

**M A S A R Y K O V A
U N I V E R Z I T A**

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Filial Piety in Contemporary China: A Political Discourse Analysis

Magisterská diplomová práce

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Seminář čínských studií
Obor Kulturní studia Číny

Brno 2021

MUNI
ARTS

Bibliografický záznam

Autor:	Bc. Jan Štefanko Filozofická fakulta Masarykova univerzita Seminář čínských studií
Název práce:	Filial Piety in Contemporary China: A Political Discourse Analysis
Studijní program:	Mezinárodní teritoriální studia
Studijní obor:	Kulturní studia Číny
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Bc. Magdaléna Rychetská, M.A., Ph.D.
Rok:	2021
Počet stran:	81
Klíčová slova:	filial piety, Xi Jinping, Chinese Communist Party, discourse analysis, political discourse

Bibliographic record

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Title of Thesis: Filial Piety in Contemporary China: A Political Discourse Analysis

Degree Programme: International Territorial Studies

Field of Study: Culture Studies of China

Supervisor: Mgr. Bc. Magdaléna Rychetská, M.A., Ph.D.

Year: 2021

Number of Pages: 81

Keywords: filial piety, political discourse, discourse analysis, Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping

Anotace

Diplomová práce si klade za cíl zanalyzovat roli konfuciánského konceptu synovské oddanosti v současném čínském politickém diskurzu. Koncept synovské oddanosti tvořil více než 2000 let základ čínské společnosti. Ovlivňoval vládu dynastických panovníků, byl přítomen v čínských zákonech a určoval dennodenní život čínských obyvatel. V průběhu 20. století ovšem význam synovské oddanosti poklesl spolu s tím, jak se v čínské společnosti zvyšovala míra individualismu. Čínská vláda se ovšem snaží koncept synovské oddanosti i nadále propagovat. Tato práce se proto zaměřuje na způsob, jakým tak činí.

Abstract

The thesis aims to analyse the role of the Confucian concept of filial piety in contemporary Chinese political discourse. The idea of filial piety has formed Chinese society for more than 2000 years. It has influenced the rule of dynastic rulers, been present in Chinese laws, and determined the daily life of Chinese citizens. During the 20th century, however, the importance of filial piety declined as the degree of individualism in Chinese society increased. The Chinese government, however, continues to promote the concept of filial piety. This paper thus examines how the Chinese Government promotes it.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis with title **Filial Piety in Contemporary China: A Political Discourse Analysis** I submit assessment is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis

The thesis was completed within the cooperation framework between the Department of Chinese Studies (Masaryk University) and the Institute of China Studies (Zhejiang University) where the thesis was supervised by Dr. Zhang Xingkui.

Brno August 20, 2021

.....
Bc. Jan Štefanko

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor Mgr. Bc. Magdaléna Rychetská M.A., Ph.D. for her guidance and suggestions throughout the project.

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Glossary

CCP	– The Chinese Communist Party
KMT	– The Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang)
PRC	– People's Republic of China

1 Introduction

“Of all the virtues, filial piety comes the first” (*bai shi xiao wei xian* 百事孝为先) this Chinese saying demonstrates that filial piety and respecting elders are considered as vital virtues in Chinese culture. For thousands of years, the Chinese culture has been described as one of respecting the elders (Chow 1991, 210). Hugh D. R. Baker (1979, 98) argues that respect for the family is the one element common to almost all Chinese people.

Filial piety can be defined as a virtue of respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors. In the Chinese language, filial piety is expressed by the character 孝, which is made from the upper part (老 – old) and lower part (子 – son). Ikels (2004, 3) offers three possible interpretations of this character. One is that the young generation supports the old. However, it can also mean that the young age is burdened by the old. Finally, because Chinese were initially written from top to bottom, it can also mean a simple continuation of the family line, that is, the father produces the son.

It is the family system's specific position in Chinese society, that makes filial piety crucial for Chinese society. The family in China was not only a social unit, but it represented a whole codified ideology that pervaded the state and the society for thousands of years. Latourette (1964, 565) describes the traditional Chinese family system as one that “had a leading part in economic life, in social control, in moral education, and government”.

From the Chinese philosophical perspective, an orderly family system has formed the starting point of a harmonious cosmos. A family could only be orderly when members learned to behave appropriately toward each other. Mencius once said: “The root of the world lies in the state; the root of the state lies in the family; the root of the family lies in the person” (*The Mencius*, 4A/5). In traditional China, it was widely believed that a peaceful world could not exist without well-governed nations, and such nations were built upon orderly families.

Thus, filial piety has served as a regulator of proper behaviour both within the family and broader society. C. K. Yang (1959, 51) says that while the functioning of the filial piety was limited to the relationship between parents and children, the veneration of age by the young generation was traditionally a means of inspiring respect and obedience by the young toward all the other senior members of the family and society as a whole. Kutcher (2006, 12) confirms that devotion to one's parents was often associated with one's devotion to the state.

