



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

<i>Student Name: Pang Hoi Na</i>	
<i>Module Code: SICH5003</i>	<i>Student number: 1903362</i>
<i>Module title: The Governing Principles of Ancient China: Selections from the Book of Rites</i>	
<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i> NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

A Brief Analysis of the Contemporary Value of Filiality in *the Book of Rites*

Student name: Pang Hoi Na SID: 1903362 Date: 3 Feb 2021

Word count: 1953

Venerable Shengmiao, Miss Deng, good morning. My name is Pang Hoi Na and I would like to share with you the topic on ‘A Brief Analysis of the Contemporary Value of Filiality in *the Book of Rites*’. The presentation will be divided into three parts, introduction, text and explanation, and the last part is conclusion.

1. Introduction

When thinking about the modern inspiration of filiality, an interesting advertisement crossed my mind, it is the Christmas advertisement of the Germany supermarket EDEKA. It is about an old person who spent Christmas alone for many years therefore he did feigned death and let all his children come home to celebrate the Christmas together. It received 68 million clicks on the YouTube which aroused much public concern. Through this example, the following discussion will explore the way to relieve the feeling of loneliness for the elderly. To understand the importance of making one’s worthy of parents’ care and upbringing in the content of *the Book of Rites*, we can clearly grasp the contemporary value of filiality and its benefits for improving the parent-child relationship.

2. Text and Explanation

2.1 The explanation of the filiality

First of all, In the classical texts, filiality comes from family relationship which is also the origin of emotion. According to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, the character *xiao* 孝 (filiality) means ‘*Shanshi fumu zhe* 善事父母者 (One is good at caring for his parents’ needs).’ But it is just the external format of filiality. In the chapter *jiyi* 祭義 (the Meaning of Offering Sacrifices) said, ‘立愛自親始 (Love begins from loving their parents).’¹ The intrinsic value of filiality is building up the sincere love for parents and expanding to others. In the *xiaojing* 孝經 (The Classic of Filiality), Zengzi said, ‘夫孝，天之經也，地之義也，人之行也(Filiality is the principle of the heaven, the way of the earth and conduct of human).’² According to the description in the *Book of Rites*, etiquette helps people to identify the different level of love between close and distant relatives while *yue* 樂 (music) helps to express the truth feeling of the filial children during the offer sacrifices to gods or ancestors.

‘孝子將祭，慮事不可以不豫，比時具物，不可以不備，虛中以治之……其孝敬之心至也與！薦其薦俎，序其禮樂 (When a filial son is going to offer sacrifices, he need to be well prepare and pay attention...When the sacrificial offering is ready and the music starts, it is the time to show his ultimate love and respect).’³

As a core concept of classical Confucius teaching, filiality is the basis of benevolence and

¹(Han) Xu qianxue (漢) 徐乾學, *Duli tongkao* 讀禮通考 (the Comprehensive Examination of Rites), (Qing) Jiyun, Yongyong compile, (清) 紀昀、永瑤等編纂, 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge) (Taipei : Taiwan Commercial Press, 2008), volume 72, book 113, 646. Translated by myself.

²(Yuan)Wucheng (元) 吳澄, *Xiaojing dingben* 孝經定本(The Classic of Filiality) , (Qing) Jiyun, Yongyong compile, see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, book 182, 134. Translated by myself.

³Ma Xinmin edited, (Han) Zhengxuan, (Tang)Kong Yingda annotated, 馬辛民編, (漢)鄭玄注, (唐)孔穎達, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (十三經注疏) (The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version),(Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), volume 48, 1568. Translated by myself.

human relation.

Secondly, let us explore the different level of filiality and its progressive formation. In the chapter *jitong* 祭統 (the Format of Offering Sacrifices) said,

‘孝子之事親也有三道焉：生則養，沒則喪，喪畢則祭 (There are three stages for a filial son to serve his parents: take care of them, organize their funeral properly and offering sacrifices on the anniversary).’⁴

It also pointed that, ‘孝者，畜也。順于道，不逆於倫，是之謂畜 (Filiality is being used to attend to comforts of parents, following the ethical relation and not going against it).’⁵

Following the above guidelines, one can build up the thoughts of filiality from the very young age and gradually strengthen their emotional relationship between parents and children. With the correct attitude and experience, such as offering sacrifices on the anniversary, people keep on cherishing and holding high esteem in the nature and ancestors. In the Doctrine of the Mean said, ‘蓋天地萬物,本吾一體 (All things in the universe and me is a whole).’⁶ Wang points out that, ‘是人心一點靈明 (The way to connect nature and human is people achieve their pure sincere).’⁷ Through assisting one’s parents to solve problems, to carry on their unfinished aspiration, he goes beyond his ego and blend in ancient society based upon the clan system. One will feel more and more grateful of his family and living environment because they make him alive. In the chapter *jiaotesheng* 郊特牲 (the Victims at the Border Sacrifices) said, ‘萬物本乎天，人本乎祖 (Everything comes from the nature, people comes from his ancestors).’⁸ Looking for the source of life and one gradually understands himself,

⁴Ma Xinmin edited, (Han) Zhengxuan, (Tang)Kong Yingda annotated, The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version, (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), volume 49, 1573. Translated by myself.

