

绝不允许用儒学取代马列主义

‘Confucianism Cannot Replace Marxism-Leninism in China’

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This is the fourth article in the new six-part series on the theme “CPC’s ‘Two-Line Struggle’”. The first article in the series can be accessed [here](#); the second article in the series can be accessed [here](#); the third article can be accessed [here](#). We welcome contributions from our readers in the series.

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Méi Róngzhèng



'Xi Jinping trying to fuse Confucianism with Marxism' – A commentary in *The Economist* (Nov. 2023) on the just aired CCTV new TV show

In the new stage of socialist modernisation construction, which has made great achievements and social development, China has been facing many problems. It is in this context, some “mainland neo-

Confucianists” advocate the comprehensive revival of Confucianism; rebuilding the spiritual home of the Chinese people with Confucian thought at the core; and using Confucian political wisdom and guiding principles to transform China’s political reality, i.e., “replacing Marxism-Leninism with Confucianism” and “Confucian-ising the Communist Party”. This raises the question of how to understand Confucianism and its functions, and how to treat Confucian culture in the process of the Chinese nation’s search for the path of revival and development. This article intends to explore this issue.

I. The Function of Confucianism cannot be Magnified

“Mainland New Confucianism” advocates the comprehensive revival of Confucianism. One of the important reasons is that in the process of pursuing modernisation, contemporary China has encountered problems such as lack of faith, spiritual emptiness, overall decline in social morality, people’s behaviour disorder, tense interpersonal relationships, prominent contradictions between man and nature, etc. and so on. These problems cannot be overcome by modern industrial civilization itself, and can only be solved through the comprehensive revival of Confucianism. Confucianism is a panacea

for China today. So, does Confucianism really have such a powerful function?

Confucianism was transformed into the ideology of the feudal ruling class during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Western Han Dynasty, and achieved a unique orthodox status. In the long feudal era, Confucianism continued to enrich and develop in order to adapt to and meet the needs of feudal autocratic rule, and some new theoretical forms emerged, such as science, psychology etc. At the same time, under the promotion and even coercion of the feudal autocratic regime, the ideological content of Confucianism gradually penetrated into all aspects of social life, forming a cultural form with Confucianism as the theoretical basis. Overall, Confucianism, which has been transformed and developed by Confucianists of all generations, advocates obedience to the people and benevolent governance to the monarch at the level of the whole society, and pursues the construction of a hierarchical society with clear hierarchy, stable order, and each monarch and the people keeping their own duties; at the level of individual society, it advocates that people should abide by the Three Bonds and Five Constant Virtues, “control themselves and return to propriety,” and cultivate people with

benevolence, responsibility, loyalty and integrity. Confucianism played three major functions in China’s feudal era: First, Confucianism advocated “great unity” in politics and preached “the divine right of kings,” which was conducive to the centralisation of autocracy and the maintenance of national unity, providing theoretical support for feudal autocratic rule; second, Confucianism advocated the “inner sage and outer king” thought of “cultivating oneself, managing the family, governing the country, and pacifying the world,” providing a unified value system for society and conducive to forming a consensus in the whole society; third, Confucianism proposed a series of behavioural norms such as “propriety, benevolence, loyalty, filial piety, faith, and righteousness,” coordinating interpersonal relationships in social life, maintaining social order, and conducive to achieving social stability. In summary, Confucianism showed its distinct interpretive value and constructive value in Chinese feudal society.

It should be noted that even in the feudal era, the function of Confucianism was limited. As the ideology of the feudal ruling class, Confucianism could neither prevent nor solve the problems of land annexation, polarisation between the rich

and the poor, and political corruption that occurred in various dynasties, nor protect the feudal dynasties from collapse. It also had no fundamental restraint on the feudal monarchs and individual bureaucrats. There were countless incompetent monarchs, tyrants, and corrupt officials in Chinese history. In the Northern Song Dynasty, Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi made innovations in Confucianism and promoted the “study of righteousness and reason.” In the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi inherited the two Chengs and developed them independently, integrating the great achievements of Neo-Confucianism and highlighting the function of Confucianism in controlling society. However, the weak Southern Song Dynasty could not resist the Mongols’ iron cavalry. In the middle of the Ming Dynasty, Wang Yangming developed Confucianism to the stage of mind learning. He attached great importance to ethical concepts and personal moral cultivation, and wanted to “destroy the thief in people's hearts” to deal with the power struggles among officials and the successive peasant uprisings. However, it created a trend among the entire scholar class to talk about morality but not practical matters, and a considerable number of bureaucrats lacked the necessary political ability. In the Qing Dynasty, the dominant position of

