unites human society, including political and legal systems, with this knowledge humanity can be brought into oneness and progress together. A Voltaire scholar Song Shun-Ching asserts that China appears to be Voltaire's ideal civilization:

La civilisation chinoise était née et s'était développée de longs siècles avant celle de l'antiquité païenne et de la Bible; des lois, des institutions, une morale, une religion, des arts, des techniques qu'on connaissait mieux à mesure que les voyageurs et les missionnaires en portaient témoignage et que l'on s'instruisait de la langue du pays, prouvaient qu'indépendamment de la sagesse gréco-latine et de la tradition judéo-chrétienne des hommes avaient pu concevoir et réaliser à leur façon la justice et le Bonheur. Étaient-ils sauvés pour leurs vertus, ou réprouvés devant Dieu parce qu'ils n'avaient eu part ni à la révélation de Moïse, ni à celle du Christ? Honoraient-ils de faux dieux ou reconnaissaient-ils, malgré l'histoire qui les avaient privés de la Parole divine, l'éternité, l'immatérialité, l'unicité du Créateur? (4)

The history of China and the development of its civilization meet the requirement of Voltaire's ideal society in many ways. With the virtues of tolerance and reason, Voltaire sees this long-lived civilization with its traditions so very different from

Christian tradition, its unison of philosophical and religious development are an idea which matches his ideal. In addition, Chinese civilization was teaching and practicing the virtues he believes, such as tolerance, morality and reason. The illuminating experience the Jesuit missionaries had in China, contrasted with the *Massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy* in France, demonstrate the Chinese people's virtue of tolerance. When the Jesuit missionaries introduced Confucian ideology to the *philosophes* of the Western world, Voltaire in particular, was impressed by its high ethical and moral standard as well as its capacity to maintain and uphold the great civilization throughout many dynasties.

Voltaire and Confucius

In China, the openness and tolerance toward different religions is mainly because of the practice of Confucianism, which is also the foundation of the morality in Chinese civilization. Confucius was born around 551 BC. He dedicated his life to teaching his students and traveling from country to country to educate the kings to be wise and righteous. Throughout the centuries, Confucius' principles have been very well accepted primarily because of their basis in common Chinese tradition and belief. He champions strong familial loyalty, ancestor worship, respect of elders, and strength in families as the most important unit in the society in order to govern the

public. His theory of ethics is deeply connected to sacrificial ritual practices. These rituals start with ceremonies associated with sacrifice to ancestors and deities of various types. Some believe that rituals originate from the heavens and commandments of the Supreme Being. Confucius is a deist, but he sees a different possibility of the ritual. He emphasizes the development of rituals through conscious decisions, and the actions of wise and intellectual leaders and kings in human history, such as Duke Zhou, who organized and standardized all the ritual practices in China around 1000 BC. Since kings have the power to both establish laws and set up sacrificial ritual, the line between civil laws and sacrificial practices become vague. Since rituals are obeyed and followed as laws, the virtues within these rituals can impact people more thoroughly. At the same time, the legal system is examined and refined by the high moral standard. The civil power is never controlled, but always supported by religious sacrificial practices. This process ensures the political system, including sacrificial and legal practices, are as great as possible to benefit Chinese civilization.

Confucius is neither a lawyer nor a religionist, but his philosophy united the elements of Chinese civilization and moved them forward in oneness. The morals he taught are based on the traditions embedded in Chinese judicial, political and religious systems, and these morals and virtues were well accepted and became the standard for

common people to judge how good their kings and government officials were.

Through the influence of Confucianism, sacrificial rituals have turned from blood to non-blood so the rituals could become morally correct sacrifice, which is an important symbol of civilization. Confucianism remained to be the core of Chinese civilization until the communist swayed its foundation during the Cultural Revolution in 1965 when Mainland China was replaced by Maoist thoughts. Still the ideology of Confucius is deeply rooted in the culture and people's everyday life and it retains its superiority in Chinese civilization until today.

