A STUDY OF THE XIAO-JING

Abstract

Besides touching on the questions of the authenticity of authorship and the date of publication of Xiao Jing (孝經), this thesis primarily explains its philosophical ideas and discusses their social impacts, hoping that this would reveal the influence and value of such ideas. This is because, till now, there is a dearth of comprehensive work of this nature.

Xiao Jing, a remarkable literature compiled more than two thousand years ago in China, was widely recognized as a valuable book by the society of ancient China for its tremendous social impacts which have never ceased affecting the development of China for more than two thousand years.

It is said that Xiao Jing is a compilation of Confucius's discussions with Zeng-Shen (曾參) on filial piety. The present version that has been popularly studied consists of 18 chapters, covering all aspects of the topic. The book narrates in great detail social class distinctions and categorizes broadly society into five classes of people: the emperors (天子), the feudal lords (諸侯), high-ranking officials (卿大夫), scholars (士) and the civilians (庶人). Scholars rank in the second last category and they are considered lower-ranking administrators. There are chapters on their social status, occupations, the guiding principles of "filial piety" and feats of filial piety. Although it is a short book of filial piety,
consisting of about 1799 characters, the popularity and perpetuity of its philosophy had frequently been adopted and popularized by the emperors or rulers and intellectuals in various dynasties. Its philosophical ideas had greatly influenced the people's concept of ethics, society, politics and religion in China. What really makes Chinese culture different from that of the West is the great emphasis on "filial piety".

In the chapters on Analysis and Criticism of its significance and ideas, the writer of this thesis is certain that Xiao Jing's influence and contribution in the modern age are still great. The writer is also confident of the continued role Xiao Jing would play and its further development in the modern society. The writer firmly believes that the abandonment of Xiao Jing after the May Fourth Movement of 1919 in China is a serious mistake. The writer has finally evolved his personal views on methods of studying, interpreting and implementing the philosophy of Xiao Jing.

Today the fact that Xiao Jing has been translated into Japanese, Korean, English, French, German and Italian evidently tells of its far-reaching influence. In conclusion, though Xiao Jing's contribution to academic value is discountable in the development of the culture of a nation, its influence is immeasurably great. Therefore, to understand the local Chinese community in our Republic, their traditions, social structure and culture in general, one has to read this remarkable document Xiao Jing.