Confucianism was higher than that of the Han Wu period. Both official and private schools were dominated by Confucianism. However, the highly “Confucian” Qing Dynasty was increasingly heading towards political corruption, military disuse and ideological silence.

If we count the feudal dynasties in China, the most prosperous periods do not correspond to the prominent status of Confucianism. For example, in the prosperous period of the early Han Dynasty, the Huang-Lao school of thought was respected, and Confucianism had no status. The Tang Dynasty reached its heyday in Chinese history. The rulers of the Tang Dynasty regarded themselves as the descendants of Laozi, promoted Taoism, and established Taoism as the state religion. As for Buddhism, which was widely believed by the people, the rulers often promoted or suppressed it for political reasons. The rulers of the Tang Dynasty also respected Confucianism and used it to govern the country. But overall, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism coexisted in the Tang Dynasty, and Confucianism did not have an absolute advantage. It can be seen that Confucianism has no direct connection with the prosperity of the feudal dynasties.

In modern times, when mankind was irresistibly moving from traditional agricultural civilization to industrial civilization, and when China was invaded and plundered by Western industrial powers, Confucianism, as the official ideology, was not only unable to understand and solve the problems China was facing at the time, but also unable to respond theoretically to the invasion of Western powers and the introduction of Western culture. The “Three Bonds and Five Constant Virtues” that maintained social ethics and the feudal autocratic system, and the concept of “Heaven does not change, and the Way does not change” that controlled society, instead became an ideological obstacle to reform and revolution and the exploration of a way out for the nation.

History is a mirror. Since Confucianism could not solve the problem of long-term stability of the dynasty in the feudal era of China, nor was it a necessary condition for the prosperity of the dynasty, it could not solve the problems of the independence of the Chinese nation, the territorial integrity and security of the country in modern times, and could not guide the Chinese nation to maintain independence and achieve prosperity. However, with the trend of economic globalisation

accelerating, scientific and technological progress changing with each passing day, the competition among countries in the world for comprehensive national strength becoming more intense and complex, and China having established the basic socialist system and is rapidly promoting socialist modernisation, Confucianism can no longer solve the problems facing China today.

We should have a dialectical attitude to understand the function and value of Confucianism, and we should not exaggerate it unilaterally. This is because: First, from the perspective of the content of Confucianism, it advocates “inner sage and outer king,” attaches importance to moral education and self-cultivation, which can play the cohesive and integrating functions of coordinating interpersonal relationships and achieving social stability in a certain period of time. However, Confucianism emphasises human relations over nature, morality over crafts, agriculture over commerce, righteousness over profit, etc., and it is difficult to meet the needs of human society in terms of pursuing the growth of material wealth and production efficiency; it particularly emphasises the maintenance of the power and interests of the rulers, the maintenance of the hierarchy, and provides

a theoretical basis for the continuous expansion of the power and interests of the rulers, which is conducive to the strengthening of the power and interests of the ruling class, leading to the intensification of social polarisation, until social unrest and the decline of the dynasty. At the same time, Confucianism pays attention to its own “orthodoxy” and forms exclusivity, and maintains the existing order and opposes reform and change. The conservative nature makes it unable to face the new situation and resolve social contradictions. The ancients said: “In a well-governed world, there is Taoism, in a chaotic world, there is Buddhism, and from order to chaos, there is only Confucianism.” This statement reveals the limitations of the function of Confucianism. Second, historical materialism believes that social existence is the root of social consciousness, social consciousness is the reflection of social existence, and all social consciousness is dependent on social existence. Although social consciousness has relative independence, has independent manifestations and forms different from economic life, has a relatively independent development process and internal laws, and has a huge reaction to social existence. However, the degree and effect of this reaction are often subject to social existence. “Only when the economy

develops and politics is clear can the entire country be strong and stable. Culture can only play its best role under the conditions of economic fundamentals and an optimised political system.” Although Confucianism has long dominated the ideological and cultural fields of feudal society, its actual effectiveness in various dynasties of feudal society was restricted by social and economic conditions and political conditions, and its theoretical content was also adjusted with changes in political structure and political relations.

