

# The Internal Relationship and Influence between Confucianism and Ancient Chinese People

Li Dongmei

School of Humanities and Social Sciences Hainan Tropical Ocean University, Sanya, Hainan 572000, China

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**Abstract:** Among the Confucian, Taoist, legalists, and Mohist, it is understandable that Confucianism is regarded as the essence of traditional Chinese culture in modern times. As the educator and thinker, Confucius, during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, has become known to the world because of its large number of students. His book “The Analects of Confucius” became a classic, but the true formation of Confucian thoughts should be started from the Han Dynasty. At that time, “Ban from hundred philosophers, venerate Confucianism”, Confucianism was adopted by the emperor of the Han dynasty as the philosophical foundation of the state, and put an end to the existence of other ideas. Since then, Confucianism has become a formal and orthodox ideology. Naturally, this ideology also represents the roots of the ruling class's “train the people”, “pacify the people”, and “settle the people.” For a long time, the “benevolence” and “rites” influenced the lives and values of ancient Chinese people. This paper follows this historical thread and attempts to answer the implications of this connection.

## 1. Introduction

Opening a long historical chapter, we come to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods. This period is a period of controversy in Chinese history. The reason why there are so many “the hundred schools of thought” in this period is that they represent various of political orientation and strategies of harmonizing the country. In a sense, the theory of “the hundred schools of thought” served the ruling class at the beginning, in order to achieve how to better govern the country. So at that time, the Confucianism was not important as late, even it is not arrogant to a certain extent. It is of course inseparable from the “war chaos” of this period. The war of the states has made the ruling class lose the patience of “training the people”. They are fighting for power in the struggle for the site, and the self-worth was realized. But Confucianism was still liked by some writers and poets. It was his political ideology that advocated “governing the country by virtue” and governing the people by virtue. Harsh politics (including the people-based thinking), which is a kind of thinking with a strong role in comfort the people, has received a large number of fans in the people [1].

## 2. Chinese Context and Development of Confucianism

The Confucianism was raised in the Han Dynasty, which is represented by Confucius, after experiencing the chaos of the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. Why was the Confucianism not valued during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods but reused in the Han Dynasty? This is because at the end of the war, the ruling class desperately needed a kind of philosophical thought for governing the country, and the core of Confucianism was “benevolence” and “rites”; The concept is what the ruling class need. They want the people to be kind and courteous. At the same time, Confucianism is advocating “governing the country by virtue”, governing the people by virtue, and opposing harsh government. At the same time, it put forward “make no social distinctions in teaching” to break the form of aristocratic monopoly education and win the worship of the people. Therefore, it was gradually accepted by the people in the Han Dynasty and became the mainstream of Chinese traditional culture [2].

Of course, the rise of Confucianism in the Han Dynasty was also inseparable from the

acceptance of Dong Zhongshu, the successor of Confucianism. At that time, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Western Han Dynasty, the feudal country was strong, and at the same time, the ruling class's ruling thoughts were relatively lacking. In order to stabilize the state, the feudal rulers also maintained the situation of unity and sought the ideological system from the whole country. Representative Dong Zhongshu absorbed Taoist and Legalist elements that are conducive to monarchy, and reformed Confucianism, especially adding the “divine right of kings” and the unified thought. This kind of monarchy was the original monarch's will. The people came to worship the king, so it was necessary to give the king the supreme “God-like status”. Obviously, this objectively helped the feudal ruler and the centralized government to strengthen the country's status, and also benefited to the stability of the society. His thoughts began to sprout and grow in all aspects of society, and became a situation in which the whole society learned Confucianism, thereby establishing the ideology of Confucianism in feudal society. During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the trend of “combination of three religions” appeared. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Confucianism absorbed useful content from Buddhism and Taoism, and constructed a new Confucian system, “Neo-Confucianism” [3].