In Voltaire's The Orphan of China, Confucian virtues are presented through Zamti's characteristics; Genghis Khan's change of heart is intended to demonstrate the power of the universal principles found in Confucianism to create the oneness of human kind. The changes that Voltaire makes from the original play, The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, can be explained and understood more thoroughly after understanding Voltaire's ideal civilization. He embraces virtue and morality in Chinese civilization, but The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao does not contain enough qualities of his ideal civilization, therefore we see great changes in his adaptation, The Orphan of China. The ability to reason is an example. Voltaire explains why he makes the changes in his adaptation in a letter to Richelieu:

The Chinese piece is indeed very deficient with regard to all manners; no

sentiment, eloquence, reason or passion in it; and yet, as I said before, the work is superior to anything we could produce in former ages. (Orphan of China 178)

Voltaire implements the three unities into his play because he wants to present the idea of reason from the seventeenth-century literary form, and connect it with morals and virtues found in Chinese society that express his philosophical theory. His comments in the letter are intended to point out, not only the lack of three unities in the original Chinese classic, but more importantly, to criticize the contemporary French and European society which have already abandoned the classical works with these qualities of sentiment, eloquence, passion, and most of all, reason. Theater is where Voltaire begins his literary career with his first production OEdipe in 1718. From then to his last work Irène in 1778, he composed fifty-five plays which included different topics and originalities and his consistency in following the three unities was evident in all his plays. The Orphan of China, along with the other fifty-four plays, was intended to restore the virtue of reason from the previous century.

The origin of the The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao is based on an historical event in the twelfth century. When Voltaire adapts the play into The Orphan of China, he moves the time to two centuries later during the time the Mongol Empire is occupying China. The history of the Mongol Empire is not only well-known

because it is the largest empire on land, but it is also a great threat for the Christian societies in Europe. Voltaire uses the Mongol Empire's invasion of China to remind France of its fear for the Mongol Empire, a powerful non-Christian nation, in order to urge French society to shift to more secular form of government.

In The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, after the death of the Tchao family, General Han, Gongsun Chujiu, and the only son of Cheng Ying, die one after another in order to save the orphan of the Tchao's. On the contrary, no blood is shed in Voltaire's play. This difference, along with changing the time to centuries later, demonstrate Voltaire's pattern of the progression of becoming civilized. Under the influence of Confucianism, the sacrificial system in China changes from blood to non-blood rituals gradually. It also shows the maturing process of the Chinese civilization. Political law and religious rituals are evolving into morality and virtue. Voltaire's play is designed to capture the progression of humanity and civilization. Vrooman describes Voltaire's intention when the artist was composing his tragedies: "The philosophic spirit of Voltaire's age found its way into his tragedies. He emphasized tragedy's didactic aim, its ability not only to move but to improve. Tragedy thus became a means for propaganda, particularly moral propaganda." (57) In Voltaire's theatrical world, The Orphan of China not only expresses Voltaire's love for the seventeenth-century literary form which represents reason, but also

demonstrates the ideal society and civilization.

Both sacrificial and judicial systems play very important roles in Chinese civilization. Sacrificial practices played an important role in the early stage of Chinese civilization. In its maturing process, sacrificial rituals are transforming into morals and ethics, which are indispensable for a civilized society and important for adaptation to the judicial system, whose influence is increasing during this process. In the play of The Orphan of China, Voltaire praises the well-established judicial system through the conversations among the characters. Meanwhile, he preserves the spirit of sacrifice which is the essence of morality in Chinese society, but not the practice of sacrifice. Voltaire illustrates a civilizing society which diminishes its dependency on blood sacrificial practice and increases the efficacy of a legal system through the development of reason.

Violence in Scapegoat Mechanism and Judicial System

As a judicial system becomes more and more important for a society, altering rituals and putting blood sacrifice practices to an end is a necessary process in the development of that civilization. Practices of law and blood sacrifice have almost identical functions for the human community: to control violence and stop the cycle of vengeance.

Vengeance is a problem that exists in both primitive and civilized societies.

Whenever the spirit of revenge breaks out, the society faces a great menace because the cycle of blood-shed cannot be stopped. Vengeance professes to be an act of reprisal, and every reprisal calls for another reprisal. René Girard explains the impact of vengeance on society:

Vengeance ... is an interminable, infinitely repetitive process. Every time it turns up in some part of the community, it threatens to involve the whole social body. There is the risk that the act of vengeance will initiate a chain reaction whose consequences will quickly prove fatal to any society of modest size. The multiplication of reprisals instantaneously puts the very existence of a society in jeopardy, and that is why it is universally proscribed. (14)

Vengeance can cause great damage to a society when there is not a power to stop the cycle. This occurrence is portrayed in both The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao and The Orphan of China.

