

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EARLY CONFUCIANISM AND HO CHI MINH'S THOUGHTS ON THE GOVERNOR'S MORALITY

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Abstract: *in any era, to build and develop a regime, it is important to have a method of training and using the governors. Confucius believed that governance is made not by violence but by morality of the governors, and the building of good morality is important. Like Confucian scholars, Ho Chi Minh believed that morality plays a fundamental role in building an ideal person. Morality is the root of people especially who are revolutionaries and cadres. In this paper, the author presents the views of early Confucian scholars on the morality of the governors and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on the morality of cadres. The article also points out the influence of Confucian influence on Ho Chi Minh's thoughts, and the qualitative difference between Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on the morality of cadres and early Confucianism on the morality of the governors.*

Keywords: *Confucianism, Ho Chi Minh, morality, governors, cadres.*

СХОДСТВА И РАЗЛИЧИЯ МЕЖДУ РАННИМ КОНФУЦИАНСТВОМ И МЫСЛЯМИ ХО ШИ МИНА О ПРАВСТВЕННОСТИ ГУБЕРНАТОРА

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Аннотация: *в любую эпоху, чтобы построить и развить режим, важно иметь метод обучения и использования правителей. Конфуций считал, что управление осуществляется не насилием, а моралью правителей, и создание хорошей морали важно. Как и конфуцианские ученые, Хо Ши Мин считал, что мораль играет основополагающую роль в построении идеального человека. Мораль является корнем людей, особенно революционеров и кадров. В этой статье автор представляет взгляды ранних конфуцианских ученых на мораль правителей и мысли Хо Ши Мина о морали кадров. В статье также указывается на влияние конфуцианского влияния на мысли Хо Ши Мина и качественное различие между мыслями Хо Ши Мина о морали кадров и ранним конфуцианством о морали правителей.*

Ключевые слова: *конфуцианство, Хо Ши Мин, мораль, правители, кадры.*

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Introduction

Confucianism is a political, ethical, educational, and social management doctrine that was born and held a dominant position in the superstructure of Chinese feudalism for thousands of years. One of the reasons for the success of Confucianism is that this doctrine focuses on educating and training noblemen and officials who serve the king and help the country on both his virtue and wisdom. This doctrine is considered an ideology that has had a profound and long-lasting influence on Vietnamese society. Not only did it contribute greatly to the state organization, the maintenance of social order, economic development, and literature production during the monarchical dynasties, but also gradually shaped the customs, activities, morality, and interpersonal relationships in Vietnamese society over ages.

The concept of an ideal society in early Confucianism is a stable society with hierarchical order, where people have a relatively adequate material life and are able to access education. To build that ideal society, early Confucian scholars believed that it was necessary to build an ideal model, a pioneer who is a nobleman, with noble moral qualities and knowledge, whose ability to cultivate himself, to manage the family, to govern the country, and to bring peace to the world. In Ho Chi Minh's thoughts, "Socialism is when people have adequate to eat, to wear; people are becoming happier and happier. Everyone has opportunities to go to school, take medicine when sick, and retire when old." In that society, "everyone has morality and volunteers to do the job. Production is abundant. Therefore, everyone has what they need." The most important thing is in that society, the working people are truly the owners and truly have freedom. Although Ho Chi Minh and early Confucianism had the same desire for an ideal society, Confucian scholars wanted to bring back the good

society of the past in the Yao and Shun period where a hierarchical social order was maintained, whilst Ho Chi Minh, based on Marxism, dedicated his lifetime making a better society which is “increasingly progressive, materially increasing, and spiritually improving”.

Early Confucian scholars emphasized the role of morality in state governance. They believed that governors who want to rule and lead the people must firstly have morality. In Confucius's view, educating people by morality is better than governing people by punishment: “When government orders are used to guide the people, and punishment is used to maintain order, people can avoid crime but would not be ashamed. When morality is used to guide, and ritual is used to maintain order, people would be ashamed and move towards the goodness” [1, p. 215]. Later, Mencius even emphasized the role of morality of the governors in governing and educating the people: “There are three things in the world that people respect: title, age, and morality. All are equal. In the court, nothing is more precious than title; in the village, nothing is more precious than age; in terms of educating the people, nothing is more precious than morality”. Mencius also believed that morality is more powerful than violence. Morality is the lasting root of political regime, because morality conquers people's hearts while violence only makes people afraid and unconvinced: “When force is used to conquer, people are not convinced; they only submit because they do not have strength (to resist). When virtue is used to conquer, people are truly happy, and fully convinced, like the seventy students who believed in Confucius”².