⁵Ma Xinmin edited, *The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version*, volume 49, 1571. Translated by myself.

⁶(Song)Zhao Shunsun (宋) 趙順孫, *Zhongyong zuanshu* 中庸纂疏 (The Collected Annotation of the Doctrine of the Mean), volume 1, book 201, 99. Translated by myself.

⁷(Ming) Wang Yangming (明) 王陽明, 傳習錄下 (The Record of Teaching and Practising II), 王陽明全集 (The Collected Book of Wang Yangming), volume 6, book 3, 107. Translated by myself.

⁸Ma Xinmin edited, *The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version*, volume 49, 934.

his parents, the nature and the universe are as one. It is the reason ancient sages always show crucial support for the filiality when establishing the etiquette and music system.

2.2 The effect and specific cases of the filiality

The profound value of filiality starts from the trifling caring for parents. Compare with western, the eastern mindset about filiality emphasizes *tianren heyi* 天人合一 (Man is the integral part of the nature). Chinese society use the bloodline as the link of social relationship. Both sides accept family is the miniature of society, but western country take the relationship between married couple as the key point while eastern treat parent-child relationship as the most important. When trying to achieve the goal of parents, people can do their own reinterpretation. They settle down their life and the future of the family in the continued efforts. In a large extend, it can reduce their loneliness. To teach his own children about inheriting spiritual property from their ancestors is the way to extend the life of oneself. If people can combine his goal with the transfer of family culture, their short life will put into continuous flow of family history and social network.

To analysis the value of filiality is equal to think about the value and meaning of life. From the natural affection for one's family, one understands the different connections with others, to set up his lifelong goal and learn to adapt the society. In traditional Chinese society, ethics is more powerful than the law. Therefore, the national system gives more care for the elderly, The chapter *quli* 曲禮 (the Trivial Etiquette) in *the Book of Rites* said, ‘八十、九十曰耄，七年曰悼。悼与耄，虽有罪不加刑焉 (Those elderly who are over 80 or 90, children who are under 7 years old will not be punished even committing crime).’⁹ People

Translated by myself.

⁹Ma Xinmin edited, *The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version*), volume 49, 23. Translated by myself.

can be release from the conscript labor if their parents are too old. With the idea of family and nation are all based upon the family system and bloodline, the ruler treats the law as the inadvisable plan. The best way to govern the nation depends on the emotional influence from one's family. A filial child who is able to attend to comforts of parents at home will also do their best to attend upon the king at the government. That is the stable foundation of a society. Filiality is a human nature with multiple meaning of individual and social structure.

Next, let us talk about the why people need essential long-time training of be concerned with their parents. In the video, all of the children had their reasons to be absent at Christmas dinner and each of them felt very shocked and guilty when knowing their father's death. Why people always do something they will regret knowingly to their parents? The chapter trivial etiquette said,

‘凡為人子之禮：冬溫而夏清，昏定而晨省 (The etiquette of being children is to make parents felt warm in the winter and cool in the summer; to organise bedding at night and inquire after their health in the morning).’¹⁰

The literal meaning is so simple, but it was easily neglected in daily life. Comparing with the busy schedule of work, sensitive or anxious children, parents are more accommodating and quieter. In another word, one need to be cautious to find out their true feelings. Ancient Chinese teaches their children how to take care the elderly, not for taking advantage but the prediction of life process. The careful and keen observation one learned from his family can also apply to the future social relationship. What is more, in the chapter meaning of offering sacrifices said, ‘君子之所謂孝者：先意承志……直養者也，安能為孝乎？ (The way for noble person to practice filiality is to do what parents want before their order...only take care of their lives is not filiality).’¹¹ The *Book of Rites* emphasis that

¹⁰Ma Xinmin edited, *The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version*), volume 1, 11. Translated by myself.

¹¹(Han)Daide (漢)戴德撰, *Dadai lij* 大戴禮記 (The Book of Rites – Dadai version), see footnote 1, The

children's sincere love and respect for parents need to express in a proper way. Being positive to face the truth that parents are getting old and feeble and prepare for it earlier. It is a way to building up the conditioned reflex, the way to prevent grieving.

