

Lecture 3

Exclusion of the Ruling Class from the Economic Field



Learning outcomes



I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES



I.1 The Theory

- In lecture 14, we discussed the wealth system based on productivity. We raised the potential problem of higher classes taking advantage of the lower classes, because of their superior ability.
- Confucians excluded salaried officials from gainful occupation entirely.
- Is it due the fact that, in ancient times, aristocracy allowed the officials to hold their office by hereditary right?
- Confucius' exclusivity principle means more than that.



- Firstly, Confucius does not allow for aristocracy, so no one would hold office by hereditary right.
- Secondly, even for temporary officials, the exclusivity principle still applies.
- At the time of Confucius, feudal princes and the noble families had both capital (land and capital goods) and political powers. If they should compete with the people in the economic field, there is no foothold for the people.



- *“The emperor ought not to talk about whether he has wealth or not; the feudal princes ought not to talk about whether they have more wealth or less; and all the families which enjoy a public salary ought not to compete with the people for profit.”*

--- Book of Latter Han, Biography of Zhu, Yue and He

- *“Salaried officials should stick to their salaries and not to compete for profit with the people.”*

--- Book of Han, Biography of Dong Zhong Shu



- Direct implications of this principle:
 - Giving a great chance to all common people
 - Economic equality
 - Promoting the character of the ruling class to a higher ethical standard



- Deeper meaning of this principle from an ethical perspective
 - If the government and all the ministers focus on profit only, then everyone will try to “rob” from each other, with no end of satisfaction (lecture 4)
 - *“Superiors and inferiors will try to snatch this profit the one from the other, and the kingdom will be endangered.”*

--- Mencius, King Hui of Liang i
 - The ruling body can greatly influences the people, so they must be ethically superior.



I.2 Exclusion of the Emperor and Feudal Princes

- *“The emperor plants only gourds and flowering plants, not such things as might be stored.”*

--- *Book of Rites, Jiao Te Sheng*

- Since the emperor had the taxes from the imperial state and the tribute from the feudal states, he should be a most moderate man and an example to the whole empire.



- Duke Yin of Lu was condemned by Confucius in the Spring and Autumn, because he left his office and place of work, travelled great distance to come fishing.
- The value of his fish amounted to one hundred kilograms of gold
- The quantity is so great, he was literally competing with the people (*Spring and Autumn, year 5 of Duke Yin of Lu*)



I.3 Exclusion of All Salaried Officials

- *“The Master said, ‘The superior man does not take all the profit that he might do, but leaves some for the people.’ It is said in the Book of Poetry, ‘There shall be wheat-straws left on the ground, and wheat-ears here and there left untouched; for the benefit of the widow.’ Hence, when a superior man is in office (and enjoys its emoluments), he does not go in for farming”*

--- Book of Rites, Record of prevention



- Leaving profit for the people is the fundamental idea of the principle of exclusion.
- *“The officer Meng Xian said, ‘He who keeps horses and a carriage does not look after fowls and pigs. The family which keeps its stores of ice does not rear cattle or sheep.’”*

--- *Book of Rites, the Great Learning*

- The first sentence refers to the one who has just started to become a great official; and the second, to the great official and minister. Indeed, none of the officials should care for any other business.



II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THESE PRINCIPLES



- Example of Gong Yi Xiu, the prime minister of state of Lu.
 - Reading: *Excerpts from Record of the Grand Historian, Biography of virtuous officials (Xun Li Lie Zhuan)*
 - The essential point is that the officials should get only their salary and leave the whole economic field free for the common people.



- Dong Zhong Shu criticised the social condition of his time
 - Reading: *Excerpts from Book of Han, Biography of Dong Zhong Shu*
- Hu Yin's conclusive remark of the exclusion principle
 - Reading: *Excerpts from the General Research, Tian Fu Kao 2*