In the original Chinese play, when the Chancellor kills over three hundred of the Tchao family, this cycle begins. People who are aware of Tu Angu's wickedness and malice feel the need for vengeance, but the orphan is too young to do anything, at first. The General Han Jue, the Doctor Cheng Ying, Cheng Ying's son, and the

Government Official Gongsun Chujiu sacrifice and give their lives to protect the orphan so he can grow up and eventually kill Tu Anku for vengeance. In The Orphan of China, Genghis Khan feels the need for vengeance because he was despised as a beggar in China and was rejected from marrying his love, Idame, so he wages war against China as revenge.

The desire and to act on revenge causes great damage to each individual involved in the process and society as a whole; this process is obvious in The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao and The Orphan of China. Although many aspects of revenge resemble or echo the concept of justice, revenge usually has a more injurious than harmonious goal. The goal of revenge usually consists of forcing the perceived wrongdoer to suffer the same pain or greater than was originally inflicted.

Vengeance exists in both primitive and civilized society because it deals with human nature's weakness. Society must then come together to develop a system to deal with the issues of vengeance and violence, this is where the basic functions of the sacrificial system and the judicial system originate. Under the sacrificial system, in sacrificial rituals, the animal becomes the "scapegoat". The function of the scapegoat is to take upon itself the sins and crimes of the community and then to be sacrificed as a symbol of cleansing the society from these offenses. According to Girard, humans are driven by desire for that which another has or wants (mimetic

desire). This causes a triangulation of the desire and results in conflict between the desiring parties. This mimetic contagion increases to a point where society is at risk; it is at this point that the scapegoat mechanism is triggered. One person is singled out as the cause of the trouble and is expelled or killed by the group. In The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, Tu Angu is that person. His death becomes necessary to bring the society back into balance. Even though he is not an innocent scapegoat who takes upon the sin of others, he is indeed the sinner therefore a sinful scapegoat who starts the conflict and causes the deaths of all others in the play. He becomes the sinful scapegoat to achieve balance and the sacrifice functions to quell violence within the community and to prevent conflicts from erupting. (Violence and Sacred 14)

The role of the orphan is to ensure that Tu Angu will be killed and achieve balance through a deserving scapegoat. At the end of The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, the orphan is able to kill Tu Angu to avenge his own family and also the death of Cheng Ying, Cheng's son, Han Jue, and Gongsun Chujiu. The new Duke who appears to be wise, recognizes that Tu Angu deserves to be killed according to the will of the public. Even though the orphan has no civil power and legal right to execute Tu Angu, the new duke announces to the public that the orphan did what is just, and dubs the orphan with his family name, Tchao. Through this process, the orphan's morally unsuitable act in killing Tu Angu is legitimized and no longer an act of

vengeance. This act of the Duke ensures the vengeance cycle can be stopped by the judicial system and the notion of justice is introduced to society, a missing element in primitive societies. Through anthropological research, Girard discovers the lack of justice in primitive society:

The absence of a judicial system in primitive societies has been confirmed by ethnologists. Malinowski concludes that the ‘criminal’ aspect of law in savage communities is perhaps even vaguer than the civil one; the idea of ‘justice’ in our sense [is] hardly applicable and the means of restoring a disturbed tribal equilibrium [is] slow and cumbersome.” (Violence and the Sacred 18)

In primitive society, men spend the majority of their time hunting and searching for food to meet their basic physical needs. Their interactions among/between each other are very limited. The ability to reason, negotiate and compromise with people to reach a consensus is not a necessary skill to survive, but, the problem of vengeance is still there. When there is a conflict among them, usually because of mimetic desire according to Girard, a way is needed to resolve the disturbance of violence.

The scapegoat mechanism is what breaks the cycle of vengeance by introducing “sacred violence”, and is the beginning of the sacrificial system. The purpose of the scapegoat mechanism is to decrease vengeance and violence in primitive communities.

In civilized societies, the judicial system is designed to serve for the same purpose.

Girard explains the relationship between the sacrificial and judicial systems:

It is significant that sacrifice has languished in societies with a firmly established judicial system—ancient Greece and Rome, for example. In such societies the essential purpose of sacrifice has disappeared. It may still be practiced for a while, but in diminished and debilitated form.

And it is precisely under such circumstances that sacrifice usually come to our notice, and our doubts as to the ‘real’ function of religious institutions are only reinforced. (Violence and the Sacred 18)

When a society is mature enough in their civilization to develop a judicial system, the need for the sacrificial system is diminished, because the judicial system is a more efficient way to cope with vengeance and violence than the sacrificial system.

