

A Hybrid China

Description

One of the major constants that can be perceived in Chinese history is its enormous capacity to absorb and digest external influence. The Mongol invasion and the creation of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), with the Great Kublai Kan at the lead, or the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911) have been frequently mentioned as paradigmatic. However, it could also be said that the very Han people, the overwhelming majority of the population in China, is nothing but a melting pot of the diverse miscegenation conformed throughout the centuries.

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This symbiosis is not a thing of the past, or part of a unique field. As an example, the demographic reality of Chinese cities is also hybrid, at least in a double sense. First of all, because the urban explosion that China has experienced in recent decades has produced a singular inner-city landscape combining both avant-garde and monotone buildings with the survival of rural manners in their human geography. It is the *rururban* landscape that greatly seduces large amounts of westerners when they visit China's large cities and succeed at avoiding the broad avenues. Second, because that urban population, representing 52.16% of the total, lives with a double status, reflected in that other 17.3% who lack the desired residency permit without which they cannot have equal access to basic services, during a transition that is expected to be long and complex.

In the economic field, the coexistence of formulas associated to both capitalism and socialism is the norm, with regimes that do not differ too much in some cases. Planification continues to be a key instrument in an economic policy that does not deny the value of the market. Social organisations (including unions), universities or hospitals (or the army until recently) have created companies to strengthen their budgets in the same manner that public companies have created others that participate in the market in similar conditions to the private companies, although they usually benefit from their promoters' comfortable status. That interaction indicates a genuine and rather generalized dynamic which achieves its utmost expression in the advocacy of a mixed property economy in a large part of the public sector to promote a new wave of transformations.

This, then, has an institutional reflection in the sequence of organization and instruments intervening in the administration, be it the Central Committee of the Party, the National Commission for Development and Reforms, the quinquennial plans, the labour conferences and diverse fora. Although some regard these as an expression of an endless ceremony of confusion, others claim they generate consensus and lengthen the bases for decisions, even at the risk of favouring symbiosis. This is, however, how they have managed to advance much faster than us in many fields.

Escaping from bipolarities, systemic hybridism has planted itself firmly as a decisive note in the reform process in China, with different levels of permeation depending on the area, the highest being in the economic field. Its manifestations in the political field are fundamentally a first internal circle. This is very well exemplified in an expression that has gained ground in the official language: Neither of them should be rejected. Maoism should not be rejected to seek the reform; the reform should not be rejected based on the argument of Maoism. Far from expressing opportunism, or only opportunism, it is a cultural matter that makes it easily understandable, and which explains, for example, the willingness to peer into everything coming from the outside and adapt it to their preferences and needs, a very pertinent phenomenon nowadays, during China's most open moment in its millenary history. This also develops from the core and superior conviction of its culture and from an inclusive will which is not automatic or blind, as it would if it resulted from an inferiority complex.

The very "socialism with Chinese peculiarities" is the net expression of an ideological hybrid, just like the willingness for bringing to life a legalist culture that will elevate the value of the norm and its empire instead of the discretionary nature of

power constitutes an example of partial integration of western discourse in an uncomfortable field, even though it rejects additional consequences.

Hybridism is, after all, what prevents common cataclysms when the maximalisms, no matter what banner they come under, impose their dogmas, even when the collusions generated can facilitate the accumulation of obstacles, aggravate contradictions and delay the solutions required. Nevertheless, in the difficult internal balances between the rivalries of the different groups, hybridism is an imperative more than an option.

In short, in China, even rice is hybrid, thanks to Yuan Longping's discovery, whose production still breaks records and is grown in more than a hundred countries. Hybridism does not have a bad press. On the contrary, it could be said that what weakens is the obsession for purity, which requires an intelligent and flexible attitude based on the ability and willingness for absorption through adaptation. It is their natural state, with deep cultural roots, and it will stay.

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China e o mundo chinés

ETIQUETAS

China CPC Hybrid socialism with Chinese peculiarities Maoism

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Inglés

Date Created

Maio 20, 2014

Meta Fields

Autoria : 3717

Datapublicacion : 2014-05-20 00:00:00