The Confucian classics of the Han dynasty attach importance to Chinese classics and culture, and the Song Confucianism mainly explained interpretations and talked about life and death. Therefore, in the Song and Ming dynasties, it was gradually systematized and become the doctrine, which affected the later six or seven centuries after the Song Ming Confucianism became the official orthodox Confucianism. For a century, it has played an important role in maintaining the autocratic political system. For the people, it uses three principles and five virtues to maintain autocratic rule. At the same time, it suppresses and stifles people's natural desires, and has a negative impact to a large extent. Many “uprisings” appeared during the Song and Ming dynasties, naturally because of this harsh “neo-Confucianism” that put a lot of pressure on the people. Of course, Song Ming Confucianism also has its positive meaning and value. For example, it attaches importance to the willpower of the ego, pays attention to integrity, establishes moral character, emphasizes reason and affection, emphasizes human social responsibility and historical mission, and at the same time highlights respect for human nature. Nature has played a certain role in shaping the national character in the long history of the Chinese nation. By the end of the Ming and early Qing dynasties, the three major progressive thinkers were Wang Fuzhi, Gu Yanwu, and Huang Zongxi. In the fierce social changes in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, they enlighten people with people-centered ideas and humanistic arguments, such as opposing monarchy and improving the status of merchants, focusing on gaining experience through practice rather than relying on theory to educate the world. His pragmatic idea was very popular among literati and ordinary people at the time. However, their thoughts did not receive much attention, in the later corrupt Qing Dynasty and the serious monarchy's centralization of power, let alone development. But they were of great significance to the formation of the philosophy of traditional Chinese culture and the development of Confucianism; It is a critique of traditional Confucianism, and also a kind of guidance, which urges our traditional culture to renew a new vitality, and has a great impact on future generations. For example, in the late Qing Dynasty (late 19th century): The implementation of reform in the name of Confucius was a good example. Although the reform failed, it opened the horizon of the Chinese people, and the rise of the old democratic revolution was inseparable. With the advent of modern Chinese society, various Western theories have been introduced into China, forming a strong impact on Chinese traditional culture. Even Confucianism, which has long dominated the Chinese ideological circle, cannot be spared. The May 4th Movement proposed the slogan of “Overthrow Confucianism”. During the Cultural Revolution, the trend of “criticize Confucius” also flourished. Nowadays, we can also hear from time to time the “New Confucianism” and other re-orientations of traditional Confucianism. Concept [4].

### **3. Analysis of Confucianism's Internal Connections to Ancient Chinese People**

The internal connection of Confucianism to the ancient Chinese people is mainly divided into two parts: the first is the enlightenment of the sage's subjective thinking and objective political

theory. Since the Han Dynasty, the ruling class has used Confucianism to control the society and the people, and carry out various of “monarchical thought” with obvious tendencies. This is because the “deification” of the king has gradually led to the formation of a centralized idea; the second is that it has a great influence on the people’s life and production. Confucianism’s core thought is “benevolence” and “rites”, and this has gradually developed into a humanistic philosophy, which is systematic and serves the ruling class. In the centuries of the training of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, people gradually accepted this Confucian idea and spiritual pursuit; especially in the field of education, Confucian ideas are still up to now in connecting our lives such as “teaching students according to their aptitudes”, “be tireless in teaching others”, and “gain new insights through restudying old material”. It can be seen that in the ancient times, the process of people from passive acceptance to active catering was long and far-reaching in the era of relatively lack of information. So it is no exaggeration to say that Confucianism is the root of the ideological culture of the Chinese nation. Its huge influence has always affected future generations. Confucianism advocates “rites” to govern the country. This “ethical and political” thought is a concrete manifestation of “moral culture.” Of course, the Confucianism also had a negative side during the Song and Ming Confucianism period: It does not attach importance to agricultural production, overemphasizes individual obedience to the group, and achieves the unification of ignorance and filial piety by suppressing human personality. The moral and responsibility standards have suppressed human creativity, which become a vassal of the emperors of all ages, and become the ideological weapon of the ruling class. In family life, the ethical relationship is solidified and absolute. This is because the three principles and five virtues and authoritarian parents become the custom and the source of physical oppression and spiritual killing, which of course restricts the development of ancient Chinese society and affects the progress of the Chinese nation .

#### **4. The Influence of Confucianism on Ancient Chinese Society and the People**

The influence of Confucianism on ancient Chinese society and the people is profound. For thousands of years, the feudal society has taught a unified view of the “The Four Books and Five Classics”; it has formed a brand-new ideological system and put this traditional Responsibility, moderation, filial piety, ethics, and seniority are brought to the extreme. At the same time, this ideological system is perfectly combined with the feudal ruler's idea of centralization of power. Of course, Confucianism also has its positive aspects, such as its emphasis on education, and the creation of teaching methods that promote “appropriate teaching”. It still affects education and teaching. At the same time, Confucianism focuses on morality, etiquette, and justice, and get people to comply. From a ideological point of view, it is good at dialectical thinking and has a simple materialist dialectical view. Because it values nature's agriculture, people's experience in life and production, and believes that natural order is the root of human rationality. The idea of “agriculture-oriented” is in line with the lack of actual resources in ancient China. This kind of thought of heavy agriculture is also a natural development. Therefore, for thousands of years, people in ancient China attached importance to farming and regarded the land as the lifeblood for its historical reasons. This source lies in Confucianism.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Judging from the trace of Confucianism over the past two thousand years, Confucianism was once a tool for governing the country that ancient emperors relied on. But from the perspective of the progress of the Chinese nation, it has restricted the development and progress of society and caused the unification of the idea of foolish loyalty and foolish filial piety still affects Chinese society today. It can be seen that the formation and demise of a kind of thought need to go through a long time. Of course, Confucianism also has its positive side. And the education concept of “teaching students according to their aptitude” is still talked about by people today.

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