Ho Chi Minh also put emphasis on the moral role of the cadres, especially the morality and moral cultivation. He believed that, to build socialism the cadres must have good morality: “Just as a river must have a source for water, without a source the river will dry up. A tree must have its roots, without the roots the tree will wither. A revolutionary must have morality, without morality, no matter how talented he is, he cannot lead the people. Liberating the nation and liberating humanity is a major task. If one does not have morality and does not have the foundation but is corrupted and evil himself, what can he do?” [2, Volume 5, p. 252-253], “A revolutionary must have revolutionary morality as a foundation, only then can he complete the glorious revolutionary task”. Thus, Ho Chi Minh considered morality as the root, playing a fundamental role in building an ideal cadre. Morality is the root of a person, especially a revolutionary or a cadre. “Having talent without morality is a failure” and “Morality must come before talent” [2, Volume 9, p. 492]. Accordingly, the “morality” of a cadre and a party member is revolutionary morality, which could be shown in political qualities, ideology, morality, lifestyle, and infinite loyalty to the Party, to the country, to the people, to socialism, and their readiness to fight and sacrifice for that noble goal and ideal.

Although both emphasized the role of morality of governors, there were fundamental differences between Ho Chi Minh and the early Confucian scholars. Ho Chi Minh said: “Some people think that old morality and new morality are not different. That is a big mistake. Old morality and new morality are very different. Old morality is like a person with his head upside down on the ground and his feet up in the sky. New morality is like a person with both feet firmly on the ground and his head up in the sky.” He also said, “That morality is not a conservative morality. It is a new morality, a great morality, it is not for personal fame, but for the common interests of the Party, of the nation, of humanity.” For early Confucian scholars, the people were considered the objects of rule, and the purpose of education was also to make the people know etiquette, which helped the governors do their job more easily. Therefore, Confucianism believes that if a governor has morality and cultivates himself, the people will follow. The world will be peaceful and prosperous. The governor who has morality is like the Polaris; he just stays there, and all directions turn to him. In Ho Chi Minh's thought, a cadre has morality, and cultivates his morality to serve the people, serve the country, for the purpose of liberating the working people, bringing them to the position of masters. Thus, although he emphasized the role of morality, Ho Chi Minh does not believe that if only cadres cultivate morality and accumulate virtue, the country will be independent, and the nation will be free and happy. To successfully build socialism, the working people and the whole nation must fight steadfastly and indomitably under the leadership of the Communist Party and the cadres with revolutionary morality. In that fight, the morality of revolutionary cadres plays an important role.

Viewpoint on setting an example

The Confucian scholars of the pre-Qin period all advocated *Virtuous Governance*. The first illustration of *Virtuous Governance* was setting an example. “Using oneself to teach the people, using morality to influence the people” means that the superiors correct themselves to pacify the people, and the inferiors follow. According to Confucius, if the governors know how to do humane and moral things, the world will naturally look up to him and imitate him. He said, “using virtue to do political work is like the Polaris, staying in its place and all the other stars will pay homage to it” [1, p. 214].

According to Confucius, man in power must set an example for the people. They themselves must first be *upright* and honest so that the people will trust them: “If (the ruler) himself is upright, even if he does not give orders, everything will still go smoothly; if he is not upright, even if he gives orders, the people will not follow” [1, p. 502]. According to him, “If one can correct oneself to be upright, governing the people is not difficult, isn't it? If one cannot correct oneself to be upright, how can one correct upright people?” [1, p. 507]. To have a *legitimate* name, one must be *upright* and speech must also be *upright*. Words and actions must be aligned with each other. One must not talk much but do little: “The man is timid in speech, but diligent in action” [1, p. 547], one's attitude must be sincere and respectful; moreover, one must “work diligently and be careful with words” [1, p. 209] and “speak slowly and work diligently” [1, p. 209]. To do so, each person must be honest and keep his word.

Ho Chi Minh also believed that revolutionaries and cadres who want to lead the people must first of all set an example for the people, and that practicing morality is more important than theory: “A living example is worth more than a hundred convincing speeches” [2, Volume 1, p. 263]. He emphasized: “In front of the public, we cannot just write the word “communist” on our foreheads to be admired by them. The public only admire those who have character and morality. If we want to guide the people, we must set an example for them to follow... To call on people to be economical, we must be economical ourselves first” [2, Volume 1, p. 552]. Therefore, cadres and party members must be exemplary, take the lead in the revolutionary movement, have a clean and healthy lifestyle, be close to the public, be attached to the people, be modest, receptive, have a spirit of solidarity, mutual love and affection. Only then the cadres will be trusted and supported by the people.

