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## The Comparison between the Luxuries in China and Europe in 17<sup>th</sup> Century

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### Abstract:

*The luxurious consumption of China increased fast in recent years and got much concern. At least for several years, China consumed the most part of the luxurious goods. In Europe, some thinkers gave the riveting evaluations for luxury. Wemer Sombart's famous work *Luxury and Capitalism* describes and analyses luxury, and believes that luxury is the origin of capitalism. There were also some Chinese thinkers assessed the luxury phenomenon, and literary works described that. According to the opinion of Wemer Sombart, the luxurious consumption of China could accelerate the economic development. If China consumed more luxurious goods, the economy of China would develop faster. However, the reality seems not coincident with his theory. The paper compares the luxurious consumptions and the attitudes toward luxury in China and Europe respectively to the problem. There were luxury tides in the history of both ancient China and Europe, especially around 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, the attitudes of China and Europe toward luxury were different, especially after 17<sup>th</sup> century. The consumption pattern were different after 17<sup>th</sup> century accordingly. The differences derive from the different economic basis in China and Europe. Luxury is the result of the development of commerce, instead of the contrary. The current luxurious consumption condition seems not last long.*

**Keywords:** *Luxury, luxurious consumption, China, Luxury and Capitalism, economic basis*

### 1. Introduction

There is increasing interest in the luxury activity in recent years since the China economy rose in recent years. According to the report of *Fortune Magazine*, China people has become the biggest consumer group in the world without controversy. In 2013, the consumption of the luxury goods amounted to \$280 billion in domestic market, and \$740 billion in overseas market. China people had bought the 47% of the total luxury goods in the world. (Liu, C. 2014) Before the reforming and opening of China in 1979, the percentage of China luxury goods consumption in the world was very little. After the reforming and opening policy implemented, the luxury goods consumption increased by year, which became a sign of the China economic progress. Such luxury goods consumption increase has appeared in history of China and Europe. It would be meaningful to understand the differences between the luxury goods consumptions of China and the Europe.

Before the reforming and opening up, there was rarely the luxury consumption in China. For a long period China was in a situation of living materials scarcity. Even from 1959 until 1961, the great famine erupted, and lots of people were starved to death. So the luxury consumption was regarded as immoral. In 1990s, some people who had certain social status and wealth but still were not the middle class appeared. They pursued the living taste and focused on the enjoyment of material and spirit. They were luxurious in the background that many people could fulfill the food and clothing demanding barely. But after 2000s, the rich Chinese people had a massive increase. They were interested in the luxury goods, especially the European luxury goods. Those people became the main luxury consumption groups in China.

In ancient history of China, there were luxury consumption tides for several times, especially in the Late-Ming Dynasty. The Late-Ming Dynasty was a period in which the capitalism began to develop and China was involved in the globalization of trade. The status of the merchant was promoted. In contemporary times, China joined into WTO and replaced the planned economy as the market economy, so to some extent, the Late-Ming Dynasty and contemporary China is similar in the aspect of economic change. Of course, there are many differences between Late-Ming Dynasty and contemporary China. Late-Ming Dynasty was in feudal era and had many backward factors.

Despite the difference, the consumption conditions of Late-Ming dynasty are similar. If one understand the consumption of Late-Ming Dynasty, one would understand the consumption condition today in China more easily.

Wemer Sombart's work *Luxury and Capitalism* describes and analyses the consumption behavior around Renaissance times in Europe, which is very near to the times of Late-Ming dynasty in China. The histories of Late-Ming dynasty and the Renaissance times of China and Europe respectively are similar. The difference is that the Late-Ming dynasty was followed by the Qing dynasty, which implemented the policy of value agriculture and contempt trade and the more strict law, with the disappearance of the inclusive and loose social and economic environment.

Wemer Sombart's work *Luxury and Capitalism* believes that the rapid accumulation of wealth caused the zeal of the luxury consumption, and through the luxury consumption the rich family enhance their own value. There were many luxury consumption

times in human history, in which period the new social ideological trend would be formed, or even the turning point of history would come. In 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the luxury consumption appeared in both the Europe and China, which were similar. In some spheres, China and Europe had same condition. The centuries of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> can be regarded as the beginning of globalization period, with the new lands discovered and the opening up policy of Late-Ming dynasty.

