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Comparative study of Zheng Xuan's Annotations on the *Classic of Filial Piety* and Imperial Annotations on the *Classic of Filial Piety*

I. Introduction

The *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing*) is a Confucian classic about filial piety culture, which records the filial piety thought of the Zhou Dynasty. The *Xiaojing* plays an important and special role in the history of Chinese classics, Chinese Confucianism and even Chinese ideological history. It is important because the *Xiaojing* is one of the thirteen Confucian classics. It is special because the *Xiaojing* is the shortest among the thirteen Confucian classics. However, it is no less popular than the Confucian Five Classics in terms of its wide spread among the people, its importance to the rulers and its recognition by the people. Because of the position of the *Xiaojing* in the history of Chinese thought, the study of it is more significant. Throughout the history of the study of the *Xiaojing*, the imperial annotations of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty 唐玄宗 unified the academic differences between the two major annotations of Filial classics from the Han Dynasty to the early Tang Dynasty (*Zheng Xuan's Annotations of the Xiaojing* 孝經鄭註 and *Kong An'guo of the Old Text Commentary of the Xiaojing* 古文孝經傳). Before that, Zheng Xuan's Annotations of the *Xiaojing* is one of the most important notes on the *Xiaojing* before the Tang Dynasty. After Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty annotated the *Xiaojing*, it was gradually lost until scholars in the Qing Dynasty recompiled it as a book. Zheng's annotations and Imperial annotations are representative annotations of the *Classic of Filial piety*, which are of great research value. This paper tries to compare Zheng's annotations and Imperial annotations of the *Xiaojing*, find out the differences between them and understand the reasons behind the differences.

II. Zheng Xuan's Annotations of the *Xiaojing*

Zheng Xuan's annotations of the *Xiaojing*, as the official texts annotating the *Xiaojing*,

circulated in the society and remained as one of the most important versions of the annotations before the Tang Dynasty. After Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty annotated the *Xiaojing*, it was gradually lost until scholars in the Qing Dynasty recompiled it as a book. After the excavation of Dunhuang suicide notes the academic circles can almost see the whole contents of Zheng's Annotations of the *Xiaojing*. Zheng's Annotations of the *Xiaojing*, which was written by Zheng Xuan in his later years, quoted many classics in its content, including the *Book of Songs* 詩經, *Esteemed Documents* 尚書, *Rites of the Zhou Dynasty* 周禮, *Ceremonials and Rituals* 儀禮, *Book of Rites* 禮記, *Analects* 論語, *Baihu tong* 白虎通. Moreover, through proofreading of the latitude books such as the *Contract of Aid to God of Filial Piety* 孝經援神契 and the *Link Life Formula of Filial Piety* 孝經鉤命訣, the author believes that the Zheng's Annotations of the *Xiaojing* is a note of both ancient and modern texts with strong latitude study color, which has both ethical and political attributes. Therefore, the Classic of Filial Piety was not only valued by rulers, but also widely circulated among the people. It was not only a textbook for official learning, but also a book for children and even a religious classic.

III. Imperial Annotations of the *Xiaojing*

The classics in the study of the *Xiaojing* can be divided into modern and ancient texts. Zheng's annotations belongs to the modern text and Kong Zhuan belongs to the ancient text. The content of classics is different and the annotations are very different. After the unification of the whole country in the Tang Dynasty, the study of classics was unified, but the *Xiaojing* was still the modern and ancient texts circulated independently. In the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, he ordered scholars to analyze merits and demerits of the modern and the ancient texts of the *Xiaojing*. Liu Zhijing 劉知幾 advocated the adoption of the ancient text, but Sima Zhen 司馬貞 advocated the adoption of the modern text. Finally, Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty adopted the modern text of the *Xiaojing*, which is Zheng's Annotations of the *Xiaojing*. He referred to the annotations of the Han and Tang dynasties and annotated the *Xiaojing* by himself, and then the Imperial Annotations of the *Xiaojing* was born. After that, Zheng's Annotations and Kong Zhuan were gradually replaced, and for thousands of years thereafter, the modern text of the *Xiaojing* was based on the Imperial Annotations.

IV. Differences between Zheng's Annotations and Imperial Annotations.

There are many differences between Zheng's Annotations and Imperial Annotations, such as the explanation of the relationship between king and minister, father and son, the explanation of the relationship between loyalty and filial piety, the explanation of rites and music, and the attitude towards the monarch. Due to the limitation of the number of words, this paper will focus on the two commentaries on the relationship between king and minister, father and son and the original meaning of filial piety.