There is a consensus among contemporary Chinese scholars that the meaning of filial piety in China in the last several years has changed (Yan 2003, 2009; Chen et. al, 2007). However, scholars diverge in opinions about the importance of filial piety in contemporary China. Some scholars (Laidlaw et al., 2010) argue that because of the rapid globalization, family obligation and filial sentiments have weakened in recent

times. However, other scholars (Chen et. al, 2007) add this decline is more at a behavioral level than the attitudinal level.

Qi (2015) argues that filial piety continues to be significant in contemporary China because of the absence of welfare for elderly people. There are other scholars (Cong & Silverstein, 2008; Chappell N. L. & Kusch, 2007) arguing that filial piety is strong mainly in rural areas where elders do not have any other choice but to rely on their children. Contrarily, Whyte (2005), based on the observation of the elderly people in Hebei province and Taiwan in the mid-1990s, concluded that the filial piety persists in Chinese society.

Zhan (2004), based on survey data collected in 1997-1999, concludes that there are no significant differences in accepting filial piety among only-children and children from multiple child-families. Deutsch (2006) on the other hand, states that only children are more planning on helping their parents and reside in the same city as were children with siblings.

As for the cross-cultural research of emphasis on filial piety between Chinese parents and parents from Western societies, Pearson and Rao (2003) argue that mothers from China value filial piety more than mothers in Europe and the USA.

Other scholars (Wang, 2004; Thomas, 1990; Cheung, 2009) focused on the relationship between filial piety and modernization. Wang (2004) claims that with societal and economic modernization, filial piety will decrease in China. Thomas (1990) and Cheung (2009) state that although the filial piety is decreasing in modern China, it can be sustained by education and practice.

As can be seen from the above-mentioned works, filial piety in contemporary China has been a very frequent topic among Chinese and international scholars. However, there is a gap in examining the role filial piety plays in contemporary Chinese political discourse. Although there are quite a few works that deal with the Confucianism in the contemporary Chinese political discourse (Billioud, 2007; Ai, 2008; Sun, 2013) none of these works focus specifically on filial piety. The aim of this research is therefore to examine what role filial piety plays in the contemporary Chinese political discourse.

In order to address the aim of this thesis, it aims at answering following research question:

What kind of discourse Xi Jinping creates on filial piety in his public speeches since he has become the President of the People's Republic of China in 2012?

In addition to this main research question, this thesis further aims to examine *how the discourse on filial piety created by Xi Jinping differs from the traditional meaning of filial piety defined in Confucian Classics*. Last but not least, this thesis also aims to discuss *how does Xi Jinping use the concept of filial piety in his speeches to promote the Chinese Dream*.

In order to answer above-mentioned research questions, the thesis conducts a discourse analysis of selected Xi Jinping's speeches. To conduct a discourse analysis, it is necessary to first define the term discourse since it is used in different ways. Tannen et al. (2015, 1) define discourse as language in sequence beyond the sentence. Fairclough (1989, 22) defines discourse as a form of social practice. Van Dijk (1997, 1-3) views discourse as text in context. He claims that for the study of discourse, it is essential to focus on four aspects – who use the language, how is the language used, why is the language used, and when is the language used. According to Fairclough (1989, 24), discourse is the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part.

Discourse refers to every kind of verbal and written communication, ranging from a personal letter to a newspaper report or a family talk to a political speech. It forms a part of a communicative event (van Dijk, 1997, 13), where thoughts and feelings are conveyed or exchanged through language. Discourse mediates ideology and facilitates the circulation of power in a variety of social institutions. In conventional ways, it helps to maintain and reproduce social relationships, social identities, and existing systems of knowledge and belief, and in creative ways, it helps to transform them (Svetanant, 2009, 226).

Political discourse can generally be defined as the written or spoken language, verbal or non-verbal, used in politics to affect the attitudes and opinions of a specific audience. It is distinguished from other types of discourse because it is directive to a certain group, functional, well organized, and rich in figurative language, i.e., metaphors and similes (Al-Faki, 2014, 180).

Political discourse plays an essential role in shaping people's thoughts and attitudes. Politicians usually function their rhetorical skills to change and control people's beliefs and attitudes. To be a successful politician, one should be an eloquent orator to steer the receivers' emotions, attentions, and minds (Hassan, 2016, 88). Politics can be viewed as "a struggle between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" (Chilton, 2004, 3). Therefore, there is a strong relationship between language and political activity (ibid., 4-15).