In the contemporary times, the globalization phenomena become more common. Ever since the reforming and opening up, plenty of rich people appeared, with the consumption behave was popular. So comparing the consumption behaves and opinions of China and the western respectively is meaningful to understand contemporary China.

## 2. Literature Review

This review is followed by an introduction. First, the paper will present the research of China scholars about the luxury consumption, then it will present the western scholars' research about that.

Many China scholars focus on the consumption behave in the Late-Ming dynasty. Yuan Zujie's *Luxury Consumption and Identity Identification of Gentries in Late Ming Dynasty* is a typical paper about that. The consumption condition of Late-Ming dynasty witnessed a new rich class. Yuan Zujie believes that the daily consumption of that class was rarely documented by the official and local chronicles. Many researchers get insight of it through the novels, notes or the works combined by the literature and chronicles. With the support of wealth, some merchants can compete with the officers in the government. The merchants of Ming dynasty had no a class identity. They were still attached to the political institutions of the state power, and sometimes they would purchase for the status in the government. Some officers or squires were also involved in the business activities, and formed a unique class. Most gains from the merchant and economic prosperity flew to the officer and squire classes, especially the officers and squires of the high status. The most prominent phenomenon of Late-Ming dynasty was the pursue of the officers and squires who had the privileges for the luxury, but not the rising of the merchant class independent from the state power. The activities of the officers and squires involved in the business cared about the status in the power network more, besides the market profit. Any changes of the government policy would lead to the destruction of the private property in some conditions of the ancient China, in other words, the private property was not protected effectively in that time. So relying on the state power was more important than getting the independent class identity. (Yuan, Z. 2009)

Some scholars focus on the mode of the consumption behave in Late-Ming dynasty. The typical one is Gong Tianfeng. He believes that the most prominent feature of the Late-Ming dynasty is the luxury consumption. Luxury consumption continued from the Middle-Ming dynasty until Late-Ming dynasty in the capital city and the cities of the prosperous Jiangnan area. In Late-Ming dynasty, luxury consumption became a very common social phenomenon. The consumption of diet consumption accounted for a little part of the total consumption in contrast to the huge consumption of the estate. The rich intellectuals in Jiangnan area would buy much fertile field and engaged in the handicraft production factory and trading, and such activities accumulated much wealth for them. Selling the poems was also a way to acquire wealth. In the atmosphere of luxury, they spent much in the luxurious estates, which were the magnificent villas in that times. The wealth of them was an important reason for why the rich intellectuals were fantastic for the villas. The construction of the magnificent villas maintained their social status, because the intellectuals' activity of reclusing in the beautiful landscape was regarded as elegant. The construction of the magnificent villas showed their elegance and justified their enjoyment of the luxurious material lives. The villas became the symbol of their social elite status and maintained such status if it was in jeopardy. (Gong, T. 2012)

Compared to the China scholar's research, the western scholars pay more attention to the luxury consumption of Renaissance and the opinions on the consumption in history of Europe. The most famous work about luxury research is Wemer Sombart's work *Luxury and Capitalism*, which is known for many researchers. In the following discussion I will quote the work frequently. Some researchers believe that the luxury consumption behave started in modern Italy, and Italian luxurious goods had a high position in European history. Even in the Roman empire period, the Roman had lived in a most profligate and luxurious style. The living standard was not high in Italian area in the condition that the medieval economy was backward. The Crusade happened in that period and failed at last, but it accumulated wealth for Italian area. The wealth became the foundation of the luxury consumption in Italian area. The luxury consumption living style swept across Europe in Renaissance times.

