



## The Cultural Conflicts and Integration Between East and West From the Movie *The Treatment*

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### Abstract

This article which is on the basis of the movie *The Treatment*, mainly demonstrates the cultural difference between China and the west, describes its difference in various aspects as well as the causes of it. And ultimately it also figures out the ways to solve the cultural conflicts on the base of that.

**Key words:** *The treatment*; Cultural differences between east and west; Cultural conflicts and integration; Integration

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### INTRODUCTION

Guasha is one of the nature cures of traditional Chinese medicine. Fengkui Zhang, a medical scientist, depicted the causes and the symptoms of Guasha in his Heat injury encyclopedia. In China, Guasha experts must attend the unified state examination organized by Human Resources and Social Security and National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and get the scrapping of traditional Chinese medicine division profession qualification certificate. While in the west, Guasha is not approved, even considered as illegal.

### 1. THE DEFINITION OF GUASHA AND ITS PURPOSE

Guasha is a kind of external therapies to treat internal disease. Based on the theory of meridians and visceral outward manifestations, using tailor-made board made of buffalo horn and lubrication oil, scraping on the skin where veins and arteries circulate, thereby it is widely utilized. Guasha treatment is also widely used in the scope of miscellaneous diseases, external infection, orthopedics, etc..

According to Chinese medical theory, when the internal organs have certain problems, the external skin especially the both sides of the spine will have pathology reaction point. Guasha treatment is aiming at the pathology reaction points, because stimulating certain part of body or skin of acupuncture point will cause the relevant reaction of the whole body, by doing so, this positive stimulation can be transmitted or reflected to the internal organs by passages and channels which we call “jing” and “mai”. “jing” and “mai” are passages through which vital energy circulates, regulating bodily functions. Many such passages together form a network, along which the acupuncture points are distributed. And this stimulation can inspire and adjust the disordered physical function, balance yin and yang and the functions among organs.

Guasha treatment in this way, achieves the goal of treatment and strengthening the disease-resistance. And Guasha treatment has been practiced for more than at least two thousand years, which is proved to be safe, reliable and non side-effect.

### 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE MOVIE *THE TREATMENT*

It has been a constant topic whether different cultures should confront or talk to each other. In recent years, a lot of films and television programs emerged reflecting

culture shock, culture conflicts and cultural integration. *The Treatment*, *Pushing Hands*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Sense and Sensibility* are among them. *The Treatment* directed by Zheng Xiaolong is a typical one in which the famous actor and actress Liang Jiahui and Jiang Wenli impersonate Xu Datong and Jianning respectively. The movie mainly shows the audience the mistaken concept people in the west have toward Guasha, reflecting the dilemma of American Ethnic Chinese resulting from the cultural conflicts. Finally, it is sincerity and love that make everybody stay together. It is a good movie promoting the cultural communication between east and west.

The story happened in St. Louis, a beautiful city by the Mississippi River, America. Xu Datong, a Chinese American, has been in America for 8 years and he has a successful career and a happy family. He told the audience at the award presentation ceremony which is held annually, "I love America. I finally realize my American dream." But what came next shocked Datong from his dreams. His 5-year-old son Dennis got sick, so Grandpa just Guasha on the kid because he didn't understand the English names of the medicines on the drug bottle. Guasha is one of the nature cures of traditional Chinese medicine which have been practiced for thousands of years, while this exactly became the evidence in court against Datong for abusing his own son. While in court, the witnesses and testimony came one after another which made Datong and his wife inexcusable. Because the western medicine theory can't explain traditional Chinese medicine.

The judge deprived Datong of his guardianship over Denis. Parent-child separation, marital separation, ...all these things came continuously like nightmares, all of which destroyed a happy family. The lawsuit smashed Datong's American dream which he has been fighting for years. On Christmas night, Datong wanted to see his son so badly that he dressed up as the Santa Claus and climbed up the building from the outside toward the 10th floor, his own home, which aroused the attention of the police...

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### 3. THE CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN GUASHA

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#### 3.1 The Family Education Concept Between China and America

At the beginning of the movie, Datong's son, Dennis hit Paul, his boss' kid. Datong hit Dennis on the head and asked him to apologize to Paul without asking any reason. Datong apologized to his boss for Dennis' behavior, while he told his boss later in the movie, "The reason I beat my son is for your face concern, to show my respect to you." In China, people value their face most. It is considered disrespectful for the leader if his son was hit by the son of his subordinates. What the parent should do be to rebuke or even beat their children in the face of people to save the

face of the leaders. The Chinese family education can be embodied in the children's moral aspects, that is, to know the seniority rules and to be kind and obedient. Father kind, children filial idea also reflects that Father and son are not equal in a family. In China, sons are supposed to listen to his father, no matter what. The father's words equals to law to some extent. Therefore, the father-son relationship is not that equal in which son shows more respect to the father instead of love.