Political discourse analysis focuses on the analysis of political discourse. In the light of contemporary approaches to critical discourse analysis, critical-political discourse analysis deals specifically with the reproduction of political power, power abuse, or domination through political discourse. Such an analysis would deal with the discursive conditions and consequences of social and political inequality that result from such domination (van Dijk 1997, 11)

One kind of discourse where power may be displayed is political communication (Chilton, 2004, 30-47). A political speech can be considered the primary means of influencing others, using rhetoric to persuade, excite, and claim leadership (Klebanov et al., 2008, 448). Political speeches function in various ways, and these functions are reflected partly in the language used in conveying these speeches. Moreover, political

speech can provide an overview of how ideas and beliefs are revealed in argumentative contexts and instrumental in presenting what is distinctive about political opinions and thoughts. Political speeches are mainly used to convince the receivers of the message to support the speaker's point of view or to disguise, transform and deepen a particular phenomenon. (Carreon, 2017, 639).

This thesis follows critical discourse analysis defined by Norman Fairclough (1992). This British Professor of Linguistics developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse which consists of the analysis of language texts, analysis of discursive practices, and analysis of social practices. Each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 62-100).

Text analysis (description) addresses formal properties of the text, for example, the use of metaphor and rhetorical devices. Processing analysis (interpretation) manages the issues of production, distribution, and consumption of texts. That means how a text was created, which institution produced a text, who is the target audience etc. Social analysis (explanation) concerns with intertextual and interdiscursive elements of the text. This level of analysis studies social currents that affect the text (ibid.).

The analysis of a specific discourse requires analysis in each of these three dimensions and their interrelations. It is hypothesized that significant connections exist between features of texts, how texts are put together, and interpreted and the nature of the social practice. In other words, when we interpret a text, we should analyse and understand the social and discourse practices to reach a complete understanding of the analysed text (Hassan, 2016, 87).

As for the analysis process, this thesis first focus on the background information of the examined data. That means who wrote the source, who published it, if the source responds to any significant event or debate, etc. The next step is the data coding. I look for the keywords related to the concept of filial piety and examine how these keywords (discourse strands) are used in the source. In the last part of the analysis, I focus on the language level of the text. I examine the grammatical and linguistic features of the text.

This analysis is based on an analysis of speeches by the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping (习近平 1953). Given that Xi Jinping is the President of the PRC, we can assume that an analysis of his speeches can provide us with the overall position that the current Chinese government takes on the concept of filial piety.

The corpus of this thesis consists of 10 speeches written in the Chinese language. 6 from 10 chosen speeches can be found in *The Governance of China (Xi Jinping tan zhiguo li zheng 习近平谈治国理政)*, the official collection of Xi Jinping's speeches and writings published by Foreign Language Press, which is controlled by the Chinese government. As of 2020, three volumes of this publication have been published. The rest of the speeches (Spring Festival Gathering Speeches 2017, 2018 and 2019) were retrieved from the official website of the Xinhua News Agency (*Xinhua tongxunshe 新华通讯社*, www.xinhuanet.com). Xinhua News Agency is the official state-run press

agency of the People's Republic of China. All speeches were chosen for their thematic connection with family values and filial piety.

Name of the speech	Date	Venue
在实现中国梦的生动实践中放飞青春梦想 Realize Youthful Dreams	May 4, 2013	China Academy of Space Technology, Beijing
创新正当其时，圆梦适得其势 Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True	October 21, 2013	Centenary Celebration of the Western Returned Scholars Association
培育和弘扬社会主义核心价值观 Cultivate and Disseminate Core Socialist Values	February 24, 2014	Beijing
青年要自觉践行社会主义核心价值观 Young People Should Practice the Core socialist values	May 4, 2014	Seminar with teachers and students, Beijing University
从小培养和践行社会主义核心价值观 Foster and Practice Core Socialist Values from Childhood	May 30, 2014	Minzu Primary School of Haidian District, Beijing
实现中华民族伟大复兴是海内外中华儿女共同的梦 The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation is a Dream Shared by All Chinese	June 6, 2014	The seventh conference for friendship of Overseas Chinese Association, Beijing

在 2015 年春节团拜会上的讲话 Speech at the 2015 Spring Festival Gathering	February, 17, 2015	Central Hall of the People, Beijing
在会见第一届全国文明家庭代表时的讲话 Family Values, Family Education, Family Tradition	December 12, 2016	Beijing
在 2017 年春节团拜会上的讲话 Speech at the 2017 Spring Festival Gathering	January 26, 2017	Central Hall of the People, Beijing
在 2018 年春节团拜会上的讲话 Speech at the 2018 Spring Festival Gathering	February 14, 2018	Central Hall of the People, Beijing
在 2019 年春节团拜会上的讲话 Speech at the 2019 Spring Festival Gathering	February 2, 2019	Great Hall of the People, Beijing

Table 1: The list of selected Xi Jinping's speeches

A possible limitation of this corpus can be found in the fact that only six speeches were published in the full version, namely “Foster and Practice Core Socialist Values from Childhood” (*cong xiao peiyang he jian xing shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhi guan* 从小培养和践行社会主义核心价值观), “Realize Youthful Dreams” (*Zai shixian zhongguo meng de shengdong shijian zhong fangfei qingchun mengxiang* 在实现中国梦的生动实践中放飞青春梦想) and the speeches from Spring Festival Gathering Speeches in 2017, 2018 2019. The other five speeches published in The Governance of China are only excerpts. It means that the analysis of the entire text cannot be conducted. Although full version of these speeches can be found online, the authenticity of these versions cannot be guaranteed. For this reason, the thesis will work only with the excerpts as they were published in the primary source of this analysis.