The representative researcher of the luxury opinion is Preben Mortensen. He thinks that the luxury was reappraised in Enlightenment. Some Scottish enlightenment thinkers believed that the luxury could improve the quality and temperament. They believed that the pursue for the luxury consumption and some conspicuous consumption, especially the consumption of art, were under the higher moral principle and had active influence on the individual and society. (Preben Mortensen. 1995)

Many China researchers also notice the European opinion on the luxury. Wang Chao's *The Modern Explanation on the Luxury Concept* describes the Scottish enlightenment thinkers' opinion on luxury. One Scottish scholar divided the luxurious goods into two kinds: the durable commodities, such as the furniture, castle, manor, jewelry, etc.; another is the disposable commodities, such as the clothing, beer, etc. The former tends to good, and the later tends to evil. The former could encourage the private frugality so that it is in favor of the growth of the national wealth. (Wang, C. 2012) More Scottish enlightenment thinkers put forward that the luxury is derived from human nature, the fulfillment of the individual sensuous pleasure is rational. The individual pursue for the elegant and comfortable life is not the origin of the evil. The pursue makes human being walk from the poverty to the abundance, from the barbarism to civilization. The attitude derived from the Scottish enlightenment to luxury cleared the obstacle for the capitalism development in theory. The luxury consumption advocated by the Scottish enlightenment is a kind of taste enjoyment, and they emphasize the intrinsic value, which is the value of elegance and taste. They believe that the enjoyment of the luxury consumption

could make the life more entertaining and elegant so that the human being could break away from the barbarism and stupidity, explore the human nature and edify sentiment. (Wang, C. 2012)

Another typical paper about the western opinion on the luxury is Huang Jingbin's *Luxury: the economic explanation and Chinese Traditional Opinion*. In the perspective of the western classical economics, luxury has the positive influence on the social economical life because, first, the national prosperity and economic development are valuable, second, the individual pursue for the interests and improving the life quality is rational. So the luxury has nothing to do with the morality. In Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Public Benefits*, the author put forward that the spender is the blessing for the whole society, because the luxury consumption does not have the harm to anyone, but themselves. Their activity is in favor of the property distribution. (Huang, J. 2008) From the review of the western scholar's opinion on the luxury, we can find that the opinion on luxury changed in certain period of history. That is interesting when it is compared with the opinion on luxury in China.

In the following section I will compare the history and opinion of luxury consumptions in the western and China.

### 2.1. The Opinions on Luxury

In Greek times, luxury was considered to be the cause of the weak temperament, because luxury could corrupt the soul and hurt body, so the brave men would be changed as the vulnerable women. They believed that the luxury would cause the jealousy and disputes among the people, and make people lazier. The declination of Sparta virtue and Roman was thought as the typical mode of luxury's function. (Christopher J. Berry. 2005)

In contrast to the opinion of the Greek, in the same historic period, the prime minister of Qi country in China of the period of Chun Qiu and Zhan Guo, Guan Zhong, proposed that the luxury was not bad for the whole country, however, it did good to the whole economy. He even suggested that people carved the eggs before boiled and ate them, and carved the wood before burnt it. The thoughts were recorded in his work *Guan Zhong Luxury*.

In the medieval times, Christianity influenced every aspect of society and life. In the perspective of Christianity, the body was the symbol of degeneration, so the enjoyment of the body was contempt. Anything exceed the need of the body was thought as a kind of crime. So the Christianity emphasized the asceticism, which believed that the physical suffering could achieve the spiritual promotion. Besides, the economic developments were slow, so the trend of luxury consumption was not formed. However, in the end of the medieval age, the churches broke the discipline of the Christianity first, the Pope of that time had not only wife but also mistresses. The upper society of Florence had very open opinion on luxury, which was a factor incurred the popularity of luxury. Many artists who had the Renaissance spirit and created the artistic works which emphasized the secular enjoyment got the asylum of the church and aristocrat.

The opinion of the Chinese intellectuals in the medieval times was similar. For them, the luxury was harmful to the country and the individual. For example, the emperors in different dynasties would practice the economical thoughts. The emperors in Tang dynasty did not construct many palaces and restricted the entertainment activities, punished the luxurious officers and reduced the number of the imperial palace maids. Many laws were issued in Song Dynasty to prevent the luxurious consumption in many aspects of life, such as the clothes, food, construction, festival and celebrities, and the religious and entertaining activities. To be economical was regarded as a kind of moral and necessary for the welfare of the county, family and individual. The economical thoughts rooted deeply in the Confucian ideal.

Of course, for some dominators, especially the aristocrat in Wei and Jin dynasties, the luxurious consumption was common for their daily life. But the opinion about the luxury was almost the same in medieval times of China.