While for the westerners, it is difficult to understand this kind of concept. Quinlan thought that boy would be boys, and the adults do not necessarily get involved in it. He was shocked at Datong's behavior. What shocked Quinlan most was Datong's reply when he was supposed to give. "The reason I beat my son is for your face concern, to show my respect to you." In the west, this kind of relationship is much equal. Father can be friends with his son. Children show their love to their parents. We can often hear them say "I love you". Parents and children are more equal in American families. In the west, people believe that they were born equal, whether fathers or sons, they are God's people. They do not value the inherent relationship between father and son, instead, they value equality. In America, child abuse is illegal, even your own child.

#### 3.2 Different Attitude Toward Abortion

In China, there is no debate about whether the baby is a human being, and Chinese do not view abortion as a big human right problem or a grave evil. When there is any danger for a woman to give birth, if the husband chooses abortion, the child will die, but his wife will be saved, then they can have another baby. So when Jian Ning is in danger in giving birth to her son, Datong prefers to save his wife rather than his son. There is an old saying in China, "As long as the green hill lasts, there will always be wood to burn." It is just "the common sense" to him. In China, there is not a debate whether abortion is legal or not. In the past, the feudal society held that only men can continue the family line and the daughter will be other man's wife. And a pregnant girl often causes abortion, because the family still abort girls, because they prefer boys, especially in the rural areas. Second, in order to control China's population, the government encourages contraception and abortion for those families with one child, and this policy is protected by law. Third, it is considered immoral in China that women get pregnant without getting married, so women always choose abortion. However, this kind of immorality is different from that of America.

In the movie, the nurse Mrs. Rico in the movie for Jian Ning holds the strong belief of pro-life, so she accuses Datong about abusing his own child because he gives the instruction of aborting his son to save his wife:

The prosecution lawyer: "I'd like to call the second witness, Mrs. Consuelo Rico. Mrs. Rico was the attending

nurse for Dennis Xu in hospital. Mrs. Rico, you were the attendance the day Dennis was born?”

Rico: “Yes. I’ll never forget that day as long as I live.”

The prosecution lawyer: “Please tell us what happened?”

Rico: “Gladly. That day an Oriental pregnant came. Her name was... en...Jian Ning Xu. She was in bad shape, her water was broken, and the baby was in the wrong position. I was instructed by the doctor to call her husband, because she may have emergency section.”

The prosecution lawyer: “So Mr. Xu can’t even present for the birth of his first child? The inheritor of his life blood?”

Rico: “I had to page him. Because apparently he was in a meeting, which was more important than the birth of this child. This is what his wife told us. Anyway he finally returned his page, and after explaining everything what was happening, he had no regard for the life of child, he said ‘save the wife, not the child.’

Xu: “That is the common sense. 留得青山在, 不怕没柴烧. Your honor, I mean, if my wife lives, we can always have more children, but if she dies...”

Rico: “You even don’t give the child the chance to live? You Orientals are barbaric.”

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Over five years, Mrs. Rico still remembers the details of the situation on that day, and she will never forget it. What impress her so deeply? Abortion continues to be a highly contentious issue in the U.S., with few signs of abatement. Debates about abortion have served to polarize not only the Catholic community but also the whole society. The struggle over abortion is a cultural issue.

According to the Catholic Catechism, Catholic should be pro-life. Pro-life against abortion and other actions that destroy human being’s life. Catholicism teaches abortion doesn’t just destroy a clump of cells or blobs of tissue, but kills human being. Life is dominated only by God, no one has the right to take other’s life. No matter you are a scientist, a student, a mother or a fetus, everyone has the holy life directly bestowed from God. In the tradition of Christianity, fetus’s life is fully protected. Abortion despoils of innocent life, so it is wrong on moral. The Christians have always condemned abortion as a grave evil. In the Bible, it maintains that children are the fruit of marriage, benefiting from parents, the family and the society. In Mrs. Rico’s eyes, Datong is not only a neglect father, but a killer, who steals the holy right from God. Her consideration cannot be deprived from America’s cultural environment.

### 3.3 American Legal Concept Vs Chinese Traditional Culture

In the movie, “Guasha” was the clue for the whole story. According to Datong’s father, “Guasha has been practiced in China for thousands of years. Why is it so hard to make it clear in America?” Actually, it is very simple.

