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Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda's Study of The Book of Rites

Preface

The Book of Rites was written in the Han Dynasty. *Jingji Zhi* records: "At the beginning of the Han Dynasty, Hejian Xian Wang 河間獻王 got 131 articles was recorded by Zhong Ni's disciples and later scholars... and also got *Mingtang Yinyang Ji* 明堂陰陽記、*Yueji* 樂記 etc. Two hundred and forty in all. Da De 戴德 deleted repetitive content, making them eighty-five chapters, which are called *Dadai Ji* 大戴記. And then Dai Sheng 戴聖 deleted some content from Daide's book, forty-six remain, which is called *Xiaodai Ji* 小戴記. At the end of the Han Dynasty, Ma Rong 馬融 inherited Daisheng's learning. Rong added three more for a total of 49 chapters."¹

Now *Book of Rites* is one of the Three Rites 三禮, Five Classics 五經 and Thirteen Classics 十三經. The book mainly records the ritual system of the pre-Qin period, embodying Confucian philosophical thoughts, such as the view of Tiandao 天道, the universe, and life; educational thoughts, such as personal self-cultivation, education system and teaching methods; Political thoughts, such as ritual system and criminal law; and aesthetic thoughts, such as the theory of harmony in ritual and music, etc. is a very important Confucian classic, and it has an important impact on contemporary cultural education and moral cultivation, as well as the construction of a harmonious society. Before Zheng Xuan in the Eastern Han Dynasty made commentary on this book, the three rites *Zhou Li* 周禮, *Yi Li* 儀禮 and *Book of Rites* had the same status.

¹ 书名: "Jingjizhi" - 中国哲学书电子化计划

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However, after Zheng Xuan's annotations, the status of *Book of Rites* rose day by day, and it was revered as "Classic" in the Tang Dynasty. Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda have outstanding academic achievements, and they can be called representative figures in the Han and Tang Dynasties. The Book of Rites they annotated had a profound influence on the world. Therefore, this article attempts to briefly describe the characteristics of their annotations to the Book of Rites and their main contributions to the study of the *Book of Rites*.

Zheng Xuan

Zheng Xuan was a Confucian scholar and classicist in the late Eastern Han Dynasty. According to "Biography of Zhang, Cao and Zheng" 張曹鄭列傳, the total annotated books by Zheng Xuan include Book of Changes, Shangshu, Mao Shi, Rituals, Book of Rites, The Analects of Confucius, Book of Filial Piety, Dazhuan of Shangshu and so on. Zheng Xuan's own books include *Tianwen Qizheng Lun* 天文七政論, *Liuyi Lun* 六藝論, *Maoshi Pu* 毛詩譜, *Bo Xu Shen Wujing Zhengyi* 駁許慎五經異義, etc., with a total of more than one million words.

The characteristics of Zheng Xuan's commentary on the *Book of Rites*, "Academic Features and Versions of Zheng Xuan's Notes on *the Book of Rites*" mentioned: 1.

"Commentary on the Book of Rites retains many variant characters in scriptures.

According to statistics, there are as many as 206 different variant characters. For this variant characters, he will choose the good ones and follow them, providing important original materials for future generations to study this book. 2. Zheng Xuan's collation

of *Book of Rites* is very detailed. He use the context in the book, other editions, or other books to proofread; or use the font, pronunciation, and meaning of the characters to proofread. His rigorous and scientific style of proofreading is deeply praised and adopted by later scholars. The article "Looking at the Gains and Losses of Zheng Xuan's Annotations to *the Book of Rites* from the Unearthed Documents" also said that the advantages of Zheng Xuan's annotations are: *The Book of Rites* has incorrectly added or deleted characters due to repeated copying, and Zheng Xuan will come to make corrections. Secondly, he correct the characters that are close in form but wrong in form. Furthermore, he pointed out that the pronunciation is close but the word is wrong. 3. Zheng Xuan made concise and precise annotations to the full text of forty-nine chapters of *Book of Rites*. As a result, the commentary are often less than the scriptures. In the article "Rongtong Liuyi, Boer Shouyue—A Glimpse of the Features of Zheng Xuan's Notes on *the Book of Rites*", it is said that the Book of Rites annotated by Zheng Xuan, because of the author's erudition, can be mutually verified and integrated, not only the text before and after the *Book of Rites* is mutually confirmed, and even confirmed the Book of Rites with Zhou Li and Yi Li, and even confirmed the book with documents other than the three rituals. In addition, its explanations advocate to be concise and to the point. Except for a few necessary words, most of them focus on inventing the nature, meaning and function of rituals contained in the text of Book of Rites, which are often to the point.