### 2.2. The Attitudes toward the Luxury of China and the Western World since the Renaissance Times

The attitude toward the luxury changed in the Renaissance times in Europe. For example, some enlightenment thinkers proposed the luxury would not be harmful to the country and society as I mentioned in the literature review section. Adam Smith in 18<sup>th</sup> century believed the luxury played an important role in the transformation from the agricultural era to the commercial era.

But in China, at that time, the changed attitude to the luxury had not been formed. Many intellectuals still kept the opinion of the previous times. There was the same luxurious consumption tide around 15<sup>th</sup> century, which was the Late-Ming dynasty of Chinese period, in China and the western world. Some intellectuals in the following periods believed the luxurious consumption in Ming dynasty caused the abnormal development of social economy, which was embodied by giving up the agricultural production and engaging in the commercial activity, or speculation. (Lan, D. 1993) There were also some similar opinion about luxury, for example, "The extremely luxurious consumption caused many abnormal, irrational and immoral economic living styles and the spiritual morbidity." (Wang, J. 1988)

We would find that the contemporary intellectuals in China still keep the traditional attitude toward the luxurious consumption, and there were few intellectuals proposed the different opinion on the luxurious consumption.

### 2.3. Why the Attitude toward Luxurious Consumption Did Not Change in China?

If one wants to find the reason for why the attitude toward luxurious consumption did not change in China, he or she should investigate the production mode, because economic basis determines superstructure.

The traditional production mode of China is the small-scale peasant economy, which is a self-sufficient economy and in the form of the family unit. Most of the products is consumed by the production unit itself. So the huge wealth could not be accumulated in short time. The luxurious consumption in such condition is obviously harmful for the individual, family and country. To some extent, the small-scale peasant economy is in contrast to the commercial economy, which is featured by the exchange of goods. The commercial

economy could make the wealth be accumulated in short time and the status of the merchants would rise in the commercial economy condition, so some people could have the ability to consume luxuriously. The luxurious consumption could also make the market more active and prosperous, which is good for the economy. Of course, the small-scale peasant economy also has its advantage, for example, it made China produce enormous cheap products and help China rise peacefully in recent years.

Although China advocates the commercial economy and market economy from the 1970s, the small-scale peasant economy still is a main economic mode in China. We would find in the countryside of China, which composes the most part of China territory, the small-scale peasant economy still continues from the ancient times. The consumption mode in such condition continues accordingly. Chinese contemporary intellectuals could not break apart from such influence. The economic production mode determine the attitude toward the luxurious consumption.

We discuss influence of the material production of human being on consumption attitudes above. For Marxism, human being has two kinds of production: material production and human's reproduction. In the next section the paper will discuss the influence of human's reproduction on the consumption attitudes.

#### 2.4. Human's Reproduction and the Consumption Attitudes

For Sombart, pursue for the sensual pleasure is one of the causes of luxury. The sex life is the origin of pursue for the delicacy and sensory stimulation, because the sensual pleasure and the sexual pleasure are similar. Any origin of the luxury could be found in the sexual impulse consciously or unconsciously. (Wemer Sombart, 2005)

Sex life is the way of human reproduction, although sex life appears as the pursuit for pleasure in many aspects. It is a fundamental way for human existence, so it has great the impulse. Confucius said: "The desire for food and sex is part of human nature." The food is for the need of human individual survival, and the sex is the demand for the human group survival. Survival is the most basic goal for any biological group.

Once the material production is enough, the spends on the sex life would be increased. Wemer Sombart's *Luxury and Capitalism* describes the luxurious consumption on the marriage and love in 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the capitalism was prosperous, in detail. In the Late-Ming dynasty, in which period the commercial economy was active and the wealth was accumulated fast, the prostitution was very prosperous, and at that time, the serious venereal disease, syphilis, was transmitted into China. The prostitutes in that time seemed got well educated, for example, some concubines of Ximen Qing, the main character of *The Golden Lotus*, a famous documentary novel about the Late-Ming Dynasty merchant, were the prostitutes, and they were well educated. The courtesans described in *Luxury and Capitalism* also got well educated and some of them would be high-born.

