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<i>Student Name: Pang Hoi Na</i>	
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A Brief Discussion to the Filial Children's Way of Survival - in the Book of Songs 詩經 and the Biographies of Exemplary Women 列女傳

Student name: Pang Hoi Na SID: 1903362 Date: 30 Jul 2020

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Professor. Wang, Miss Deng, good morning. My name is Pang Hoi Na and I would like to share with you the topic on 'A Brief Discussion to the Filial Children's Way of Survival - in the Book of Songs 詩經 and the Biographies of Exemplary Women 列女傳.' The presentation will be divided into three parts, introduction, text and explanation, and the last one is conclusion.

1. Introduction

Mencius said, 'The poem Xiao Pan reflects the love for one's parents. The love for one's parents is human goodness.'¹ Children have no complaints when parents made grievous mistakes; it means they feel distant from parents. For those close parent-child relationships, resentment is our common humanity. But it is a pity that after expressing his despair about not gaining his parents' love anymore, the poet drowned himself. I want to find out the turning point for his better decision in this poem and the historical story of the great stepmother Li Mujiang in Han dynasty. Four stepsons hated and slandered her day by day.

¹(Song) Zhuxi (宋) 朱熹, *Mengzi jizhu* 孟子集註 (The collected annotation of Mencius), (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) , the second version, volume 6, book 197, 175. My translation, following Wu Guozhen 吳國珍, *Mengzi zuixin yingwen quanyi quanzhu ben* 孟子最新英文全譯全注本 (New Annotated English Version of Mencius) (Fujian: Fujian Education Press, 2015), 280.

But in the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* said, 撫字益隆，恩養加篤 (she still loved and cared for them even better than her own sons)². She broke through to their prejudices and strengthened the bonds within family. From this discussion about the success and fail examples, let's find out the positive insight to solve the difficulties in modern families.

2. Text and Explanation

2.1 The explanation of the Poem *Xiao Pan*

According to the preface of *Xiao Pan*, 刺幽王也。太子之傳作焉。³ (it pointed out that this poem was written by the imperial tutor to crown prince). He composed this poem to satirize the King You of Zhou Dynasty who was going to depose the 申后 Empress Shen and the 宜臼 Crown Prince Yijiu⁴. Another version said that the poet is Yin Boqi who was exiled by his father Yin Jifu.⁵ The third saying is this poem was not pointing any people, and just for those filial children who were not feeling cherished by parents.⁶ The previous two views all had their literature base but cannot convince each other. Therefore, I agree with the third version which is also with sufficient evidence and more comprehensive. But during the discussion using Boqi as a demonstration model will be easy to understand and intuitive to compare with Li Mujiang.

²(Qing)Zhangying (清) 張英撰, *Yuding yuanjian leihan* 御定淵鑑類函 (The collected book of *Yuanjian leihan*), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 243, book 988, 258. (Ming)Xiejin (明) 解縉等撰, *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 2, book 452, 90. Translated by myself.

³(Han)Zhengshi Jian, (Tang) Lu Mingde sound and meaning, Kong Yingda annotated (漢)鄭氏箋, (唐)陸德明音義, 孔穎達疏, *Maoshi Zhushu* 毛詩注疏 (The annotation of Mao poem), see footnote 1, *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 19, book 69, 554. Translated by myself.

⁴King You of the Chow Dynasty loves his concubine Baosi and want to let her own son Bofu to be the the Crown Prince. (Han) Maohen, Zhengshi jian, (Tang) Kong Yingda (漢)毛亨傳(漢)鄭玄箋, (唐)孔穎達疏, *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (The annotation of Mao poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, book 69, 62. Translated by myself.

⁵(Ming) Feng Weinei (明)馮惟訥撰, *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (The collection of ancient poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 1379, 31.

⁶Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shijing quanshi* 詩經詮釋, (The annotation of the Book of Songs), *Qu Wanli xiansheng quanji* 屈萬里先生全集 (The full collection of Mr. Qu Wanli's book) (Xinbei : Linking Publishing Co., Ltd., 1983), 372.