1. Different interpretations of the relationship between father and son, king and minister.

One big difference between the two commentaries is that the Imperial annotations of the *Xiaojing* changed the relationship between father and son, king and minister in the *Xiaojing* by modifying the classics and adding annotations. Among the *Xiaojing*, the most typical text that talks about the relations between king and minister, father and son comes from chapter *Shengzhi* 聖治. The classics of Imperial Annotations is: The proper way (*dao*) between father and son is a natural propensity that by extension becomes the appropriate relationship (*yi*) between ruler and minister. There is no bond more important than the father and mother giving life to their progeny, and there is no generosity more profound than the care and concern this progeny receives from their ruler and parents.¹父子之道，天性也，君臣之義也。父母生之，續莫大焉。君親臨之，厚莫重焉。²Xuanzong annotated: The love between father and son belongs to nature, the son has natural respect for his father, and between them there is the *yi* 義 of the king and the minister. Children and parents are linked together, between them both the nature of the kindness, and the *yi* between the king and minister. It doesn't get any thicker than this.父子之道，天性之常，加以尊嚴，又有君臣之義。父母生子，傳體相續。人倫之道，莫大於斯。謂父為君，以臨於己。恩義之厚，莫重於斯。³He equated the relationship between father and son with the relationship between king and minister, making

¹ Henry Rosemont . JR and Roger T Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), p.110.

² Li Longji 李隆基 annotated, Xing Bing 邢昺 sub-commentary, *Xiaojing Zhushu* 孝經註疏 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), p.50.

³ Li Longji 李隆基 annotated, Xing Bing 邢昺 sub-commentary, *Xiaojing Zhushu* 孝經註疏, p.50.

the relationship between father and son into the relationship between king and minister. But this classics in the modern text of the *Xiaojing* unearthed in Dunhuang is: 父子之道天性君臣之義, there are no two characters “也”. The classics of Zheng’ Annotations is: The proper way between father and son is a natural propensity; it is the same as the propensity between lord and ministers. Fathers and mothers create this (relationship), nothing is greater than maintaining it. The lord supervises it and nothing is more generous than this.父子之道天性，君臣之義。父母生之，續莫大焉。君親臨之，厚莫重焉。⁴ Zheng Xuan annotated: 性 means nature, the relationship between father and son is innate. King and minister are not related by blood, they are united by *yi*. If the minister remonstrates three times and the king does not accept, the minister can leave. A son will not leave his father because his father can not accept the remonstrance. The king selected virtuous people to be officials and gave them titles and salaries. This is the king’s heavy favour to the ministers.性，常也。父子相生，天之常道。君臣非又有骨肉之親，但義合耳。三諫不從，待放而去。父母生之，骨肉相連屬，復何加焉。君親擇賢，顯之以爵，寵之以祿，厚之至也。⁵ The biggest difference between Zheng Xuan and Xuanzong was that Xuanzong combined the relationship between king and minister and father and son into one, while Zheng Xuan separated the two. For “父子之道天性”, Zheng Xuan said: “父子相生，天之常道。”This means that the relationship between father and son is inherent in heaven and earth and cannot be escaped. As for 君臣之義, Zheng Xuan did not mean that king and minister were father and son. On the contrary, they were different. For this reason, his commentary emphasizes that “the king and his subjects are not blood relatives, but are bound together by *yi*”.君臣非骨肉之親，但義合耳。The king and the minister are united because of *yi*.君臣義和 is the core rule of the relationship between the king and the minister in Confucianism. Zheng’s Annotations was worried that the readers would not know the meaning of it, he added an explanation if the remonstrance was repeatedly remonstrated but not accepted, the minister could leave the monarch. But the relationship between father and son is nature, even if the son remonstrated with his father, he will not leave because his father did not adopt. Therefore, in Zheng Xuan's view, the relationship between king and minister was different in nature from that between father and son.

⁴ Chen Tiefan 陳鐵凡 chief editor, *Xiaojing Zhengzhu Jiaozheng* 孝經鄭註校證 (Nanjing: Guoli bianyiguan, 1987), p.138-141.

⁵ Chen Tiefan 陳鐵凡 chief editor, *Xiaojing Zhengzhu Jiaozheng* 孝經鄭註校證, p.138-141.

Zheng's Annotations separated the relationship between father and son and the relationship between the king and the minister, so the interpretation of the following classics was very smooth. “父母生之，續莫大焉” follows “父子之道天性” Because the relationship between father and son is human nature, nothing can compare to it, Zheng Xuan explained “big” as “無可加於其上”. “君親臨之，厚莫重焉” follows “君臣之義”, Zheng explained “君” as “君上 sovereign”, explained “親” as “親自 in person”, which means virtuous people originally had no title or salary, but were just ordinary people. However, the monarch selected them to be officials in the court because of their good virtue, so that they could give full play to their talents. This is the monarch's heavy favour to his ministers. As can be seen from the comparison of Imperial Annotations, Emperor Xuanzong changed the classics by adding two characters of “也” to combine the principle of father and son with the principle of king and minister, which made the classics read more smoothly. However, the following words “君親擇賢”, did not have much meaning, so Xuanzong had to interpret “the king” to mean that the father was like a monarch 謂君為父，以臨於己. But as far as the whole sentence is concerned, this understanding is obviously not clear.