Girard analyses the effectiveness of the judicial system in controlling violence:

The judicial authority is beholden to no one. It is thus at the disposal of everyone, and it is universally respected. The judicial system never hesitates to confront violence head on, because it possesses a monopoly on the means of revenge. Thanks to this monopoly, the system generally succeeds in stifling the impulse to vengeance rather than spreading or aggravating it, as a similar intervention on the part of the aggrieved party

would invariably do. ... In the final analysis, then, the judicial system and the institution of sacrifice share the same function, but the judicial system is infinitely more effective. (Violence and Sacred 23)

In a civil society, the vicious circle of vengeance has been broken by the judicial system. The system does not suppress vengeance; rather, it effectively limits it to a single act of reprisal, enacted by a sovereign authority specializing in this particular function. The decisions of the judiciary are invariably presented as the final word on vengeance. It is evident that social institutions have taken over the role religion played in primitive society, only more efficiently.

In the environment of a primitive society, as separate individuals, the chance to develop their societal potential for reason is restricted. In addition, sacrificial rituals in primitive society are always aligned with religion, which usually encourages people to develop faith, thus the development of reason is hindered. As an historian, Voltaire has observed the efficacy of the judicial system, not only in controlling the outbreak of violence, but also in bringing people together to reason. Voltaire believes the ability to reason is the way to find ultimate truths and this ability is a potential everyone has, but, it requires development. He embraces the idea of civilization because men are then situated in a complex society where plenty of opportunities are provided for them to develop this potential to reason

When Voltaire stands up for reason, he is not opposing the sacrificial system in primitive societies. He considers performing sacrificial rituals in the primitive state as part human progression but definitely not the end to becoming civilized. He recognizes the contributions from the less civilized sacrificial system to more civilized moral virtues in a judicial system, but disagrees with Rousseau's nostalgia in not moving on from the past. The combination of the high standard of morals and an efficient system to maintain the function of society is Voltaire's ideal civilization. He sees these qualities in Chinese society more than any other civilizations he encounters. Through The Orphan of China, he is able to introduce his ideal civilization to his audience.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have compared the original Chinese classic, The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao, by Ji Junxiang, and Voltaire's eighteenth-century adaptation, The Orphan of China, and then analyzed the changes in light of Voltaire's interpretation of Rousseau. In particular, I have argued that Voltaire uses his adaptation of the play to illustrate his ideal civilization. I have shown how his play begins with the traditional Chinese sacrificial system and then evolves to his ideal judicial system.

Song analyses the intention of Voltaire as he writes The Orphan of China:

Parmi les sujets d'études consacrés au thème de la Chine chez Voltaire, la pièce dramatique L'Orphelin de la Chine occupe une place privilégiée. De nombreux travaux sur la transformation du contenu de la pièce, etc... sa véritable intention lors de la création de cette pièce, car son Orphelin est en réalité très éloigné de la pièce originale, que ce soit pour le contenu, le style, ou même la leçon philosophique. (264)

When The Orphan of China is analyzed, many critics have interpreted the changes Voltaire makes from The Orphan of the Mansion Tchao as his reaction to contemporary society and limitation of understanding in Chinese history and culture. They contend that Voltaire is: 1. Propagating the spirit of the Enlightenment to the Europeans through the Chinese people; 2. Refuting Rousseau because he condemns

civilization as the source of men's suffering and pain; and 3. Lacking in understanding of Chinese history during the Mongolian's invasion. These points do touch on the style and content of his changes as Voltaire states in his letter to Richelieu, but as for a philosophical lesson, these critics have not yet reached far enough because the analysis of the sacrificial and judicial systems is lacking, and this information is crucial for understanding Voltaire's philosophical theory.

As a *philosophe*, Voltaire stresses the importance of reason to help humans searching for ultimate truth. He discusses his "belief" in God because it is what most people believe to be the way to find truths. For Voltaire, the answers to men's questions are never found through faith in God or religion. Instead, it serves as a vehicle for each intellectual individual to understand the ultimate truth which is greater than the idea of God. He talks about God not as a religionist, but as a humanist. His aim is to help human beings in their journey to truths. In Voltaire's own search for his ideal, he discovers that Confucius has done in China what he desires to achieve in Europe. The transformation from sacrificial to judicial practices is successful. Everyone, from king to vulgar, is trying to achieve the same values and morality and progress together towards the same goal. The whole of society is integrated by the standard of Confucius' teaching. In The Orphan of China, Voltaire illustrates his ideal civilization in and demonstrates the essence of civilization

which he loves. To say Voltaire wants to be the Confucius of France would not be far from his ambition as a *philosophe*.

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