First, let us have a general idea of the focus in the Xiao Pan and the suffering of Boqi. According to the records in the Book of Songs, the poem *Liu Yue* said, ‘文武吉甫，萬邦為憲(Yin Jifu was a very brilliant military leaders and all-under-heaven praised his solid accomplishments for the nation).’⁷ But considering on the *Lushuang Cao* 履霜操 (the songs of treading on frost),⁸ as the eldest son Boqi has been throwing out of the house, he was desperately poor at that time and needed to weave lotus leaves as his clothes, to appeased his hunger with some edible flowers from the early morning. Many literatures agree the description of Xiao Pan which indicating he was not only bearing the worse living conditions but also the heartbreaking disappointment. This poem Xiao Pan uses the progressive method to express the painful feelings of not getting the love of his parents. At first, he used a soft tone to say, ‘何辜於天，我罪伊何 (What is my crime against Heaven? What is my fault?); and then he emphasized that 心之憂矣，疢如疾首 (I was very mournful; my pain just likes serious headache), 心之憂矣，不遑假寐(I was so worried; I have no leisure to sleep for a while [even] undressed); finally, he asked 君子秉心，維其忍之([But] such is the heart of my parent, why there is nothing they cannot bear to do?).’⁹ It shows that the poet was very talented and sincere with a deep love for his parents. He also used the direct description of others who were living together happily¹⁰ as a contrast to his lonely and sorrow after kicking

⁷*Shijing xiaoya liuyue* 詩經·小雅·六月 (the Book of Songs·Xiao Ya·June), (Song)Zhuxi,(宋)朱熹撰, *Shijing jizhuan* 詩經集傳 (The collected annotation of the Book of Songs), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 5, book 72, 821. Translated by myself.

⁸尹吉甫之子伯奇無罪，為母所讒，而見逐。乃集芰荷以為衣。採檉花以為食，晨朝履霜自傷 (Pochi was innocent but punish by his father because his stepmother told lies. He can only use lotus leaves as clothes and picked the flower of birch-leaf pears as his food). (Ming) Fengwei nei,(明)馮惟訥撰, *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (The collection of ancient poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 1379, 31. Translated by myself.

⁹(Ming) Fengwei nei (明)馮惟訥撰, *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (The collection of ancient poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 1379, 31. My translation, following James Legge, *The Chinese Classics IV-The She King* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2011), volumes 5, 336-340.

¹⁰Guifei titi 歸飛提提 (The situation of many crow fly together), Min mobu gu 民莫不穀(The situation that no one was not happy), Weizu jijì 維足伎伎(The situation of many deer run together), Shangqiu qici 尚求其雌 (The pheasants are bouncing with finding their partner), (Ming) Fengwei nei (明)馮惟訥撰, *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (The collection of ancient poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 1379, 31. Translated by myself.

out by his parents. Niu Yunchen said, ‘The hurt feeling was more than blaming which means he was an honest and kind person.’ We can discover his personal character of nobleness and kindhearted and also cherishing his family ties in this poem.

Moreover, we may have questions why such a good person will be drove away from home? Now, let’s know more about his background. In *Qin Cao* 琴操 (A Colletion of Volumes) Caiyong said, “Boqi’s mother died in very young age and then Jifu married the second wife. Boqi’s stepmother said to Jifu, ‘Boqi likes me because of my beauty.’ Jifu did not believe her so she asked Jifu to stay in the storied building for observation. She put some poison bees on her collar and asked Boqi for help. After Boqi took away those bees, his father blamed him seriously and expelled him. When Jifu followed the King Xuan of the Zhou dynasty travelled outside, he was so touching when reading the poem *Xiao Pan*.” Although there were slightly different¹¹ among documents but the main idea was the same. They all refer to the process that stepmother created the misunderstanding between father and son. Boqi was too filial piety to explain the lie of his stepmother and too angry to escape from the feeling of being misunderstood by his dear father. Therefore, he chose the worst way to end his life early.

