

Past versus future

Veronica Chio

‘Old people are wise.’ I always believe in this statement. Almost everything we learn as a kid is from our parents and seniors. And where did they acquire the knowledge? It is a recapitulation of learning. Knowledge and wisdom do not appear out of thin air, nor are they invented by scholars. They are preserved and passed down from the past to our generation.

Clearly, we cannot deny that the wisdom of our ancestors has offered a helping hand in the progress of social development. Even when we look into ourselves, we can discover that our personality and behaviour are a reflection of how we are brought up. We alone are the work created by legacy preserved from the past. We have our family legacy. Without preserving the gifts from our ancestors, we do not have the honour to shape a future and preserve it for our descendents. Family legacy simply cannot be abandoned.

Coming to a wider view, we may sometimes fail to contemplate the fact that from the customs our society retains to the traditional festivals we celebrate, there is preservation from the past. Think of what the society will be without the morals or customs adopted from the past! Do you think that we can still create and look into the future when we abandon our legacy? Do you think there will still be civilisation when we fail to preserve pieces of the past? Don't forget, the so called ‘development’ of a society is resulted from observing and improving happenings of the past.

‘We learn from our experiences.’ This is another old-fashioned, yet authentic statement proving the significance of preserving the past. We often make mistakes, and it is mistake that gives us a lesson as we continue the journey to a bright future. Old people are wise not because they are more intelligent than we. What make them wise are the experiences they have accumulated in their years. Listening to the pieces of advice of our grandparents, studying the sayings of Confucius, learning the quotations of the historical figures, etc. are already acts of learning from the past. So you can see that the past is not as useless or distant as we think. We are already living with the past; it is integrated with our modern lives. Preserving and learning from the past is just another way of equipping ourselves for the future, isn't it?

The past shapes the future, and the future redefines the past. Only when we preserve our legacy and civilisation will we successfully embrace the future. Only when we live with the past can we look into the future. Remember, the past helps to shape the future, and the future is developed from the past. After all, that is what preserving the past is about.