It is not that the “mainland new Confucianists” do not understand China’s history or the actual function of Confucianism. The reason why they want to magnify the function of Confucianism is not to promote and revitalise the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, nor to use the positive factors in Confucian culture to respond to the problems of China’s modernisation and maintain the stability of contemporary Chinese society, but to oppose the political pursuit of Marxism and socialism.

II. A Comprehensive Revival of Confucianism is Not in Line with the Historical Trend

Marx once pointed out: “All historical states that have successively changed are only temporary stages in the infinite

development process of human society from low to high. Each stage is inevitable, and therefore, for the era and conditions in which it occurs, it has its reason for existence; but for the new and higher conditions that gradually develop within it, it becomes obsolete and has no reason to exist; it has to give way to a higher stage, and this higher stage will also decline and perish.” History is the same as cognition. Any culture is a product of certain historical conditions. When the historical conditions of its existence change, it either conforms to the changes in historical conditions, absorbs new cultural elements, creates new theories and new forms, or gives way to other cultures and becomes a legacy. If you must oppose the development of the times, the result will inevitably be abandoned by the historical trend.

1. The End of the Restoration of Confucianism in the 20th Century

The comprehensive revival of Confucianism advocated by the “New Confucianists on the Mainland” is nothing more than a rehash of the old tune. After the Revolution of 1911, attempts to restore the mainstream ideological status of Confucianism appeared again and again, but they were ultimately rejected by history because they went against the

historical trend. After the Revolution of 1911, Yuan Shikai stole the fruits of the revolution and set off a counter current of “respecting Confucius and restoring the past” in order to restore the monarchy. In September 1912 and March 1913, Yuan Shikai successively issued the “Order to Rectify Morality” and the “General Order to Respect Confucius,” praising Confucianism as applicable to all countries and advocating etiquette. Kang Youwei, who once advocated the Restoration Movement and the Reform, did not move forward with the progress of history. He was obsessed with restoring the Qing Empire and served as the president of the Confucian Church. He openly attacked the Revolution of 1911 and the republican system, claiming that “since the Republic, rituals and music have been abolished, all rules and regulations have been changed, and the moral principles and laws have been swept away.” In 1916, he wrote to the Beiyang government, demanding that Confucianism be made the state religion and “incorporated into the constitution, and the worship and kneeling of Confucius be restored.” This was undoubtedly helping the tyrant and cheering for Yuan Shikai to restore the monarchy. For a time, organisations that respected Confucius and restored the past emerged, and activities such as the Spring Ding Worship of

Confucius and the Autumn Ding Worship of Confucius continued to rise, causing a sensation. However, the Revolution of 1911 had already established the concept of democracy and republic in the hearts of the Chinese people. Yuan Shikai's perverse actions to restore the monarchy aroused strong opposition from bourgeois revolutionaries, progressive intellectuals and the people of the country. In the end, Yuan had to give up his dream of becoming emperor. Kang Youwei was widely condemned by the intellectual community, who accused him of demanding that Confucianism be included as the state religion in the constitution, calling it a "constitution of stale dead people," "a constitution of ancient tombs," and "a constitution that protects the authority of idols." Chen Duxiu said: "Mr. Kang telegraphed the government to worship Confucius and respect religion, but no newspaper in the north or south agreed; the Congress advocated deleting the Confucius-honouring clause in the constitution, and the Ministry of the Interior abolished the kneeling etiquette, but no newspaper in the north or south opposed it. And one of the original books said, 'The measures taken by the government have shocked the people of the country.' Another one said, 'The state affairs department has taken the lead in banning the worship of the saint, and the

world is shocked, surprised, and laughed at!' I know that there are only a few people who are shocked, surprised, and laughed at, except Mr. Kang. How can he represent the people of the country and slander the world?" Liang Qichao said sarcastically that his teacher Kang Youwei had transformed from a historical giant into a historical dwarf.

