

The Official-led Revival of Confucian Ceremony at Qufu Confucius Temple

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Abstract

In order to achieve the dream of construction Chinese harmony society which proposed by Chinese government, the Confucian thought which influenced China more than 2000 years might be inevitable and the image of Confucius gradually became to a powerful cultural symbol when the rapid of modernization caused the moral and social issue in China. The heritage of Confucian ethos still affects the authorities that the “ritual” has occupied a crucial position especially the cult and sacrifice of Confucius. The revival of Confucian ceremony at Qufu Confucius temple has shifted in significance from the official religion and Confucian philosophy to one of political symbols of the CCP.

Key words: Confucian ceremony; Chinese tradition; Cultural leadership

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INTRODUCITON

The revival of Confucian ceremony at Qufu Confucius temple has shifted in significance from the official religion and Confucian philosophy to one of political symbols of the CCP. This revival at the temple is used to ensure political loyalty in the inner CCP and establish cultural authority, but the effect of this revival is still struggling with the conversion between Confucian ritual and practical reality because of the deconstruction of

Confucianism during the May Fourth movement and in the 1960s and. Moreover, it should not be ignored that the diversity of community culture is established by ritual teachings of popular organization in terms of Confucian ceremony revival.

1. THE BACK OF “CONFUCIUS CITY”

After the 1980s’ reform, the rapid economic growth in mainland China led to the emergence of latent moral crisis and the decline of Marxism. After a decade of ruthless crackdown on “class enemies” without clear definition, and the destruction of heritage without generating a more promising culture, what remained in society were fear and disillusion. In order to ensure the Party-State’s legitimacy, the revival of traditional Chinese culture such as Confucian ritual was gradual endorsed by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Wu, 2014, p.971; Chan, 2016, p. 89; Tang, 2017). Among series Confucian rituals, the Confucian ceremony, which is used to sacrifice to the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 BC), plays a crucial role to indicate the political, economic and cultural elements of Confucian rituals led by the CCP in attempts to establish political loyalty and maintain social stability. (Yan & Bill, 2008, p.971; Flath, 2016; Murray, 2009, p.372). The CCP listed Confucian ceremony at the temple as part of “national intangible cultural heritage” in 2006 (Yan and Bill: 2008). The official definition of this ceremony is a series of inherited performances of music, dance and rites lasting from Sept 26 to Oct 10 at Confucius temple in Qufu, Shandong province. (ihChina: 2006). However, it is obvious that other parts of this ceremony are omitted. According to research by Billioud and Thoraval (2009), the whole Confucian ceremony at the temple comprises the political discourses and Confucius festival organized by official organs (*guan fang*). Yet different sorts of small-scale Confucian ceremony were also held by common people

(*min jian*). Qufu is the hometown of Confucius, after his death, temple in Qufu was established., many emperors and other visitors came to the temple to hold grand ceremonies to sacrifice to Confucius. The temple and many descendants of Confucius still exist in this city. The CCP have conceived to formulate the model on Jerusalem to develop this Qufu city as “an eastern sacred city” in recent years (Billioud & Thoraval, 2009, p.86).

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORM AND FUNCTION OF CONFUCIUS CEREMONY FROM IMPERIAL TO MODERN CHINA IN OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

Traditional dance, music and rites are performed through this resurrection of Confucian ceremony at the temple. This complex ceremony which is mainly intended to praise Confucius’ merits, inherits the Ming dynasty’s ceremonial standard but have many changed in forms. This ceremony included music, dance, rites and songs patterns from past to present. (Wilson, 2002; Flath, 2016; Murray, 2009). The 2017 Confucian ceremony at the temple (ECNS, 2017) presents means to considerer forms and compare the past and present of this ceremony in general. Firstly, in this process, the cult of dance was regulated to imitate “the eight rows” dance by the authority, to compare with the past, it was no fixed regulation for the cult of dance, the emperors could choose the six or eight rows dance based on Confucian rituals’ text and their own favors. (Wilson, 2002). Then, the sacrificial offering is simpler than the past. From the Han dynasty to present, the “three animals (pig, ox and goat) sacrifice” was the major part of oblation. But in recent years, offering the silks and peaches to Confucius has been oblation instead of animals. some officials have offered a large basket of flowers during this ceremony. (Chen, 2017). Subsequently, the sacrificial music was “Shao” music, Confucius’ favorite. It was played by many traditional Chinese instruments such as chimes and zither (Wilson, 2002). In 2017’s Confucian ceremony, the sacrificial music was recomposed. When the city gate opened, a modern symphony was played; The singers and dancers were temporarily hired from chorus and students. Finally, the sacrificial texts have undergone huge change. Before the CCP’s reform, traditional sacrificial texts were fixed. They were normally coordinated with the cult of dance. Under the CCP’s reinterpretation of this section, some social elites, officials or public property were appointed to write the texts (Falth, 2016). For example, Confucian ceremony of 2017, the vice chairman of china cultural union Pan Lusheng wrote the sacrificial texts and the province’s governor read it at the start of ceremony. (ECNS, 2017)