Xi Jinping's Spring Festival Gathering speeches are delivered annually at the Spring Festival Reception at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on the eve of the Chinese New Year. The length of the speeches ranges from 1200 to 1500 characters.

The structure of the speeches remains almost the same from year to year. At the beginning of each speech, Xi Jinping wishes the Chinese people all the best for the New Year, then he summarizes the year that has ended, introduces the challenges of the year ahead, and after that he stresses the importance of family ties. In conclusion, he once again extends New Year wishes. The recipients of these speeches are primarily reception guests. However, since the speeches are broadcasted, Xi Jinping addresses the speeches to the whole nation.

A next set of analysed speeches, *Realize Youthful Dreams* and *Young People Should Practice the Core Socialist Values* were delivered on May 4th 2013 and May 4th 2014 on the anniversary of the 1919 May Fourth Movement. Since 1949, May 4th is in China also celebrated as the Youth Day. Xi Jinping thus uses this opportunity to give a speech to Chinese students. The location of the speeches corresponds to this. Xi Jinping's *Realize Youthful Dreams* speech was delivered at the China Academy of Space Technology, and the recipients were selected students from various tech-science majors. The speech *Young People Should Practice the Core Socialist Values* was delivered by Xi Jinping at Beijing University. As for the theme of the speeches, both are used by Xi Jinping to promote the Chinese Dream.

The speech *Family Values, Family Education and Family Tradition* was given by Xi Jinping at the meeting with representatives to the First National Conference of Model Families in December 2016. The conference was held to honour several hundred families who were chosen nationwide in a selection that highlights patriotism, observation of law, ethics or contribution to the public welfare. The theme of the speech is therefore family values and their importance in Chinese society.

The Speech *Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True* Xi Jinping delivered in October 2013. His direct recipients were members of the Western Returned Scholars Association. This association is a voluntary group composed of Chinese scholars who have returned to China after studying overseas. The main theme of this Xi Jinping speech is the promotion of the Chinese dream and how Chinese scholars who studied abroad can contribute to its achievement. The theme of the Chinese Dream also appears in the next analysed speech; *The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation Is a Dream Shared by All Chinese*. This time, however, the addressees of the speech were Overseas Chinese living abroad through representatives attending the Seventh Conference of Friendship of Overseas Chinese Association, which took place in June 2014.

The speech *Cultivate and Disseminate the Core Socialist Values* was addressed by Xi Jinping to the Politburo of the 18th Central Committee which Xi presided over in February 2014. The main theme of the speech, as the title suggests, was core socialist values and the need to promote them in contemporary Chinese society.

As for the outline of this thesis, the next chapter "The Concept of filial piety" introduces the concept of filial piety. The chapter aims to define the concept of filial piety as it was presented by the early Confucians.

The third chapter “Filial Piety in Traditional China” and the fourth chapter “Filial Piety in Modern China” discusses the role of filial piety in traditional China and modern China. This part firstly aims to summarize how filial piety affected the lives of Chinese people in traditional China. Subsequently the paper focus on the perception of filial piety in modern China. The goal of these chapters is to examine how the perception of filial piety has changed over time in public, government and academic discourse.

The fifth chapter “Discourse Analysis” aims to examine how the current Chinese Government perceives filial piety. Using the method of critical discourse analysis defined by Norman Fairclough, this thesis seeks to analyse what kind of discourse the current President of The PRC Xi Jinping, creates on filial piety. The corpus of this thesis was chosen from speeches published in The Governance of China which is the official collection of speeches and writings by Xi Jinping, and from speeches that Xi Jinping gave during the Spring Festival Gathering in 2015-2019.

2 The Concept of Filial Piety

2.1 Filial Piety in The Pre-Confucian Era

The earliest appearance of the word for filial piety was on a bronze vessel that can be dated to the very last years of the Shang Dynasty or the earliest years of the Zhou Dynasty, that is, roughly around 1000 B. C. The character shows an old man being supported by a child (Holzman 1998, 186). It is not clear what the character 孝 (*xiao*) originally meant. Waley (2012, 38), based on the references in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*, 诗经), claims that *xiao* originally meant piety towards the spirits of ancestors or dead parents. However, Holzman (1998, 186) claims based on the analysis of inscriptions of bronze vessels that *xiao* meant except piety towards dead parents also piety towards living. He argues that filial piety in these times had a wider application than it came to have later.

