Abstract

Confucianism has become one of the most studied topics in recent years due to the economic success of Japan and the Four Little Dragon (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), which are all heavily influenced by the Chinese culture in general, and Confucianism in particular. Among the many aspects of the Confucianist’s school of thoughts, I feel that the economic thoughts of Zhang Junmai (1887-1969), a modern Confucianist who was active during the period during which the Chinese culture was under massive criticism as a result of the impact of the Western culture, should be given due considerations. This is not only because his thoughts are relevant to the developing countries in many ways even today, but also because Zhang Junmai was among the very few at his time who was able to harmonize the Western and Chinese culture. A detailed study of his thoughts will therefore be able to cast some lights on the direction of cultural interaction between the East and the West, which is one of the main concern of the world after the Cold War.

This thesis focuses on the following area:

(i) The factors contributing to the formation of the economic thoughts of Zhang Junmai. These include the historical background, influences from both Eastern and Western economic thoughts, and the relation between his economic and political thoughts.

(ii) Zhang Junmai’s views on different economic systems, such as capitalism and communism, and his own “National Socialism”. Since
every economic system is backed up by its own philosophy, the
approach used in this chapter will be somewhat philosophical. Topics
like individualism, egoism, historical materialism and dialectical
materialism will be discussed.

(iii) Some economic polices proposed by Zhang Junmai for China, mainly
in the 1930s and 40s. The author evaluates the feasibility of Zhang
Junmai’s proposal using ideas which are developed by Western
economists. However, the economic environment of China then is not
neglected.

(iv) The contributions of Zhang Junmai’s economic thoughts and his place
in the history of the Chinese economic thoughts. This study will mainly
focus on how Zhang Junmai harmonized the concept of morality and
materialistic nature of human beings, which are always seen as
contradicting since the Qin dynasty.

The findings of this thesis suggest that even though there are some limitations to
Zhang Junmai economic thoughts, he is still one of the most important economists in
China throughout history.