These aspects of changes in ceremony forms and contents indicate that the CCP’s lead of Confucian ceremony at the temple have been revived in politically controlled grab. Lasswell’s “politics” theory uses the term “political symbol” to denote a tool of any social elites to protect and keep power for itself. For example, the sanctioned words or gesture used by the elite could exploit the work force or taxes. Moreover, this symbol could be intended in grabbing people’s emotion for protecting the legitimacy of regime (Lasswell, 1950). Much of the Chinese historical political stability was founded on feudalism a political order of per dynasties. That imperial society was guided by traditional political symbols such as Confucian rituals that emphasized respect for society’s rulers and elders and morality in personal relationships. Confucian ceremony was highly influential in that era, it could be a political symbol to create the political identification. However, to continue to implement this symbol in modern China, the first issue to face the CCP is giving Confucian ceremony a proper position by CCP after the last suppression of Confucianism in the 1960s (Billioud & Thoraval, 2009). But the reason for the revival was not only political. Yan and Bill (2008) explore Confucian ceremony in the temple’s changing fortunes as related to local tourism. After several experiments with the “Confucius hometown travel project”, in 2005the local cultural administration attempted to negotiate a revival of this ceremony with the central government as a “public cult ceremony”. The ceremony later came under criticism from some East Asian countries which declared that the same Confucian ceremony in Qufu was “inauthentic”. At the same time, some domestic scholars and descendants of Confucius argued that ceremony at the temple should be more traditional and authentic for development of tourism in the future. (Yan & Bill, 2008, p.982) Hence the revival of Confucian ceremony at the temple is no longer the exclusive preserve of emperors and social elites; it has become part of cultural consumption for tourists in the present. To comparison with the past, since Han dynasty, it had been originally for the emperors and descendants of Confucius to show homage to Confucius at the temple, the Confucius was respected as a sage, the most senior of his descendants in each generation has been also ennobled the duke of Perpetuating the Sage (Murray, 2009; Wilson, 2002, p.63). these continuous revivals in the sacrificial scales visually upgraded the “uncrowned king” Confucius to the level of an emperor. In the Ming dynasty, Confucius icons and sacrifices were banned but in Qufu the family sacrifice was still held by the descendants of Confucius (Murray, 2009). The image of this ceremony is different today. The domestic mainstream media such as the People’s Daily reported “Confucianism needed to be transformed and re-packaged so as to ‘advance with the times’” (Wu, 2014). The ceremony today promotes Confucius’ image into a “thinker” or “educator” that the

authorities continue to portray today. At the same time, some segments of society now refer to Confucius as a cultural symbol embodying self-cultivation. Confucius also sometimes acquires the status of a cultural hero or emblem of “cultural China”. Finally, he has also become a tourist icon and focus of economic profits (Billioud & Thoraval, 2009). Above all, this is the image of Confucian ceremony at this temple promoted by CCP.

3. THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CONFUCIUS CEREMONY IN THE CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

In political contexts, Confucian rituals are one of political philosophy of Confucianism initially which reflect the rulers' merits and measurement of officials' test instead of a latest revival attempt of CCP to ensure the political loyalty. From Thomas (2017)'s analysis in early Confucian works such as *Analects* and *Xunzi*, the functions of Confucian rituals are more like the responsibility for both rulers and officials. In this ritual system, the ruler used the ritual as a tool to display his following the traditional merits that people can measure their rulers. It is theoretical that the ruler's inspection of his subordinates' cultivation through their ritual performance. Even the ruler emerged with the moral defects, it could be modified by his officials (Thomas, 2017, p.8). Following Lasswell's theory, this political symbol could be valued for government to seize public emotion and alter public attitudes towards the party (Lasswell, 1950, p.427). Theoretically, since China is in a single-party system, the CCP could easily conduct propaganda policies, with the aim of perpetuating the legitimacy of its regime through the revival of this ceremony.

In recently years, the CCP has not fully revived Confucian rituals, because in imperial China, Chinese society could have been put in order without rule by law. One important thing to note is that Confucian ritual propriety has sustained the root of law (Chen, 2001) and Confucian officials have consistently asserted to suppress the merchants, levied heavy taxes on them, and forbade them from taking the civil service examinations and becoming officials (Tan, 2015, p.93) But nowadays, China is full of political factions and corruption because of lack of rule by law, but need the ritual propriety which includes the moral education to support the not yet completed rule by laws (Tan, 2015, p.99). Some Confucian classics' sentences, which record that officials should be disinterested, were adopted as the teaching material of party school (*dangxiao*) to resist the mid and grass-root party member's corruption (Billioud, 2010). Furthermore, the intra-party cadres needed to encourage and remobilize. As The party itself had become “an organization without energy”, lacking an “energizing ideology motivating its members to excel at public

service and suffer personal sacrifice”. (Ford, 2015) With the related revival at Confucius temple in Qufu, the major character of Confucian ceremony has changed. Before the start of the ceremony, the leader of local government such as mayor of Qufu conducted the speech which repeat the political slogan from the party's past important conferences to emphasize the political loyalty (Sun, 2015). Yet this revival of Confucian ceremony at the temple could enhance the regime's legitimacy to a certain extent. In particular, both the Yuan and Qing dynasties used a revival of Confucian practice to enhance their regimes' legitimacy. (Flath, 2016, p.107) The rulers of the Yuan and Qing dynasties realized that Confucian rituals did not discriminate against their foreign ethnicity, so the Confucian ceremony was a perfect junction with a past not their own. For example, the Kangxi Emperor achieved a remarkable compromise in reviving the custom of the imperial tour and introducing a full “three kneelings and nine prostrations” as the standard salutation during the Confucian ceremony at the temple. The rulers of Qing promoted this ceremony in order to reach the ruling court's legitimacy and attract Confucian officials (Huang, 1998). The CCP has also encountered internal challenges to legitimacy, including persisting insecurities about subversion of its ideals from the ‘spiritual pollution’ of political ideals such as 1990s' Tiananmen students' campaign (Ford, 2015), in order to defend the West—the Chinese Party-State has increasingly ‘Orientalized’ itself and its political discourse. During the Confucian ceremony and Confucius cultural festivals at Qufu which CCP so-called their officials' activities, as Lam (1998) suggests, from the scale of a country governing its sacrifice, the ability of country controlling the public resources and the powerful authority were indicated indirectly. This situation can be related to the Confucian ceremony. Rigid control over the ceremony highlights the CCP's cultural and political discourses as divided into three aspects. Firstly, the CCP is the patron of many “cultural units (*wen hua dan wei*)”. These organizations are registered by common people or social organizations, but the CCP runs them behind the scenes (Alex, 2016). For example, Murray (2009) records that the changes of Confucius' image from past to present. In 2006, the standard portrait of Confucius was replaced by the China Confucius Foundation (COF) which is a public-raising foundation receiving funds from the CCP. Secondly, this ceremony is broadcast by national media (Sun, 2015). Soldiers guard the Confucius temple to keep order and many children stand in main sacrificial square to read the *Analects* in unison. Other social organizations are not allowed to hold ceremonies at this temple that day (Billioud & Thoraval, 2009). Thirdly, the Confucius cultural festival after this ceremony is also a tool for CCP to control political discourse. The CCP evokes the official scholars at Qufu to take part in the ceremony's discourse, these scholars pick the Confucianism which the part can enhance CCP's

legitimacy (Flath, 2016; Billioud & Thoraval, 2009). Last but not least, according to Alex (2016)'s research on social cultural organizations in Qufu, the CCP limits the actions of many social religious organizations such as Christianity groups in many ways. However, although the Confucius ritual teaching groups have risen rapidly in recent years, there is a stronger 'social imperative' to diffuse Confucianism in order to defend against foreign culture and protect national tradition. (Alex, 2016, p.3).