In American culture, there is no such treatment which makes people look “black and blue” on the back. And there is no such terms as “jing” “qi” “shen” “jing” “mai” explaining the physiology of human body. In America, it is impossible for anyone to have a better understanding toward this treatment. If this is not abuse, then what is abuse? The law can’t produce anything beyond culture. So it is normal that guasha treatment is considered to be illegal in America. On the contrary, it is totally normal in China. Only cultural differences can explain all the thing that has happened.

In the movie, Datong’s trouble came from the ignorance of his boss, the Child Welfare officers and the Judge toward Guasha treatment. Then came Datong’s turning point, that is, his boss went to the China Town in person to experience Guasha himself. He was shocked at the three scars on his back the same as what appeared on Dennis’ back and he didn’t feel hurt. All these convinced him that Datong didn’t abuse his own son. Quinlan and the Child Welfare officer withdrew the appeal toward Datong on his abuse to his son. So finally Dennis returned to his parents. The Americans have come to realize their misunderstandings toward Guasha and understand Datong’s behaviors. The conflict of law resulted from culture difference finally be solved through communication and understanding between the two cultures.

### 3.4 The Chinese Sense Vs the Westerner’s Sensibility

In China, friendly relationship ranks only second or equals to the relationship among family members. Honesty and trust are very important in a friendship. Friends can help you out no when you are in trouble. If you betray your friends and do something to harm the interests of your friends, you will be condemned by the whole society.

In the Treatment, when Datong’s family was involved in the lawsuit, he asked his best friend boss Quinlan for help. Although his boss dealt mostly in intellectual property right cases, Datong still trusted him because he treated his boss as a real friend. Datong thought his boss would try to defend him, no matter what. However, he was convinced by the picture that the child was under child abuse for quite a long time and refused to defend Datong out there. The westerners are rational rather than emotional. On the processing of business, they still obey the law. Honesty is the best policy. However, it is unacceptable for Datong, because he thought that his friend betrayed him. Although his boss explained to him over and over later and asked for his forgiveness, Datong still refused to talk to him. Datong, as a Chinese, thinks that it is the right thing to do, that is, to break up with his boss.

In this movie, the Chinese sense and the westerner’s sensibility conflicted violently. Later, Quinlan figured out

the truth by experiencing Guasha himself in Chinatown. He then told the lawyer and judge what he had been through and eventually helped Datong's family out. They became friends again which also shows the common characters between Chinese friendship and western one, that is, friends should help each other, never give up on each other.

#### 4. STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNICATION AND INTEGRATION, PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE AND WESTERN CULTURE

In the western culture, individualism protrudes the social problems, while in the Chinese culture, the idea of Inaction set our country back decades or even hundreds of years compared to the western developed countries. Therefore, by learning from each other, this is the only way for the eastern and western culture to regain vitality and new life.

##### 4.1 Criticizing the Ideology of Two Extremes: Completely Reject Western Culture and Overall Westernization

The Chinese scholars have made great efforts in finding out the solution to the difference between eastern and western culture. Both totally repudiate and totally westernization should be criticized. The Chinese culture fully demonstrates its charm in a time of extreme individualism and belief crisis. If we are totally westernized and abandon our traditional culture, our traditional social structure will be damaged and social politics, economy and Chinese culture will be imbalanced. In the process of reform and opening up in China, the values of collectivism fully arouse the enthusiasm of the people from all walks of life; enhance the cohesion of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups; promote the development of reform and opening up. The achievements of China's reform and opening up prove that western culture is not the sole reference to modern culture and global culture system; "western center theory" can't hold water.

##### 4.2 It Is the Only Way Out to Strengthen the Communication of Chinese and Western Cultural Development.

With the development of world economic integration, the exchanges between the peoples from all over the world become more and more close, not only in economy, but also in culture. Economic cooperation will inevitably lead to cultural communication, Cultural exchanges and, in turn, have the effect of promoting economic cooperation. But various cultural differences between different ethnic groups brought a lot of difficulties in all aspects of communication. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen cultural communication and integration between nations.

Cross-cultural communication among different countries is the only way to keep all the culture dynamic. The communication between different cultures has been repeatedly proved milestone in the development of human civilization. When we compare with the two cultures:

Not to determine the relative merits of Chinese and western cultures, but to indicate the mainstream tendency of two cultures. It will be very convenient for the people from different cultural backgrounds to understand, to communicate and to learn from each other and to build an ideal human civilization.

As a result of the limitation of various factors, most of us cannot experience the cultural differences abroad. The only way for us to know the western cultures is to get access to the books and movies. This article introduced two well-known movies, analyzed the cultural differences, exploring the causes of all these differences and presented the solutions to them.

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