Starting from 1915, a group of advanced intellectuals deeply reflected on the lessons of the failure of the Revolution of 1911, and realised that it was necessary to attack feudal ideas and feudal consciousness from the perspective of culture and thought, and transform the national character domesticated by Confucianism, in order to achieve national rejuvenation and prosperity. They launched the New Culture Movement and advocated "democracy" and "science." Gu Hongming, Lin Qinnan, Liu Shipei and other literati tried their best to maintain Confucianism and defend feudal ethics and morality, setting off a trend of retroism. They accused the New Culture Movement of "advocating utilitarianism and losing integrity and shame, respecting science and losing propriety and righteousness, taking debauchery as freedom and taking plunder as responsibility," and that science, utilitarianism, freedom and competition were all bad things. They

advocated reading scriptures and respecting Confucius, supporting the monarchy, and advocating restoration under the banner of “nationality,” “nationality,” “national essence” and “national studies.” However, the progress of the times and the demand for national strength marked the backwardness of feudal revivalism. In the sharp criticism of the fighters of the New Culture Movement, revivalism lost its market in the field of thought.

In the 1930s, China saw a climax of respecting Confucius and restoring the past. After Chiang Kai-shek established his regime in Nanjing, he clearly advocated that “propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame” be the foundation of the country. In 1929, the National Government promulgated the “Educational Purpose and Implementation Guidelines,” which pointed out that “loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, faith, justice and peace” were the educational content of national morality; in 1931, the Nanjing National Government ordered all schools across the country to hang plaques with the eight characters “loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, faith, justice and peace” in the auditorium and public places; in 1934, the Central Standing Committee of the Kuomintang passed a resolution on

worshiping Confucius, and the National Government began to promote the “New Life Movement,” advocating respect for Confucius and reading the classics, and requiring that propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame be implemented in everyone's food, clothing, housing and transportation. The promotion of the “New Life Movement” was based on the consideration of “pacifying the country before resisting foreign aggression” and was to cooperate with the military encirclement and suppression of the rural bases led by the Communist Party of China and the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. In his book “The Destiny of China,” Chiang Kai-shek claimed that “China's inherent philosophy of life, through the creation of Confucius, the elaboration of Mencius, and the interpretation of Han Confucianism, has become a lofty system that is superior to any other philosophy in the world.”

With the support of the National Government, the New Confucians actively wrote books and a group of cultural conservatives published the “Declaration of Cultural Construction Based on China” in 1935, arguing that several cultural movements since modern times, especially the May Fourth New Culture Movement, “underestimated the particularity of

Chinese space and time,” leading to the loss of Chinese culture. They proposed to build Chinese culture in accordance with the principle of “not being conservative, not blindly following, taking a critical attitude based on China, and applying scientific methods to review the past, grasp the present, and create the future,” but in fact they still insisted on “Chinese learning as the body and Western learning as the use.” In response to this retro trend, progressive people such as Ai Siqu, Lao She, Sha Ting, Li Gongpu, Zhou Jianren, Yu Dafu, Hu Sheng, Chen Wangdao, and Ye Shengtao jointly signed and published “Our Opinions on the Cultural Movement,” clearly pointing out that the retro movement would have no future. If reading scriptures could save the country, then the “Reform of 1898” and the “Revolution of 1911” would not be necessary; the result of the development of the retro movement would be a poison, and it would definitely not have the effect of resurrecting the nation’s future. Lu Xun pointed out that those who revered Confucius were just using Confucius as a “stepping stone,” but the times were different, and these people were bound to fail, and Confucius was also “fallen into a tragic situation.” Indeed, revering Confucius did not play any role in consolidating Chiang Kai-shek’s dictatorship, and Chiang Kai-shek’s

dictatorship was overthrown in the storm of the people's revolution. History has drawn a conclusion here: thoughts and behaviours that go against the trend of social and historical progress can only fail.

