Chinese patriarchy

Chinese patriarchy refers to the history and prevalence of male dominance in Chinese society and culture.

Mencius outlined the Three Sub-ordinations. A woman was to be subordinate to her father in youth, her husband in maturity, and her son in old age.

Another one of these famous quotes is that that is also related to the patriarchy found in Athens. "Men are free to roam outside, but the woman must stay inside." From this, we get the foot-binding that restricts the movement of Chinese women and physically forbids them from going outside the house.

A cliche of classical texts, which is repeated throughout the tradition, is the familiar notion that men govern the outer world, while women govern the home. In the Han dynasty, the female historian Ban Zhao wrote the Lessons for Women, advice on how women should behave. She outlines the Four Virtues women must abide by, proper virtue, proper speech, proper countenance, proper merit. The "three subordinations and the four virtues" is a common four-character phrase throughout the imperial period.

As for the historical development of Chinese patriarchy, women's status was highest in the Tang dynasty, when women played sports (polo) and were generally freer in fashion and conduct. Between the Tang and Song dynasties, a fad for little feet arose, and from the Song dynasty onwards footbinding became more and more common for the elite. In the Ming dynasty, a tradition of virtuous widowhood developed. Widows, even if widowed at a young age, would be expected not to remarry. Their virtuous names might be displayed on the arch at the entrance of the village.

Features of patriarchy in 20th and 21st century China include the immense pressure on women to get married before the age of 30, and the incidence of female infanticide associated with China's one child policy. However, footbinding has been eradicated and trafficking in women in China has greatly reduced.