From the *Xiao Pan*, we can find two mindset that can help Boqi to save himself. First of all, he mentioned his worry about the future of Zhou dynasty. 踽踽周道，鞠為茂草(The road of Zhou should be wide and smooth, [but now] is overgrown with lush weeds); 菀彼柳斯，鳴蜩嘒嘒(The willow is thriving, [and] the *hui hui* is the noise sound of the tree

¹¹*Qin Cao* 琴操 (A Colletion of Volumes) pointed out, stepmother said, ‘Pochi likes me because of my beauty.’ *Leilin* 類林 recorded stepmother put the snake in a urn and made two sons feel fear and the younger brother shouted that Pochi hit me and made Chifu having suspicion. This book also said stepmother told lies about her foot were stabbed. When Pochi checked her wound and helped her, Chifu misunderstood. The writer said if Pochi explain the truth then he hurts his mother which is not the right way to cultivate oneself so he choose to suicide. Caozhi 曹植 *Tane niao lun* 〈貪惡鳥論〉 (The analysis of the Tane bird) said, Chifu finally discover the truth and revenged for his son. (Wei) *Cao zijian ji* (魏) 曹子建集 (The collection of Cao zijian’s articles) , see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 10, book 1063, 325-326. Translated by myself.

cicadas).¹² These two sentences showed the hidden problems of the nation. The first one refers to the heavy corvee which forces people having no time to farm. The second one conveys that there were many petty, noisy person in the government of Zhou. If he can strengthen this observation and understand the filiality should transfer to undertaking the social responsibility, to be loyal to his father and the country. He can naturally change his hopeless of losing his parents' love to the awakening. He can also get the inspiration from Zhuangzi's saying, '知其不可奈何，而安之若命 (To accept and feel contented that we can do nothing to change our life).'¹³ When committing bad luck, we cannot move it even after try our best then we should accept and transfer the love for our family to the love for all people. It will also be a good choice for him to learn from the Great Shun, 殺之不可得，即求常在側¹⁴ (He cannot be found when his parents want to kill him, but he always be there when his parents need his help.) Boqi should find a way to live alone safely and get back to his family after he become stronger and more brilliant. He can gain the trust and love from his family again.

Secondly, when knowing some petty person were around his father, worry is not the only thing he can do. He should be more skillful and thinking about problem solving. In the poem, he asked why his father believe in the calumny easily.¹⁵ The original text 莫高匪山，莫浚匪泉, (No matter how tall the mountain is, how deep the fountain is, there is nowhere the

¹²(Ming) Fengwei nei (明)馮惟訥撰, *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (The collection of ancient poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 1379, 31. My translation, following James Legge, *The Chinese Classics IV-The She King* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2011), volumes 5, 336-340.

¹³*Zhuangzi neipian renshijian* 莊子·內篇·人世間 (Zhuangzi·Inner volume·The world chapter). (Jin) Guoxiang annotated (晉)郭象注: *Zhuanzi Zhu* 莊子注, see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 2, book 1056, 25. Translated by myself.

¹⁴(Qing)Ye Fangai (清)葉方藹撰: *Yuding xiaojing yanyi* 御定孝經衍義 (The annotation of Xiaojing), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 5, book 718, 64. Translated by myself.

¹⁵ If you listen and distinguish other's word, people will not spread rumors. Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shijing quanshi* 詩經詮釋, (The annotation of the Book of Songs), Qu Wanli xiansheng quanji 屈萬里先生全集 (The full collection of Mr. Qu Wanli's book) (Xinbei : Linking Publishing Co., Ltd., 1983), 375.

calumny cannot exist).¹⁶ There were two version of explanation for this sentence. The other one is the love of parents is as tall as the mountain, as deep as the fountain. I chose the previous one because it will be more consistent for the main content of this poem. All these baseless talks may not hurt Jifu at once but will break the harmony of the family and the stability of society. Laotzu said, ‘知其白，守其黑，為天下式。為天下式，常德不忒, knowing the white, and stay in the black is the way to be a model of the world. To be the model of all-under-heaven is a way to achieve the long-lasting morality.’¹⁷ When seeing this crisis of danger, he should behave as normal and do not have conflict with petty person. He should insist his principle in his deep heart but not showing others. It was so called 和光同塵(cover up one’s brightness and act like a worldly person). He was an heir of a great minister and noble family in the past, he can still adjust his mental attitude after the accidental misfortune. Living contentedly in a poor and low-class situation, waiting for the turning point. For this kind of humble and self-reflect thinking, he can overcome the utterly helpless of no one to depend on anymore. Furthermore, many literatures recorded that Boqi and his younger brother got along well and respect each other.¹⁸ But when Jifu discovered the truth he killed his wife to revenge. Boqi was not dutiful for his brother because his suicide. He ended his poem as 我躬不閱，遑恤我後(I cannot solve my helpless now and have no time to consider about the future of my family) .¹⁹ As the eldest son, he had the responsibility to save his family. When parent faced difficulties, it is the time for him to help.