Viewpoint on loving the people

In Confucius's political philosophy, the ruler must love the people, save the people's wealth and energy (*tiết dụng nhi ái nhân, sử dân dĩ thời*), make the people populous, rich, educated (*Thù, phú, giáo*), limit wars, not massacre the people, create a stable and peaceful life for the people.

Confucius valued the people and always reminded the rulers to love the people, save the people's wealth and energy, make the people populous, rich, educated, and to pay attention to the core issues of the country such as adequate food, adequate military force, and to be trusted by the people. Mencius further developed that idea by advocating that the people are the most precious, then the country, and the king is the most important (*dân vi quý, xã tắc thứ chi, quân vi khinh*). In the doctrine of Humanity, Mencius required the rulers to make the people have a sufficient material life (*hàng sản*), collect taxes in moderation, regulate land fairly, reduce punishments, limit wars, build “walled houses” and “temples” to educate the people. While Confucius advocated the practice of *Virtuous Governance* by requiring those in power to fulfill five things, which are respect, tolerance, honesty, diligence, and grace (*cung, khoan, tín, mẫn, huệ*) [1, p. 618], Mencius emphasized that men in power must enjoy the joys of the people, care about their worries, remain humble, live frugally, and show grace to their subordinates. Mencius even believed that kings who are immoral, harmful to the people, and harmful to the country must be deposed. Thus, in the political policy of taking Humanity as the core, both Confucius and Mencius were concerned with the responsibility of the ruler to the people, must know how to love the people, care for their material life, and especially pay attention to educating the people. That demonstrated the profound humanistic spirit in the way of governing the country of early Confucian scholars. However, the limitation in the thought of Confucius and his disciples on loving people comes from their class position, loving people, but not bringing about human liberation. In fact, the early Confucian scholars still wanted to maintain a society with class distinction, in which the majority of the working-class were still oppressed and exploited.

In Ho Chi Minh's thought, loving the cadres is expressed in the spirit of serving the people, the country, and the cause of liberating the working people. Revolutionaries are always “upright, without selfish motives, without doing wrong things, and without hiding anything from the Party. Apart from the interests of the Party, there are no personal interests to worry about. When the Party assigns a task, no matter how big or small, they must do their best to do it carefully” [2, Volume 5, p. 252]. Anything that is beneficial to the people must be done with all their might, anything that is limited to the people must be avoided with all their might. In Ho Chi Minh's thought, the morality of cadres have new, more specific, and practical content, which is the boundless love for the Fatherland, for compatriots, the working people, and the boundless loyalty to the cause of liberating the working people. The love of humanity of revolutionaries and cadres in Ho Chi Minh's thought has a more proactive meaning, expressed in the spirit of resolutely fighting against things that are harmful to others and to the people, not only expressed in the love for the people but also in the limitless faith in the strength of the masses, encouraging them to voluntarily stand up to liberate themselves.

Third, moral cultivation

To build an ideal society, early Confucianism believed that there must be a wise king and virtuous ministers. Early Confucian scholars placed moral cultivation first, those in power must be self-aware, self-cultivate morality “from the emperor to the common people, everyone must take self-cultivation as the root”. Those in power must strive to perfect themselves in all aspects, must have proper thoughts and behaviors, they are the ones who carry the name of morality, of righteousness, all their thoughts and actions have an impact on society. Mencius said: “The nobleman does great deeds to the people without waste, makes the people work hard without resentment, has desires without greed, is relaxed without arrogance, is majestic without being fierce” [1, p. 687]. The nobleman must also always examine himself to prevent possible mistakes, and if they occur, must be determined to correct them, “if there are mistakes, do not be afraid to correct them” [1, p. 203]. A man must always pay attention to correcting and perfecting himself: “When looking, hope to be clear. When listening, hope to be clear. Maintain a gentle expression. Maintain a humble appearance. Say something, hope to be honest. Do something, hope to be respectful. When doubting something, think of asking. When angry, think of trouble. When seeing benefits, think of righteousness” [1, p. 605-606]. A nobleman must know how to adjust his mental state, live leisurely and calmly, without worrying or being sad about personal gains and losses, and live in harmony with others without losing his own personality (a man is in harmony but does not disagree) [1, p. 519].