During the Western Zhou dynasty (1047 – 772 BC), filial piety developed gradually from ancestor worship to respecting elders. This change of perception of filial piety followed the development of the feudal and patriarchal system implemented by the rule of Western Zhou. Respect for elders is shown in the passage from the first chapter of *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记) which describes the process of the clan assembly during the Western Zhou Dynasty (Book XLII/8):

“At the ceremony of drinking in the country districts, those who were sixty years old sat, and those who were (only fifty) stood, and were in waiting to receive any orders and perform any services; thus illustrating the honour which should be paid to elders. Before those who were sixty, three dishes were placed; before those of seventy, four; before those of eighty, five; before those of ninety, six: thus illustrating how the aged should be cherished and nourished.”

The concept of filial piety had also obtained a sacred dimension, and its cultivation was considered the primary condition to sustain peace and stability in Chinese society. For that reason, the filial piety was also assessed as a clinical virtue to become an ideal king as we can see from the *Ode to King Wu* (*Wu wang da ya* 武王大雅), in *The Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) (in Läänemets 1996, 139-140):

*“He secured the confidence due a king,
And became the pattern for all below him.
Ever thinking how to be filial,
His filial mind was the mode (which he supplied).”*

*Men loved him, the One man,
And responded (to his example) with a docile virtue."*

The Zhou dynasty officially came to its end in 771 BC when enemy nomads conquered the Zhou capital Haojing (镐京), forcing King You of Zhou (周幽王) to flee to the eastern capital Luoyi (洛邑). The Zhou family-oriented system, and practice of filial piety, however, 200 years later became the basis for the teaching of Confucius and his disciples (Läänemets, 1996, 140).

2.2 Filial Piety in Confucianism

Confucius's ultimate mission was to bring back the moral values of antiquity, especially the Eastern Zhou period, which he considered as a golden age under Heaven (Läänemets, 1996, 140). He converted the filial concept of ancestor worship in the Zhou dynasty into personal moral cultivation with filial piety to the living parents at its core (Miao, 2015, 320).

Confucian teaching argues that society is based on five cardinal relationships (*wulun* 无论). These relationships are between parents and children, rulers and servants, husband and wife, and among brothers and friends. Within these relationships, we should act according to different virtues. Among these virtues, two are the most important: filial piety (*xiao*) and benevolence (*ren* 仁). Filial piety (*xiao*) is essential because it defines the relationship between parents and children. Benevolence (*ren*) is vital because it defines the relationships outside the family (Li, 2012, 39).

As for the relationship between filial piety and benevolence, Confucianists claims that filial piety is the basis for benevolence and all other virtues (*The Classic of Filial Piety* I/2):

"Filial Piety is the root of all virtue, and the stem out of which grows all moral teaching."

The reason why filial piety is the root of benevolence is evident. If a child is not filial with his parents, he hardly can be benevolent with other people. Confucianists pay much attention to filial piety and proper filial conduct in their teaching. In a manner of speaking filial conduct towards parents means support (*yang* 养), reverence (*jing* 敬), carrying out of wishes (*chengzhi* 承志), serving the dead (*shi si* 事死) and remonstrance (*jianzheng* 谏诤). Toward a ruler, it is loyalty (*zong* 忠) (Fu, 2015, 6).

Supporting parents is the foundation of Confucian filial piety. Confucianism demands young people to care about their parents and provide them their basic needs (*The Classic of Filial Piety*, Chapter VI):

"To do the necessary in every season (such as growing crops in spring and reaping harvest in autumn), to do the utmost to make lands as fertile as possible, and to be frugal in their expense, in order to keep their parents in comfort, is the filial duty of the common people."

However, filial piety should not be limited only to material support; children should also take care of their mental health and make them joyful (*The Book of Rites*, Chapter X):

"A filial son, in nourishing his aged, (seeks to) make their hearts glad, and not to go against their wishes; to promote their comfort in their bed-chambers and the whole house; and with leal heart to supply them with their food and drink."

Filial piety also involves the role of the parent to the child. Parents have a duty to provide for their son when he is young, educate him in ancestral traditions, find a wife for him and leave a good heritage (Hsu, 1998, 64). A father is supposed to be "stern and dignified" to his children, whereas a mother is supposed to be gentle and compassionate. The parents' virtues are to be practiced, regardless of the child's piety, and vice versa (Jordan, 1998, 269).