2. It is Impossible to Fully Revive Confucianism in Contemporary China

In the new stage of building socialist modernisation in contemporary China, it is completely impossible to fully revive Confucianism. This is because:

First, the economic foundation for the comprehensive revival of Confucianism no longer exists. Culture as the superstructure is a reflection of the economic form or economic foundation of a specific era. Confucian culture is the sublimation and condensation of agricultural civilization, and the small peasant economy based on private land ownership is its economic foundation. In modern times, with the invasion of China by Western powers that completed the industrial revolution and the development of the domestic commodity economy, China's small peasant economy has increasingly lost its time and space for development. After the completion of socialist transformation, China established public ownership of the means of production, and in rural areas it was a collective economy under public

ownership. Since the reform and opening up, China has gradually established a basic economic system in the primary stage of socialism with public ownership as the main body and the common development of multiple economies, established a socialist market economic system, and implemented the household contract responsibility system in rural areas, which still belongs to the category of collective economy. Farmers' production is not mainly to meet the living needs of individuals and families, but is linked to the market. The urbanisation process of rural China has begun, and a large number of surplus rural labour has been transferred to industry and cities. Although some characteristics of small peasant economic production are still retained in rural areas, with small-scale family operations and life, it is completely different from the traditional closed and self-sufficient small peasant economy. If the skin is gone, where will the hair be attached? How can we talk about reviving Confucianism?

Second, the social foundation for the comprehensive revival of Confucianism has been lost . Confucian ethical concepts, political ideals, and personality ideals are all linked to the social ecology of patriarchal peasants. The feudal patriarchal relationship is the social foundation for the

existence of Confucianism. With the transformation of China's social system, the development of productivity and the advancement of modernisation, whether it is the state structure, rural management, or family organisation, people's living scope and lifestyle have undergone adaptive changes towards modern society. Although there are still some remnants of feudal patriarchal concepts in people's minds, the entire social outlook of China today is fundamentally different from that of feudal society. The social ecology on which traditional Confucianism depends for its survival and development no longer exists.

Third, many ideological contents of the comprehensive revival of Confucianism conflict with China's social development orientation . Building a socialist country with Chinese characteristics is to make China prosperous, democratic, civilized and harmonious. However, many ideological contents in traditional Confucianism conflict with the requirements of modern social development. The Confucian political ideal of "family harmony," "national governance" and "peace in the world" is to achieve the stability of the agricultural society under the low level of productivity and the people's peace and prosperity. Confucianism adheres to the principle of

ethics as the centre, does not attach importance to the creation of social wealth, the development of productivity and the progress of technology, which does not meet the fundamental requirements for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation; Confucianism recognises and maintains an unequal social system, regards “the Way of Heaven,” bloodline and wise men as the source of state power, and advocates “the divine right of kings.” Its distinct autocratic preference is contrary to the democratic and equal concepts of capitalism, and is contrary to China’s active development of socialist democracy and the pursuit of people being masters of their own country; Confucianism emphasises people’s obedience and blind obedience to the feudal system, which leads to people’s slavery, complacency and lack of creativity. This mentality and character quality cannot become the basic spiritual quality of modern people; Confucianism advocates that the rulers govern the country in accordance with the social hierarchy and status determined by “ritual,” and entrusts the world’s peace to the self-cultivation of wise monarchs. This typical theory of rule by man is fundamentally opposed to the socialist rule of law concept and is not conducive to my country’s construction of a socialist rule of law country. These ideological contents are precisely the manifestation of the

feudal nature of Confucianism, which is an important reason for the decline of Confucianism over the past 100 years. If we follow the Neo-Confucian ideas and revive these things, how can we talk about the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation?

The theory of “comprehensive revival of Confucianism” ignores the trend of development of the times, ignores the profound changes in the world pattern and China, is divorced from the wishes and demands of the Chinese people, and is not the conclusion of scientific research at all, but a conjecture that disregards historical facts and the current situation.