Ho Chi Minh deeply recognized the role of morality in building a new society in a society with strong oriental characteristics and strong Confucian influence like Vietnam. Right from the early days of the Vietnamese revolution, he

emphasized the importance of cultivating morality in communist soldiers: “The key to success or failure is whether the cadres are imbued with revolutionary morality or not” [2, Volume 7, p. 480]. In the process of leading the Vietnamese people in the resistance war to save the country and build socialism, until the end of his life, he always reminded everyone to overcome individualism, cultivate revolutionary morality and he himself set a shining example of cultivating the morality of communist soldiers for our Party and people.

According to Ho Chi Minh, “revolutionary morality does not fall from the sky. It is developed and consolidated through daily struggle and persistent training. Just as jade becomes brighter if it is more polished, or gold becomes purer if it is more refined. There is nothing more glorious and joyful than cultivating revolutionary morality to make a worthy contribution to the cause of building socialism and liberating mankind [2, Volume 5, p. 293]. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh requires “hard training to succeed”. “Goodness and evil are not inborn traits. Most of them are formed through education”. “Perseverance and patience... Unwavering spirit”.

Cultivating revolutionary morality must be based on the spirit of self-awareness and voluntariness, based on the conscience of each person and public opinion. Revolutionary cadres must be aware that revolutionary morality aims to liberate people and are the morality of liberated people. When engaging in revolutionary activities, it is difficult to avoid mistakes and shortcomings. The problem is to try to correct mistakes and shortcomings, and to have the courage to correct them when seeing shortcomings [2, Volume 5, p. 252]. The moral cultivation of revolutionary cadres must be linked to practice, persistently, at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances. Only then can we distinguish the moral cultivation of communists from that of Confucian scholars. He wrote: “Communist ideology and individual ideology are like rice and weeds. Rice must be fertilized to grow well. Weeds grow wildly without care. Communist ideology must be trained hard to be achieved. Individual ideology is like weeds, growing and developing very easily” [2, Volume 5, p. 488]. Therefore, cadres must constantly study, cultivate revolutionary morality, improve their scientific and technical competency level, correctly perceive the inevitable laws of historical development, the future of the Fatherland and the tasks of the individual, not be afraid of hardships and sacrifices, uphold the revolutionary spirit, be determined to realize the ideals of independence, freedom and socialism, complete any tasks, overcome any difficulties, defeat any enemies. Cadres must strive to preserve *revolutionary morality*, *uphold the spirit of thrift*, integrity, impartiality, fight against corruption and waste, live a clean, modest and simple life. “Do not covet position, do not covet money. Do not covet pleasure. Do not covet people who flatter you. Therefore, be open and upright, never commit adultery” [2, Volume 5, p. 252].

Conclusion

In the concept of early Confucian scholars, to build an ideal society, ideal persons must be built, that is, gentlemen with moral qualities such as *Humanity, Righteousness, Propriety, and Wisdom*. In the process of training and using people in power, early Confucianism required people in power to cultivate themselves, to constantly study, to be upright, exemplary, to love and care for the lives of the people, to help the people, “to do things ahead the people, to work hard to help the people” (*Tiên chi, lão làng*) without ever getting tired (*Vô mệt*) [1, p. 496]. Confucius and the founders of early Confucianism took the ideal model of the ancestors, they always praised Nghieu, Thuan, and admired Zhou Gong, considering them models for everyone to follow. But those were too ideal models, difficult for anyone to reach and not suitable for the social reality of the present time.

In Ho Chi Minh's view, “to build socialism, first of all, we need socialist people” [2, Volume 10, p. 310]. The ideal model that Ho Chi Minh wanted to build was a model of people who were both *virtuous* and *talented* (vừa *hồng* vừa *chuyên*). Ho Chi Minh built a model of people who were both *virtuous* and *talented* on the basis of social reality, starting from the specific tasks of the revolution, in accordance with the historical necessity of humanity on the path of building socialism. These were people who were conscious of being masters of the state, had the spirit of socialist collectivism and the ideology of “*one for all and all for one*” [2, Volume 10, p. 311], were honest, upright, modest, close to the masses, had the spirit of “worrying before the world, being happy after the world”, had the spirit of self-discipline and strict organizational awareness, setting an example of “*diligence, thrift, integrity*” (*cần kiệm liêm chính*), “*impartiality (chí công vô tư)*” [2, Volume 10, p. 309].

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