Another aspect of filial piety, according to Confucianists, is a reverence towards parents. This passage from *The Analects* proves that Confucius regards reverence as the criterion to distinguish human beings and animals (Book II/7):

"Nowadays, it's taken to mean just seeing the one's parents get enough to eat. But we do that much for dogs or horses as well. If there is no reverence, how is it any different"

The *Book of Rites* further formulates detailed rules on how sons (and wives) should revere their fathers. When ordered to do anything, they should immediately respond and reverently proceed to do it. Going forward or backward, or turning round, they should be careful and grave. While going out or coming in, while bowing or walking, they should not presume to eructate, sneeze, or cough, to yawn or stretch themselves, to stand on one foot, or to lean against anything, or to look askance (*The Book of Rites*, chapter X) .

Filial Piety in Confucianism contains the idea that a son should carry on with his father's wishes and undertakings. We read in the *Book of Rites* (Chapter XXVIII, I/56):

"Now filial piety is the skilful carrying out of the wishes of our forefathers, and the skilful carrying on of their undertakings."

Filial piety, however, does not mean an unconditional approval of father's conduct. In fact, Confucianism allows a son to remonstrate with their parents in certain situations (*The Analects* IV/18):

"In serving your father and mother, you may gently admonish them..."

However, the harmonious relationship between father and son must prevail. Therefore, a son, when disputing with their parents, should treat them with reverence (*The Analects*, IV/18):

"But if you see they have no intention of listening to you, then be respectful as before and do not disobey them. You might feel distressed but should never feel resentful"

How the remonstration should be conducted with proper reverence is written in *The Book of Rites* (Book X/15):

"If a parent has a fault, the son should with bated breath, bland respect and gentle voice, admonish him. If the admonition does not take effect, he will be the more reverential and the more filial; and when the father seems pleased, he will repeat the admonition. If he should be displeased with this, rather than allow him to commit an offence against anyone in the neighbourhood or countryside, the son should strongly remonstrate."

Filial Piety requires respect and reverence to their parents, and filial conduct should be carried out through life and after death (*The Classic of Filial Piety*, chapter 18):

"When our parents are alive, we should treat them with love and respect. When they are dead, we should have sorrow for them. By doing so we shall have performed the duty of mankind and have done what ought to be done by a filial son, and by the living to the dead."

Confucius himself made great efforts to make sure that the blood lineage results in familial affection and the feeling of gratitude to parents for their giving life and taking care from childhood. He proposed a three-year mourn period for one's parents. In one passage in *The Analects*, his disciple Zai Wo asks him if it is necessary to follow the rule of a three-year mourn period. Zai Wo suggests that a one-year period is enough because three years was too long. After Zai Wo left, Confucius blamed him for his lack of virtue. He states (XVII/21):

"Zai Wo has no humanness! Only after child is a three-years old does he leave the bosom of his father and mother. The three-years mourning period is a custom common to everyone in the world. Surely Zai Wo too, enjoyed his three years of loving from father and mother."

In this passage, Confucius explains why it is so important to observe the three-year mourning period. All children were taken care of for three years after they were born. The mourning period is a kind of repayment from children to their parents for their care. Zai Wo did not understand the true meaning of this rule and tried to reduce the time to make himself more comfortable.

Filial piety in Confucianism is, at its core, a concept of familial ethics. It primarily means supporting and respecting parents. Secondly, it means respecting elder brothers. However, Confucian filial piety also regulates the relationships in the whole society. In its third meaning filial piety refers to *zunzun* (尊尊), which means respect elderly relatives and people who have higher social class which indicates loyalty to rulers. In other words, "loyal to the rulers" is but the extension of "filial to parents" (Fu, 2015, 12).

In the passage below, Confucius describes how important filial piety is for society. He claims that loyalty to parents is the necessary condition for the society to be in harmony (*The Classic of Filial Piety*, Chapter X):

"He who thus serves his parents, in a high situation, will be free from pride; in a low situation, will be free from insubordination; and among his equals, will not be quarrelsome. In a high situation pride leads to ruin; in a low situation insubordination leads to punishment; among equals quarrelsomeness leads to the wielding of weapons. If those three things be not put away, even though a son every day contributes beef, mutton, and pork to nourish his parents, he is not filial."

Nylan (1996, 4) offers two significant explanations why filial piety towards parents translates into faithful service to the ruler. First, acts of filial piety effectively accustom the individual to fulfilling his social duties while helping him distinguish between right and wrong. Second, reverent submission to one's family elders is an absolute prerequisite for the individual's "serving his (political) superior" since "loyalty" to family authorities is similar in type to "loyalty" to political authorities.

Confucianism emphasizes both virtues, filial piety towards parents and loyalty to the ruler. However, when there is a conflict between these two virtues, Confucius claims that being filial to parents is more important than being loyal to the ruler (*The Analects*, XII/18):

"Talking with Confucius, the lord of She said, 'In our village there is a fellow called Honest Body. When his father stole a sheep, the son testified against him.'

Confucius said: "In our district the honest people are different from that. A father covers up for his son; a son covers up for his father. There is honesty in that, too."