III. Scientific Attitude and Principles towards Confucian Culture

The cultural development of any country or nation cannot be separated from the inheritance and absorption of its own cultural traditions. Based on the development principle of historical dialectics, Marxists have consistently opposed the view that traditional culture is opposed to socialist culture, historical nihilism, and the uncritical and unreformed copying of traditional culture that is divorced from the contemporary environment and the current situation. Lenin once profoundly pointed out:

“Communism arises from the sum of human knowledge, and Marxism is a model in this regard.” He also pointed out: “When we talk about proletarian culture, we must pay attention to this. It should be clearly recognised that only by accurately understanding the culture created by the entire process of human development and only by transforming this culture can we build proletarian culture. Without such an understanding, we cannot accomplish this task. Proletarian culture did not fall from the sky, nor was it fabricated by those who claim to be experts in proletarian culture. If you insist that this is the case, it is complete nonsense. Proletarian culture should be the development of all knowledge and laws created by mankind under the oppression of capitalist society, landlord society and bureaucratic society.” It was for this reason that Lenin sharply criticised the practice of “inventing one’s own special culture,” believing that this practice was “wrong in theory and harmful in practice.” He emphasised that “Marxism, the ideological system of the revolutionary proletariat, has won world-historical significance because it has not abandoned the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois era, but on the contrary has absorbed and transformed everything valuable in the development of human thought and culture over the past

two thousand years.” These famous quotes of Lenin not only criticised the fallacy of denying the significance of past cultural heritage and attempting to create a “pure” proletarian culture through a “laboratory path” that is divorced from real life, but also explained the premise and foundation for the emergence of communist culture and demonstrated the basic attitude of Marxists towards historical and cultural heritage.

China has formed a splendid traditional culture in the long process of historical development. As early as the 1930s, Mao Zedong pointed out that “learning our historical heritage and summarising it critically with the Marxist method is another task of our study. Our nation has thousands of years of history, its own characteristics, and many precious things. We are still primary school students in terms of these. Today’s China is a development of historical China; we are Marxist historicists, and we should not cut off history. From Confucius to Sun Yat-sen, we should summarise and inherit this precious heritage.” He stressed that the value of Chinese cultural heritage should not be ignored, and advocated that Chinese cultural heritage should not be rejected or blindly copied, but used critically, pointing out that “clearing up the development

process of ancient culture, eliminating its feudal dross, and absorbing its democratic essence are necessary conditions for developing a new national culture and enhancing national self-confidence; but we must never uncritically absorb and integrate.” He summarised the “ancient and modern, Chinese and Western” cultural debates in modern Chinese history and proposed that China should establish a “national, scientific, and popular” new culture. After the founding of New China, Mao Zedong clearly put forward that the basic attitude and principle towards Chinese traditional culture is to “apply the past to the present” and “discard the coarse and retain the fine, and discard the false and retain the true.”

In the process of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Chinese Communists inherited Mao Zedong's ideological achievements, always emphasised the dialectical analysis of traditional culture, and respected and promoted excellent cultural traditions. Deng Xiaoping once clearly pointed out that we should boldly absorb and learn from all the achievements of civilization created by human society. Jiang Zemin emphasised that the Chinese nation is a great nation with a long history and excellent culture. Our cultural construction cannot be separated from history. We

should take the essence of national traditional culture, remove its dross, and develop it in combination with the characteristics of the times, so that it can be continuously carried forward. In his report to the 17th CPC National Congress, Hu Jintao pointed out: “Chinese culture is the inexhaustible driving force for the Chinese nation to thrive and unite and forge ahead. We must fully understand the traditional culture of the motherland, take its essence, discard its dross, adapt it to contemporary society, coordinate it with modern civilization, maintain its national characteristics, and reflect the times.” General Secretary Xi Jinping has also clearly pointed out that “Chinese civilization is a civilization of reform and innovation, with deep currents and magnificent waves intertwined. Continuity is not stagnation, let alone rigidity, but a process of historical progress supported by innovation. The Chinese nation has always been creating its own material civilization, spiritual civilization and political civilization with the spirit of ‘constantly renewing, renewing day by day, and renewing again day by day’. For a long period of history, it has been the most prosperous and A powerful civilization stands tall in the world. The innovativeness of Chinese civilization fundamentally determines the enterprising spirit of the Chinese nation to uphold the

truth and not to be conservative, to respect the past and not to return to the past, and determines the fearless character of the Chinese nation to not fear new challenges and to be brave enough to accept new things.” These statements explain that China's excellent cultural traditions are the rich cultural heritage left by the ancestors of the Chinese nation and the profound source of the Chinese national spirit; the construction and development of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics is a cultural creation with China's excellent cultural traditions as the source under the guidance of Marxism. It cannot sever the natural connection with Chinese traditional culture, but should make full use of the rich resources of traditional culture and promote the excellent factors in traditional culture to build the characteristics of Chinese socialist culture. The two extreme attitudes towards traditional culture, namely the attitude of nihilism or abolitionism and the attitude of total affirmation and total inheritance, are not conducive to the development and continuation of traditional culture under the conditions of modern society.