From the analysis above paragraph we would find that in the prosperous economy the prostitution would be active and in some ways it got the legal status. The spend on the prostitution was astonishing in the special times, just as described in *Luxury and Capitalism*. The consumption for the prostitution in Late-Ming dynasty made some famous prostitutes in Qinhuai area of China, such as Liu Rushi.

#### 2.5. The Attitudes toward Prostitution in Qing Dynasty and Europe in the Corresponding Period

In Ming dynasty, the high officers and aristocrats was so enjoy the prostitution that some officers in the government did not care about the affairs of the state. The emperor Zhu Zhanji launched the largest-scale anti-porn drive in order to prevent the officers going whoring. But that action did not achieve any effect, because some officers began to house the prostitutes in their homes. When the emperor died in 1453, the action stopped and the depressed prostitution rebounded and thrived. But in Qing dynasty, things changed, and the attitude toward the prostitution changed accordingly. The strict law was issued to prohibit prostitution in that times, and in Taiping rebellion, the Taiping Heavenly kingdom ruled that one would be beheaded if he went whoring. Although the prostitution existed in Qing dynasty, the prostitutes did not have the high status, even the legal status.

But in the corresponding period in Europe, the prostitution still existed and thrived. The attitude toward prostitution became positive in some ways. In the history of Europe, the prostitution existed and got the different attitudes of people in different periods. "The Christianity emphasized the asceticism but tolerated the existence of prostitution, because the Christianity believed the prostitution was the necessary sin. The tolerance of the church and the realistic need caused the existence of prostitution, but in the different times, the prostitution got different features. In the stage of European transformation from the traditional society to the modern society, the prostitution had three phases: in the medieval age, it was legal. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was deemed as a disaster. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it got more tolerance since the social environment was loose." (Jin, C. 2010) It is worth mentioning that the prostitution was deemed as disaster in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was because of the syphilis, a serious venereal disease came from American continent.

The attitude toward the prostitution changed as more tolerant mainly in 18<sup>th</sup> century. The attitude incurred the openness toward sex. In that time, there were less than 10 men in the 100 men before marriage were virgin. (Jin, C. 2010) In that time, the restriction of personal liberty for the prostitutes was little and there was no depression from the religion. On the contrary, the prostitutes got much sympathy and help from the different institutions. (Jin, C. 2010)

The improvement of the prostitution status originated from the change of the economic condition. Prostitution was in conflict with the normal sexual relation between wife and husband, and was deemed as immoral or illegal, so the economic cost of the prostitution would be much. The commercial economy made some merchants accumulate much wealth and so they could afford the spend on the prostitution. The aristocrats and prelates also got much wealth in that time just as Wemer Sombart described in his *Luxury and Capitalism*, so they were also the regular clients of the prostitution. In the process, the prostitution got more tolerance and the prostitute got higher status than before. The prostitution was deemed as a disaster was not because of the economic condition, which was improved for the development of capitalism, but because of the syphilis.

So the question is why in China the people became more intolerant for the prostitution but in Europe the attitude became more tolerant. Someone would associate with the Confucian ethic automatically, when he or she is faced with the question. Of course, there was much moral teaching in the Confucian thoughts, and the forbidding of the prostitution is one aspect of it. However, the aristocrats, officers and merchants took part in or even keened on the luxurious consumption of prostitution in different dynasties, although the dominators issued the strict law against the prostitution.

The prostitution existed in the history, but the attitude toward it would be changed in different times. To some extent, the prostitution is a kind of luxurious consumption. From the changing of attitude to prostitution, we would find the attitude toward luxurious consumption. The turning point of the attitude for the prostitution happened in the phase between Late-Ming and Qing dynasties. So in order to understand the changing attitude, we should analyze the condition of Qing dynasty.

Compared to the previous dynasties, Qing dynasty adhered to the ancient thought system more strictly. The dominators of Qing dynasty was Man nationality, which was a nationality of few people compared to Han nationality. When such few people dominated the huge population and such extensive territory, they would be stricter. When they found some useful knowledge or successful experience from the ancient Han nationality, they would put them into practice. Qing dynasty applied the police of secluding the country from outside world, they did not care about the changing of world. In the economic policy, they practiced the policy of small-scale peasant economy. The result was that the commerce in Qing dynasty was not active.