The solution provided by Confucius and Mencius to prefer loyalty to parents before the ruler was for evident reasons seen as unacceptable for conducting state affairs. Therefore, during Han Dynasty, Confucian scholars, influenced by Legalists, tried to fill this gap. For example, Confucian Han Ying admitting real conflict between duty to the state and duty to the family claims that personal feelings must not interfere with public duty (Nylan, 1996, 5).

Filial piety is considered a fundamental virtue of the Confucian teaching. In its basic meaning, it defines the relationship between parents and children. Children are obliged to obey their parents, fulfil their vows, take care of them in their old age, and after their death arrange a proper burial for them. Parents, in turn, are obliged to raise their child properly, find a wife for him and leave him a good heritage. Such divided roles in the family enable the family to live in peace and harmony. However, the filial piety also defines the relationship between the subject and the ruler. Just as a son is in an inferior position to his father, so is a subject in an inferior position to his ruler. Confucians believed that if society was viewed as one big family, where everyone had a position in the social hierarchy, peace and harmony would be achieved.

3 Filial Piety in Traditional China

3.1 Filial Piety as the Tool for Legitimation of the Governance

The impact of Confucianism on state affairs before the Han dynasty was insignificant. Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, the emperor who unified China for the first time and founded Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), endorsed Legalism while other non-legalist schools of thought were suppressed. With the help of Legalist advisers, Emperor Qin was able to create a functional state with the rule of law, military force, and a comprehensive taxation system. However, because of the cruelty of the laws, Qin Dynasty was overthrown only 15 years after its foundation.

With the beginning of the Han dynasty (204 BCE – 220 ACE), Legalism was gradually replaced by Confucianism. This process finished in 141 BCE when Emperor Wu of Han 汉武帝 decided to promote Confucianism as the official state philosophy while proscribing all non-Confucian schools of thought. This event is sometimes called the "triumph of Confucianism" (Ch'en 1986, 766). However, Han Confucianism was largely different from the Confucianism promoted by Confucius and Mencius during the Warring States. It was enriched by concepts from Ying-Yang school and Legalist school (Ma, 1987, 672).

Despite the bad reputation of Legalist's school caused by the harsh laws in the Qin dynasty, there was a consensus among Confucian scholars that the rule of law is necessary to ensure stability and harmony in the society (Zhang 2014, 24-39). The famous scholar of the early period of the Han dynasty, Jia Yi 贾谊, commented that although rites (*li* 礼) are the only foundation for consolidating the country and winning people's hearts, the law should not be neglected because it provides the ways for people to pursue truth. (ibid., 27).

As for filial piety, the Han rulers considered it an essential virtue. *The Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝经), together with other Confucian classics, were given legal status and the thought of filial piety was widely advocated and publicized. The Han emperors expressed filial piety through the ritual of serving the elderly, and nearly all of them had the word *xiao* in their temple name. (Miao, 2015, 319-320).

Filial piety remained a vital part of Confucian state philosophy until the 19th century. Throughout the history of Imperial China, emperors promoted filiality to stake a claim to moral legitimacy and thereby attract support. However, in some cases, rulers used filial piety only for pragmatic reasons. For example, Emperor Wen 隋文帝, founder of the Sui dynasty, had received a Buddhist education and showed little interest in Confucianism or learned pursuits in general. Nevertheless, despite his anti-intellectualism, he publicly praised *The Classic of Filial Piety* (*xiaojing*) (Hinsch, 2020, 35).

The Chinese state, throughout imperial times, sought to organize society according to filial principles. Since ancient times, age had always been associated with social

status. By placing this traditional social priority within an ethical framework, the government valorized the status quo and reinforced order (Hinsch, 2020, 35).

3.2 Filial Piety in Traditional Chinese Laws

The law code of imperial China evolved from Legalism and Confucianism, the two most influential schools of thought in the Qin and Han Dynasties. MacCormack (1996, 1) describes it as legalist in form and predominantly Confucian in spirit, although marked in some respects by a legalist spirit.

Since the Han dynasty, the value of filial piety has become integrated into the state's legal system. *The Classic of Filial Piety (xiaojing)* judged the cases concerning unfilial behaviour. Moreover, filial piety served as a foundation for declaring new laws. For example, Emperor Xuan 汉宣帝 in 66 BC declared that sons who concealed the crimes of their parents committed no offense (Windrow, 2006, 277). On the other hand, when a son reported his father's crime to the authorities, he would receive the same punishment as his father because the son lacked filial piety towards a father, and the father lacked reverence toward the government. Laws also permitted a son to serve his father's sentence. Finally, if a condemned prisoner were an only child, laws allowed him to suspend the execution until his parents would die (ibid, 278).

Filial piety has provided a central plank of the thesis known as "the Confucianization of the law." According to this thesis, the law from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty gradually incorporated the duties enjoined by Confucian morality. Thus, filial piety became the basis of a variety of legal and moral obligations (Qu, 2011, 363).