Confucian culture is the main body and core of Chinese traditional culture. In Confucian culture, there are aspects of feudal autocratic ideology, maintaining

feudal rule, maintaining the small peasant economy production mode and fooling and controlling the people, as well as democratic factors on state governance, ecological wisdom on the relationship between man and nature and moral philosophy on personal self-cultivation. The essence and dregs coexist, good and bad are mixed, and the flaws are seen in each other. Therefore, for Confucian culture, which has a long history, rich content, profound and complex ideological implications, and diverse forms of expression, it is necessary to conduct a specific analysis in combination with its content and historical role. We cannot simply dismiss it as feudal culture and ignore its positive factors because it is closely related to agricultural economy, feudal system and family society in history, and its theoretical basis, Confucianism, is the official philosophy of the feudal dynasty. We cannot apply the feudal and backward content of the culture to the present without analysis and discrimination, or even promote the feudal dregs as the essence of Chinese traditional culture.

In building a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, we must make full use of the vast resource base of Confucian culture. On the basis of learning and

research, we must absorb and transform those aspects of Confucian culture that are in line with the requirements of the development of the times and the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, including excellent value principles and moral requirements, so that they can become the source of the socialist value system. We should carry forward the spirit of vigour and action advocated by Confucian culture, such as “the heaven moves vigorously, and the gentleman should constantly strive for self-improvement,” the spirit of dedication of “devoting oneself to the cause until death” and “sacrificing life for justice,” the sense of historical mission of “a scholar must be broad-minded and resolute, and the responsibility is heavy and the road is long,” the independent personality of “wealth and honour cannot corrupt, poverty and humbleness cannot move, and power and force cannot bend,” the sense of crisis of “being happy with the world and worrying about the world,” the idea of world unity, and the tolerance of “gentlemen are harmonious but different,” etc. We should give full play to the positive role of Confucian culture in resisting individualism, materialism, hedonism, regulating the relationship between man and nature, interpersonal relationships and the cultivation of man's mind and body; for some ideas and moral

requirements for maintaining feudal rule, we can strip away their feudal nature, extract the positive factors in them, and make them the ideological resources of socialist culture. For example, the idea of people-oriented and the idea of emphasising agriculture, etc. The “people-oriented” in Confucianism is not fundamentally based on the people, requiring feudal rulers to govern for the people, but from the perspective of long-term feudal rule, it warns rulers to pay attention to the people's sentiments and not to push the people into a situation where they “have to rebel”; emphasising agriculture is to maintain the small peasant economy and the social structure built on it, and to maintain the order of feudal society. Its original intention is not to respect and meet the interests of farmers. However, these contents can be transformed into socialist values that put the interests of the people first after eliminating their feudal nature, and into political wisdom that attaches importance to rural construction, agricultural development and improvement of farmers' lives in my country; feudal dregs in Confucian culture that conflict with the development of modern society and conflict with the requirements and value pursuits of the socialist system, such as “three obedience and four virtues,” the concept of rule by man, etc., should be

criticised, and these aspects should be prevented from resurfacing under the pretext of promoting excellent cultural traditions and influencing people's thoughts.

In short, we should adhere to the principles of “applying the past to the present,” “eliminating the coarse and retaining the fine, discarding the false and retaining the true,” inherit all the excellent factors in Confucian culture, critically absorb and utilise the beneficial elements in Confucian culture, and deny and abandon the feudal dregs therein. This is to respect Confucian culture and to respect the law of dialectical development of culture.

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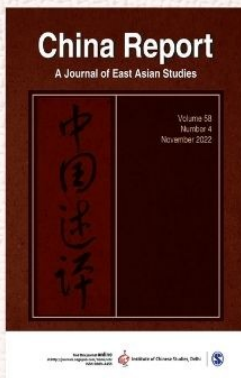


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