Here we can review the opinion we have discussed in the paper that the small-scale peasant economy can not approve the luxurious consumption. So we would find the economic condition of Qing dynasty did not approve the luxurious consumption.

Late-Ming dynasty had totally different economic condition that the commerce was very active. In the period, the trade between China and the western world was very frequent. All the society keened on the commerce and many rich merchants, officers and aristocrats appeared. So the luxurious consumption was approved in that time. One kind of luxurious consumptions was the prostitution. Although one emperor of Ming dynasty launched the biggest anti-porn action in Ming dynasty, prostitution could not be prohibited.

There would be other explanations about the luxurious consumption in Qing dynasty. One typical explanation is that Qing dynasty adhered to the ancient thought system more strictly. But Ming dynasty also belonged to Chinese ancient history and practiced the Confucian thought system, and Ming dynasty were more open and approved the luxurious consumption. So we would find that the thought system is not the reason for luxurious consumption. The valid reason for the luxurious consumption is the economic basis.

In *Luxury and Capitalism*, Werner Sombart believes that the luxury caused the capitalism. He describes and analyses the luxury in the European court, especially the luxurious consumption in marriage and love. Then he argues that the luxury is the origin of the capitalism. However, when we compared the luxurious consumptions of Ming and Qing dynasties, we would find that the economic condition is the reason of consumption mode, instead of the contrary.

## 2.6. Comparing the Luxurious Consumptions of China and the Western World on the Basis of Economic Condition

On the basis of the economic condition, we would find the luxurious consumptions in China and the western world are similar. Before 14<sup>th</sup> century, the luxurious consumption was not popular for the commercial activities were not common. But after Ming dynasty, especially Middle and Late-Ming dynasty, the commercial activities were common. In Ming dynasty, the tax on the commerce was a main income for the government. So to some extent commerce was encouraged. The status of the merchants was enhanced accordingly.

Another important feature of commerce in Ming dynasty is the overseas trade. In ancient China, the long-distance trade types included the land-borne trade and the seaborne trade. Before Tang dynasty, the land-borne trade was the main trade type, and after Tang dynasty, the main trade type was seaborne trade. In Ming dynasty, the American continent was discovered. Much silver of American continent flew to China because China had the advanced production technology and the products of China were welcomed in Europe in that time.

The seaborne trade in that time stimulated the commerce in the society of Ming dynasty. The documentary novel *The Golden Lotus* describes the prosperity of trade Shandong province of China. In the novel, it seems all matters can be bought by money, including the status and official position. The luxurious consumption is very common in the novel.

Although *The Golden Lotus* is not the academic works as *Luxury and Capitalism*, it describes the consumption condition honestly. The main character Ximen Qing is both merchant and officer, which official position is bought by money. His consumption condition, especially the sex relation with several women which is described in detail and that description is criticized by many intellectuals, is representative for the merchant and officer groups in that time.

In *Luxury and Capitalism*, the luxurious consumption is similar with the condition in *The Golden Lotus*. Werner Sombart describes the consumption condition in the court, middle class and new aristocrat society, urban etc., especially the consumption in marriage and love.

The consumption conditions of the Ming dynasty and Europe in Renaissance and enlightenment. Both consumption conditions have a common background of the economic globalization. China in Ming dynasty did not seclude the country from the outside world, and joined in the economic globalization. The wealth flew into China in the form of silver, and even the fatal venereal disease syphilis of Ximen Qing was transmitted from the American continent.

So it can be concluded that the economic globalization after the Renaissance produced the economic condition for luxurious consumption in both China and Europe. Commerce is the driving force for the luxury, because commerce can make the wealth accumulated for the individual. The luxury has little to do with different cultures and moral system.

### 2.7. *The False Understanding about the Luxurious Consumption*

There are still some false understanding about the luxurious consumption. The first false understanding is to understand the luxurious consumption of human society in the aspects of the morality. Luxurious consumption is not caused by the lack of morality. Morality originated from the realistic need of human being, and that would change in the different times. For example, the morally evaluating the luxury is different in the medieval and enlightenment times. In Chinese Confucian thought system, which is the main traditional ethic system and the learning requirement for the intellectual examination for the official position, luxurious consumption is deemed as an evil activity, but the luxurious consumption still existed in the different dynasties.