¹⁶Zheng annotated that, 言人無所不至 (there is nowhere gossip cannot go). (Han)Zhengshi Jian, (Tang) Lu Mingde sound and meaning, Kong Yingda annotated (漢)鄭氏箋, (唐)陸德明音義, 孔穎達疏: *Maoshi Zhushu* 毛詩注疏, (The annotation of Mao poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 19, book 69, 554. Zhu annotated that, 父母之恩莫不深厚 (The love and care of parents are deep). Zhu Shouliang 朱守亮, *Shijing pingshi* 詩經評釋 (The evaluateion and annotation of the Book of Songs) (Taipei: Student Book Co., Ltd, 2017), 597. Translated by myself.

¹⁷(Ming) Shi Deqing (明)釋德清, *Shi Deqing's Annotation of Laotzu Dao De Jing* 老子道德經解(Beijing: Chungwa publishing House, 2019), Chapter 28, 70. Translated by myself.

¹⁸(Liang)Xiaotong edited, (Tang)Lishan annotated (梁)蕭統編, (唐)李善註, *Wenxuan* 文選 (The Selection of Article), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 28, book 1329,487.

¹⁹(Ming) Fengwei nei (明)馮惟訥撰, *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (The collection of ancient poem), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 4, book 1379, 31. Translated by myself.

How come as a son he gives it up? How can his father and brother treat each other after Boqi and his stepmother died?²⁰ Considering about the pain of them, Boqi can be more fortitude to face the adverse circumstance. Enduring the painful and challenging situation means earning a chance to change the family tragedy.

2.2 The explanation of the Mujiang's Nobleness

Next, let us talk about the third inspiration from Li Mujiang – the constant nobleness. Mujiang's husband died in line of duty, her four stepsons often besmirch her good name and hated her increasingly because she was not their own mother. Mujiang still brought them up with benevolence and generosity from beginning to end. Providing the double necessities of life, including clothes and food which always better than her own sons. Her neighbor saw her stepsons treated her badly so persuaded her to left them and went far away from them. Mujiang said, 'I guide them with right moral conduct and then they will change themselves.' Once, her eldest son Chengxing was ill seriously and in a critical condition. She took care for him day and night, cooked medicinal food carefully. Her love and sympathy were so deep, and worries make her weary looking. Chengxing felt very guilty after he recovered. He said to his three younger brothers, 'Our stepmother was sincerely noble and kind which came from her nature. Although she never blamed us and cherished us as usual. But we made serious mistakes and our heart just liked beasts who never knew other's kindness.' He then went to the local jail to tell the magistrate about his evil and begged for punishment. The senior government official knew about Chenhsing's case, he highly praised Mujiang, freed them from conscript labor and encouraged them to change their mistakes. Afterward, all of them became wise and able scholars. Mujiang insisted her moral principle in the test of hate

²⁰Jifu asked his second wife to shoot the butcherbird and then killed her. Therefore, when the butcherbird singing it means someone will die in the family. Caozhi 曹植, *Tane niao lun* 〈貪惡鳥論〉 (The analysis of the Tane bird), (Wei) *Cao zijian ji* (魏) 曹子建集 (The collection of Cao zijian's articles), see footnote 1, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 10, book 1063, 325-326. Translated by myself.

and slander. Boqi was also a kind, honest and filial son if he can wait patiently and insist his unwavering comradeship, he can change his unfortunate life.

3. Conclusion

Although Mencius agreed the blame of Xiao Pan was common humanity, he said the poet did not reach the utmost filiality. Only when one can act like the Great Shun loved his parent without complain even in his fifties, he was a real filial son. According to the literature analysis, we can understand that the conduct and mindset of ancient sages have great help for the modern family problems. Boqi had left us at least a thousand years ago but there were still many young and puerile soul struggling in the lonely and unfortunate family condition. To show them the different mindset of Boqi and Mujiang, to tell them the turning point in their heart are actually very good solutions. Is not it? To teach children protect themselves from dangerous and knowing to solve the problems is the real filiality. It is an important benefit we can learn from the ancient filial stories.

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

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