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The 1960s and 1970s were eventful times. The world emerging from the World War II was riddled, in which were looking forward to peace and security. But good days never last long, soon the Cold War and Vietnam War began. Meanwhile, historic things came consecutively: Martin Luther King delivered its speech “I have a dream”; President John Kennedy was assassinated, Apollo Project was completed……Shocked by so many things, people were lost, despaired and disillusioned. The beat generation evolved into something new, hippies.

Hippie movement spanned across 1960s and 1970s. They used drugs, slept in tents, played loud rock music, had group sex in the public, and did everything demonstrating their identity as non-conformists. They bid defiance to social norms, conventions and governments. Peace and love were the only things they wanted.

However, in Chinese history, there had been some men doing the same things, thousands of years earlier than the hippies did. We call them 魏晋名士，a tribe of literati in the Wei and Jin Dynasties. We may wonder, what’s the underlying reason for the two groups of non-conformists doing the same things against disparate backgrounds?

First, it is necessary to give a brief introduction of the historical context in their days. The collapse of Eastern Han was accompanied by wars and uprisings that led to the establishment of the kingdom of Wei, Shu Han, and Wu, while many scholars lost their lives in the precarious court politics.

To escape the quagmire of court life, some high-born figures retreated to their large estates in southern forests, gathering with friends on delicately carved pavilions, feasting and drinking, portraying themselves as hermits and wallowing in such a lifestyle just like hippies in the west. Those people and their art works were deviant, rakish, religious and disengaged, and such a manner was called 魏晋风度.

Though an age of instability, it remained a time of flourishing arts and the spread of Taoism and Buddhism, when the Neo-Taoism (玄学) was initiated to dispute the omnipresence of the Tao. Most of the Wei and Jin hippies became devotees of the Neo-Taoism to detach themselves from worldly affairs.

When it comes to Hippies in China, Zhulin Qixian deserve the reputation. Now I’d like brief you on some eccentric habits of hippies in Wei and Jin Dynasties.

Firstly, taking drugs. Many people in this period indulged in wushisan. After taking it, their skin became so hot that they had to take off their clothes and moved around for fear of their skin coming off.

Another leisure activity is drinking wine. Liu Ling, addicted to alcohol, was at all times followed by a servant carrying a wine bottle and a shovel. The purpose of the wine is obvious. Liu Ling liked to drink. But why the shovel? He instructed the servant to bury him with the shovel if he died on the way owing to excessive drinking. In his drunken state, he also liked to loiter around his home naked.

Their behaviors seem to be weird. But during the politically fraught time, they just wished to enjoy a rustic but simple life.

In a chaotic world, people had their salvation in artistic activities.

Firstly, music. The hippie movement is a cradle for great pop musicians. People in Wei and Jin dynasty loved music as well. Large ritual instrument was replaced by portable ones like Qin, Zheng and Flute. Wei Jin literati would bring these instruments with them, and play music as a way to express their own emotions and attitudes. Secondly, literature. In *Howl*, Allen Ginsberg depicted a generation of people being tormented by ideological conflicts and wars. The literature works in Wei and Jin dynasties have similar themes. Ran Ji once wrote that he had been “wakling on thin ice” for his whole life, which is a metaphor for his anxiety. Thirdly, public gatherings. Held in New York on August 15–18, 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair is the crown jewl of hippy movement. In East Jin dynasty, a similar event was held in 353 AD: Lanting Gathering. During this event, people were sitting along a winding creek, and rice-wine cups were floating on it. Whenever a cup stopped, the one closest to the cup was required to drink it and write a poem.

Why do the culture, art and lifestyle of Chinese hippies in Wei and Jin dynasties from over a thousand years ago mater in today’s world?

2020 is a turbulent year. Just like what the literati in Wei-Jin dynasties and American hippies were faced with, the humanity also has a war going on in 2020, the war against COVID-19 that has cost over a million lives across the world. Many people fell into depression and even attempted suicide because they felt they were alone.

However, if we rid the thought of time as being irreversible, we will find ourselves in the company of hippies in the 1960s-1970s and sages in Wei and Jin dynasties in spite of their different nationalities and times. In fact, even though anti-globalization sentiments are on the rise and the Eastern culture has been recently clashing with the Western culture, we as a humanity are essentially the same and may face similar problems and challenges, and maybe looking at similar situations in the history will offer us some strength to keep going.