In the perspective of economic condition, we would find that the luxurious consumption is related closely with the trade in different times. When the trade is active, the luxurious consumption would appear obviously, and when the trade decreases, the luxurious consumption decreases accordingly. For example, in Ming dynasty, especially the Late-Ming dynasty, the trade is very active in the background of economic globalization and the discovery of American continent. In Qing dynasty, the dominator applied the secluding the country from the outside world, and clamped down the merchants, so the trade was not active, then the luxurious consumption was not as obvious as in the Ming dynasty, and the anti-luxury voice in that time was clear. Qing dynasty in Chinese history was conservative, and refused to learn from the outside world. That is caused by the economic basis of Qing dynasty, and the consumption pattern is also caused by the economic basis.

### 2.8. *The Result of the Different Relations between Government and Merchant in China and the Western World Respectively*

The relations between government and merchant in China and the western world are different respectively, and such relations cause the different statuses of the merchant and the trade situation in China and the western world. The consumption patterns and the attitudes in China and the western world respectively are also different accordingly.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the European economy became prosperous commonly, especially in Italian area. In the next several centuries, the economic condition enhanced more. So the wealth became more concentrated. In the process, the rich merchants and aristocrats became more. The wealth promoted the luxurious consumption pattern in Europe. The increasing demand for the luxurious goods promoted the development of the trade, and many merchants became so wealthy that they even could control the government of northern Italy.

The relation between the merchant and government in China was totally different from that in Europe. Almost in every dynasties, the government dominated the merchant thoroughly. The traditional and main production pattern was the small-scale peasant economy, but not the commercial economy. The commercial economy was not encouraged. So the wealth would not be concentrated and the luxurious consumption pattern was not common in Chinese history. But in Late-Ming dynasty things were different. The government loosened the clamping on the merchant and trade for more government income, so the commercial trade became active and more rich merchants appeared. So the wealth was concentrated for individuals, and the money play more important role than ever. In that time, even the official position could be bought. In *The Golden Lotus*, the merchant Ximen Qing bought the official position by money. The salary income of the officials in Ming dynasty was not high, but the main money they got was from the commerce or the merchants who had special relation with them. One special class, the capitalist formed by rich merchant, began to burgeon in Ming dynasty. But before such class became mature, the Ming dynasty collapsed. The next dynasty continued the small-scale peasant economy and clamped down the merchant and commercial trade with strict law. So the merchant had never controlled the government in China as in Europe.

## 3. Conclusion

Although the luxurious consumption of China was very common in last years, such consumption pattern can not stimulate the economic development more as *Luxury and Capitalism* describes. Luxury can not induce the appearance of capitalism, but the change of the production pattern induces the burgeon of the capitalism.

The attitude toward luxury have not changed in contemporary China, because the production pattern have not changed thoroughly. Economic basis determines the ideology. The hatred for wealthy people in China is popular, at least in the incidents that newspaper reports. Even some academic researchers can not avoid the influence of the attitude, and in their papers such attitude influences their academic opinions.

In the anti-corruption action of Chinese government, the luxurious consumption of China reduces dramatically. Much sudden wealth of some rich merchants were derived from the special relation with the corrupted officials. When anti-corruption action deletes the illegal benefit, the upstarts and corrupted officials have no so much money to consume luxuriously or dare not.

In both China and the western world, the representative phenomenon of luxurious consumption on women. In Sombart's *Luxury and Capitalism*, the consumption on the marriage and love is deemed as the main spend of the rich people. In recent years, the upstarts and corrupted officials are although involved in numerous affairs with their mistresses, and lots of corrupted officials fall because of the mistresses, which is reported frequently in the media. But in such case, the different between the situations in China and the western world is that the love affairs in Europe of that times were deemed as approved and legal at that time. The love affairs of the corrupted officials is thought as illegal.

However, such consumption cannot be prevented since it is a necessary spend in the luxurious groups. Once the individual wealth is accumulated, they would spend huge money in the love affairs, because that is determined by the human needs consciously or unconsciously. Although such consumption is regarded as immoral or illegal, it would always exist in the human history. If we analyze the luxury in the perspective in the economy, things would be more clear. The viewpoint of Marxist that the economic basis determines the ideology is true.

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