It can be seen that Zheng Xuan's academic research is rigorous, and he has put a lot of effort into textual research, which is very important and basic for the study of the

Book of Rites in later generations. Secondly, he focused on elucidating the essence of the Rites and the original meaning of the author, leaving aside a lot of tedious and unnecessary research, so that readers can understand the meaning of the Rites itself and achieve the purpose of annotation. The most important thing is that Zheng Xuan has profound knowledge and vision, and the scriptures are connected with each other, so his annotations are of a high level. Therefore, his annotations are widely circulated and have great influence.

Kong Yingda

Kong Yingda is the 32nd generation grandson of Confucius and a Confucian scholar in the early Tang Dynasty. In order to build a unified political situation and strengthen the construction of ideology and culture, Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty took one of the important measures to order Kong Yingda and other Confucian scholars to compose *Wujing Zhengyi* 五經正義 to unify classics. With the compilation of *Wujing Zhengyi*, the imperial court also gained the right to speak of academic authority.

Regarding the characteristics of Kong Yingda's sub-commentary, Tao Guangxue mentioned in an article of "Kong Yingda's Liji Zhengyi Yanjiu": 1. Kong Yingda has a clear exegetical thought, so Liji Zhengyi has rich exegetical content and various methods. 2. Kong Yingda carefully collate the text and correct mistakes before dredging the scriptures. 3. Kong Yingda has conducted textual research on the characters, names, rituals and other systems involved in the scriptures and annotations. The exegesis is quite detailed, such as "Wang Zhi 王制" "Yue Ling 月令" and other

chapters, the sub-commentary are often as long as a thousand words. Kong Yingda also supplemented the classics and fill in the missing pieces to make the discussion complete and rigorous. 4. Interpret the text of The Book of Rites, extract the general meaning of the chapters, separate the levels, summarize the meanings, and give examples and summarize the grammar. 5. Connect the Three Rites. Chen Li 陳澧 once said, "Kong Chongyuan only annotated the book of Rites in the three Rites, in fact, it runs through the Three Rites and various sutras. 6. Kong Yingda followed the principle of "sub-commentary can not contrary to the commentary 疏不破注" The citations not only combine Confucian classics, mainly based on classics and history, but also quote hundreds of schools of thought; they not only respect Zheng Xue, but also do not stick to Zheng Xuan's theory, and extensively absorb the achievements of Li Xue since the Han Dynasty. At the same time, he verified the sources of Zheng's annotations and quotations one by one, distinguished the right and wrong of all theories, which is conducive to grasping the origin of Zheng's Rites and the development of Rites since the Han Dynasty.

7. "Kong Yingda's sub-commentary are not only detailed in the examination of rules and regulations, but also very precise in their moral principle." Especially in the chapters of "The Doctrine of the Mean", "Great Learning", "Yue Ji" and other chapters, the profound and thorough explanations can be seen everywhere. Chen Li said: "Looking at this, we can see that before the Tang Dynasty, there were many scholars who discussed the theory of nature. Kong Chongyuan made sub-commentary, he has been read all over and gave a compromise. Chongyuan is not only deeper in the study

of rituals, but also in the study of Neo Confucianism. Therefore, Liji Zhengyi has an important historical significance in the history of Chinese academics.

Conclusion

Li Tiaoyuan of the Qing Dynasty said: "As for the annotators of the Book of Rites, there was no one more better than Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda in the Han and Tang dynasties. Zheng Xuan's commentary are concise and profound, while Kong Yingda's sub-commentary is elegant and rich diction. The two great Confucians, one with brief annotations and the other with detailed ones, can be said to be complementary. They are both rigorous in exegesis and well-founded; They were the most outstanding ones in the Han and Tang Dynasties, and no one in later generations surpassed them. Therefore, their commentaries occupy a great deal of weight in the history of Chinese Confucian classics, and future generations who study the history of Confucian classics cannot avoid studying them first.