Let children feel grateful is a method to change the solitary life of parents. In the advertisement, all children left their old father to spend Christmas alone for several years, and finally they went back home and joined the surprise reunion. The chapter trivial etiquette said, '禮尚往來。往而不來非禮也，來而不往亦非禮也 (It is only right and proper to pay back debt of gratitude, otherwise it is not committing the etiquette).'¹² The teaching of filiality wants to remind children to keep feeling gratitude for source of benefit. Why children always absent from their parents lives until the funeral? It may disclose people do not value or too often to forget their parents. But in the rational thinking, parents will leave before ones' spouse or children. Their decrepit bodies make them crave for accompany which is clear when people can be able to empathize with their old parents. As the previous texts mentioned, the key point of filiality is sincere love and respect, the limitation of format is not necessary. If one is too busy to spend Christmas with his parents, did he work out some remedial measures? Like sending the handwriting greeting card or arranging another family gathering. It is also the way to solve his children's egocentrism because mutual support brings unselfish and happiness.

To make parents feel happy and satisfy is more important than providing material. In the chapter 檀弓(the Alternative Rites) said,

‘啜菽飲水盡其歡，斯之謂孝；斂手足形，還葬而無槨，稱其財，斯之謂禮 (Although

one can only provide soy milk or water to his parents, he let them feel really happy and satisfy.

Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge, volume 4, book 128, 444-445. Translated by myself.

¹²Ma Xinmin edited, *The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version*), volume 1, 20. Translated by myself.

It is acceptable filiality. Although one can only use his parents own clothes to bury them even without coffin, try his best to arrange the funeral in an affordable level. It is so call etiquette).¹³

For example, there is a famous doctor in Han dynasty who call Yu Chunyi. He went to jail for false accusation. He was very helpless and angry so he said to his five daughter, ‘生子不生男, 緩急非有益(Without a son, I cannot save myself in the critical time).’¹⁴ His youngest daughter Tiying felt sad but still took care of him when he was escorted to the capital of the country. Tiying submitted a letter about the innocent of her father and the inhuman of corporal torture to the Emperor Wen of Han. Emperor Wen was touched and released her father and abolished the cruel punishment. Tiying was such a vulnerable female in feudal society who have no money or power, but she saved her father with utmost sincere and perseverance. Her dedication also saved those who may be tortured in the country. To take care one’s parents well is very good education for his children which means the transfer of benevolence.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, filiality is the inner feeling of everyone which can be strengthen by teaching. It is not a moral shackle for bringing pressure to children. In the past, western people followed the Christian thought to love and care their parents. But religions education is fading out nowadays. It is no harm to take the Chinese traditional filiality as a reference to strengthen the parent-child relationship. The weakened family relationship brings the problem of population ageing and elderly people living alone. To create the sense of achievement and satisfy instead of providing material reward can solve the crux. The lesson

¹³Ma Xinmin edited, *The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version*), volume10, 343. Translated by myself.

¹⁴ (Han) Liuxiang (漢) 劉向撰, *Gujin lienu zhuan* 古今列女傳 (The Biographies of Exemplary Women), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 6, book 448,63. Translated by myself.

learned from *the Book of Rites* is that filiality teaches people to love and devote, to know what they need in the end of their life when they are at the starting point. It can bring happiness by increasing depth and breadth in one's life.

This is all my presentation today. Thank you. Any feedback and suggestions would be appreciated.

4. Bibliography

Books:

1. (Han) Xu qianxue (漢) 徐乾學, *Duli tongkao* 讀禮通考 (the Comprehensive Examination of Rites), (Qing) Jiyun, Yongyong compile, (清) 紀昀、永瑤等編纂, 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge) (Taipei : Taiwan Commercial Press, 2008), volume 72, book 113, 646.
2. Ma Xinmin edited, (Han) Zhengxuan, (Tang)Kong Yingda annotated, 馬辛民編, (漢)鄭玄注, (唐)孔穎達, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (十三經注疏) (The annotation of the Book of Rites – the collection of 13 classics version),(Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), volume 48, 1568.
3. (Han)Daide (漢)戴德撰, *Dadai liji* 大戴禮記 (The Book of Rites – Dadai version), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 128, 444-445.
4. (Han) Liuxiang (漢) 劉向撰, *Gujin lienu zhuan* 古今列女傳 (The Biographies of Exemplary Women), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 6, book 448,63.
5. (Song)Zhao Shunsun (宋) 趙順孫, *Zhongyong zuanshu* 中庸纂疏 (The Collected Annotation of the Doctrine of the Mean),volume 1, book 201, 99.
6. (Yuan)Wucheng (元) 吳澄, *Xiaojing dingben* 孝經定本(The Classic of Filiality) , (Qing) Jiyun, Yongyong compile, see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, book 182, 134.
7. (Ming) Wang Yangming (明) 王陽明, 傳習錄下 (The Record of Teaching and Practising II), 王陽明全集 (The Collected Book of Wang Yangming), volume 6, book 3, 107.

Websites:

1. The Oxford online dictionary, <https://www.lexico.com>, accessed 18 October 2020.
2. The Cambridge online dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/>, accessed 19 October 2020.
3. Chinese-English dictionary, <http://www.lexiconer.com>, accessed 20 October 2020.
4. <https://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/Lindict/>, accessed 21 October 2020.
5. <https://www.zdic.net/>, accessed 22 October 2020.