2. Different interpretations of the meaning of filial piety.

Zheng Xuan explains the meaning of filial piety at the beginning of Zheng's Annotation. Chapter Kaizong mingyi 開宗明義: The former kings were able to use the model of their consummate excellence (*de*) and their vital way (*dao*) to bring the empire into accord (*shun*), and how the people on this account were able to attain harmony (*he*) and to live with each other as good neighbors so that those above and below alike did not resent each other.⁶先王有至德要道，以順天下，民用和睦，上下無怨。⁷Zheng's Annotation: The words 至德 means maintain duty to parents and brotherly love, the words 要道 means rites and music, and character 睦 means intimate. In the original text of the *Xiaojing*, the meaning of filial piety is consummate excellence and vital way, but Zheng Xuan's interpretation narrowed the scope of filial piety. The corresponding notes of Imperial Annotation of the *Xiaojing* is that filial piety is indispensable to both vital way and morality. The wise Kings in ancient times were able to follow the people's wishes and promote the use of filial piety to govern the country, so that

⁶ Henry Rosemont . JR and Roger T Ames, The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence, p.105.

⁷ Li Longji 李隆基 annotated, Xing Bing 邢昺 sub-commentary, *Xiaojing Zhushu* 孝經註疏, p.3.

those above and below alike did not resent each other.孝者，德之至、道之要也。言先代聖德之主，能順天下人心，行此至要之化，則上下臣人，和睦無怨。⁸ The core of the *Xiaojing* is to use filial piety to govern the world, which is a book that declares that the king teaches the people how to be filial to himself. Xuanzong explained “*Xiao* 孝” as “德之至、道之要也”，he clearly grasped the original meaning of filial piety, which the *Xiaojing* emphasizes. On the contrary, Zheng Xuan’s view on the *Xiaojing*, he said: Confucius taught his disciples to learn the Six Arts 六藝. The Six Arts had different directions, but the ultimate goal was Dao. Confucius worried that future generations would learn The Six Arts skills, but forgot that the fundamental goal of learning is *Dao*, worried that future generations could not implement the root cause, so Confucius wrote the *Xiaojing*, a comprehensive collection of The Six Arts.孔子以六藝題目不同，指意殊別，恐道離散，後世莫知根淵，故作《孝經》，以總會之⁹ It can be seen that the purpose of Zheng Xuan’s elucidation is to return to Confucianism. Therefore, the focus of the Imperial Annotations is to emphasize the restraint of filial piety and the fact that the *Xiaojing* is a political classic, which is consistent with the original meaning of the *Xiaojing*. Zheng’s Annotations advocated the ethical significance of Confucianism on filial piety and the moral education function of filial piety.

V. Conclusion

By comparing Zheng's annotations of the *Xiaojing* and Imperial annotations of the *Xiaojing*, it is known that the two annotations are different in the classics used and the analysis of righteousness. By comparing the original meaning of filial piety in the two commentaries, as well as the interpretation of the relationship between ruler and minister and father and son, we learned that the imperial commentary followed the original meaning of "governing the world with filial piety" in the *Xiaojing*. Zheng’s annotation advocates the ethical meaning of filial piety, and restores the omnipotent filial piety in the *Xiaojing* to the family ethics that embodies the love of parents and children and the relationship between people. The reason behind the difference between Xuanzong's and Zheng Xuan's annotations is that when Zheng Xuan annotated the *Xiaojing*, he considered not only the *Xiaojing* itself. He did not treat the *Xiaojing* independently, but interpreted the *Xiaojing* in the context of the Six Arts. Therefore,

⁸ Li Longji 李隆基 annotated, Xing Bing 邢昺 sub-commentary, *Xiaojing Zhushu* 孝經註疏, p.3.

⁹ Chen Bisheng 陳壁生 chief editor, *Xiaojing Xueshi* 孝經學史 (Shanghai: East China Normal University chubanshe, 2015), p.118.

Zheng Xuan annotated the classics with the classics and quoted the Book of Rites 禮記 to annotate the filial piety. As the emperor at that time, Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty started from the perspective of governing the world when annotating the filial piety, absorbing and referring to annotations such as Zheng's annotations and *Kong An'guo of the Old Text Commentary of the Xiaojing*, and integrated his own meanings, so that the Imperial annotations of the *Xiaojing* can more fully implement the filial piety of governing the world.

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