In the result of CCP's economic, cultural and propaganda policies about this revival of ceremony, President Xi Jinping gave a speech on "regaining cultural self-confidence" in which he insisted on supervising and urging every level of the CCP to revive prominent traditional Chinese cultural practices and rituals (People's daily, 2016). This revival of Confucianism lasts from the beginning of 20th century, because the leaders of CCP are aware that if their citizens continually deny traditional culture, the next generation will have no roots in traditional cultural identification, exhibit more skepticism and awareness of the evil in human nature (Chan, 2016, p.4). In 2017, the Shandong province has highlighted the "Core Socialist Values" education which emphasized traditional culture, revolutionary history, and ideology. The local government also made the compulsory class of traditional culture for basic education. (Sixth Tone, 2018).

However, it is hard to control this ceremony. In the eyes of the CCP, Confucianism may be a valuable source of legitimacy to strengthen its rule, filling the ideological void left by Marxism. Some commentators have expressed concern that Confucius, and more generally, overemphasizing the Confucian ceremony is already being politicized turning into a dangerous public obsession that will lead to cultural chauvinism (Ho, 2009). But the CCP is still struggling with its revival of this ceremony because of people's distrust. Firstly, the CCP was deconstructing the Confucianism in 1960s, especially the Confucian ceremony, it had been seen the superstitious action in cultural revolution (Zhang & Schwartz, 1997), even in Kang Youwei's Confucius church which he wanted the Confucianism to be the national religious to counter the western religious invade (Chen, 2016), but the new cultural movement and May Fourth campaign contained the Kang's revival, the leaders of new cultural movements encourage people to strike down the Confucianism because the Confucian ceremony stranded for Feudal restoration (Flath, 2016). Secondly, Huang (1998) argued that the Confucianism is the "public religious", to be corresponded with the ceremony, the sacrificial texts which read the temple always concerns about the flourishing country and the social stability rather than the personal happiness (Huang, 1998). So, the ceremony is not very useful for people to get individual blessings such as with shamans or in Buddhism. They only take part

in this ceremony after coercion from political authority. Otherwise, some local Confucius organizations actually follow this revival to do these ritual teachings (Alex, 2016), although some local ritual teaching organizations just concentrated on commercial profit, the connivance of the official with sympathetic participation is indirectly monitoring (Billioud & Throval, 2009); many people still think the ritual teaching is no help for their children to access university entrance examinations (control., 2017, p.170). Moreover, the abuse of tourism resources is another reason that people do not accept the revival of Confucian ceremony. The local government of Qufu destroyed many historical buildings outside the three Kong science spot to construct tourist centers and hotels (Yan & Bill, 2008; Flath, 2016). The local government might keen for speedy economic success, but it has already provoked some international tourism to reject the cultural consumption. Therefore, at this stage, the CCP cannot completely control this use of this revival, as Flath (2016) argued that it must be sensed that the whole ceremony was not fully manipulated of the performers, and could even create profound dilemmas for its clients in remaining perpetually open to investment, contradiction, and "regulation by excess". But under the background of CCP's lead of Confucian ceremony revival, using the Confucian rituals frequently may stand for decency and honor that confer an element that is 'soft' and persuasive, rather than violently repression. the quick speed of the spread of popular ritual teachings could enrich the community life.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the CCP is eager to search the 'reasonable core' of Confucianism and adopt it in its moral and cultural construction. In recent years, Besides the more "traditional" and "authentic" continue revival of Confucian ceremony which the CCP has declared to enhance its cultural legitimacy, Chinese Party-State also desires to establish a sort of ideological battle field by this revival, attempting to resist the western culture. In the future, the research of Confucian ceremony will be enriched if the CCP still insists the traditional culture resurgence. But there is one that should be alert that stifling standardization of CCP's interpretation Confucius ceremony might be so politicization that the effect of this revival might be reduced.

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