The process of "Confucianization of the law" culminated in Tang Dynasty when a new penal code called Tang code¹ (*Tang lǚ* 唐律) was established. The Tang Dynasty's Code sanctioned the doctrine of the superiority of a father and a husband over a son and a wife. Criminal acts committed by senior relations against the body of junior relations were either unpunished or reduced in punishment. However, the same acts committed by junior relations against the body of senior relations were always punished and often more severely (Ma, 1987, 674).

Tang Code contains ten offenses called Ten Abominations which were in traditional China regarded as the most heinous and deserved the most severe penalties. Among crimes as plotting rebellion or committing parricide, there is also a lack of filial piety (*The Tang Code*, art. 6).

¹ Tang Code is the earliest Chinese code to have been transmitted to the present in its complete form (Gernet, 1996, 244-245). Its complexity remained essentially unchanged until the end of the 19th century and became a basis for dynastic codes in other East Asian countries.

One of the major crimes of the lack of filial piety concerns mourning for parents. Tang code required all officials, upon the death of a parent, to retire from office during the entire mourning period of twenty-seven months. If an officer concealed the death of a parent and failed to mourn, he was exiled 2000 li. If an officer violated mourning by seeking office during the mourning period, he was deprived of office and punished by one year of penal servitude (ibid, art. 120).

Existing research on *Tang Code* has tried to determine to what extent these rules of mourning for parents were enforced. MacCormack (2006, 79-80) argues that the *Tang code* provides us with two distinct sets of rules. One is concerned with an obligation to leave an office during the mourning period and the other with acts prohibited during mourning. The broad formulation of the rules encompassed ordinary persons as well as officers. However, while state officers and the upper class were probably obliged to follow the rules strictly, there is no evidence that ordinary people were punished on such a wide scale as officers.

The establishment of the Tang Code was a significant turning point for the incorporation of filial piety into Chinese society. Firstly, it implemented the idea of ruling the country by filial piety comprehensively from the emperor to the nobles. Secondly, the Tang Law guaranteed filial piety content in an all-around way with normative law, relating to five aspects of living, support, illness, bereavement, sacrifice. Finally, the Tang Dynasty imposed harsh punishment on crimes of being unfilial with strict criminal law (Miao, 2015, 319).

3.3 Filial Piety in Traditional Chinese Education

Another important channel through which the Chinese imperial state-endorsed filial piety was education. Since the Han dynasty toward the late Qing Dynasty, filial piety was vital in the Chinese people's education process. For this purpose, two texts were in particular essential: *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* and the *Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars (Ershisi xiao 二十四孝)* (Jordan, 1998, 272).

As was already mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the popularization of *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* people was one of the Han Dynasty rulers' objectives. In the third year of the first century, Emperor Ping 汉平帝 summoned all scholars who had mastered *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* to teach in the capital. (Ma 2020, 582). Several decades later, during the reign of Emperor Ming 汉明帝, all the members of the imperial guard were taught *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* (Lei, 2019, 67).

During the Tang dynasty (618-907), the impact of filial piety on education further grew. During the reign of Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (598-649), *The Classic of filial piety* became required reading for the imperial examinations (Wu, 2019, 102). However, because of the reformation of the examination system in the Song Dynasty (960-1279)

and removal of *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* from the required texts, the status of *The Classic of Filial Piety* changed. Its political significance diminished to become mainly a school primer (Lu, 2017, 279).

The Classic of Filial Piety's interest emerged again in the Late Ming Dynasty. Old versions of *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* were collected for reprinting, and newly annotated editions were published. Following these events, in 1633, the Ming Emperor Chongzhen 崇禎 (1611-1644) finally enacted an edict ordering that each school should teach *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* (ibid, 280).

The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars (Ershisi xiao) is a classic text of filial piety written by Guo Jujing (郭居敬) in the Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368). The stories were very well received from the very beginning, and they soon became more popular than *The Classic of Filial Piety* itself. Contrary to the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the stories were written in a more colloquial language provided with literary imagery. Thus, even nonliterate people could get familiar with their content (Mo, 1999, 15).

As for the content of the stories, Tzeng and Hsu (1972, 29) argue that stories can be grouped according to the theme. The largest group of seven stories deals with how children obtain food for a mother who is in most cases sick and food is needed for her recovery. The next group of five stories concerns middle-aged sons who, after obtaining a high-rank position, maintain a close relationship with their parents and help them with household chores. In the third group of four stories, a young son endures physical suffering for the sake of an aged parent. The rest of the stories, for instance, includes sons who comfort their parents in their grief or sons who are confronted with a choice between his parent, or his child/wife always chooses in favor of their parent. In most of the stories, the characters are eventually rewarded for their filial piety.

Mo (1999, 16-17) mentions that most of the stories have some standard features. Firstly, every story indicates a specific time in history and an exact geographic location because the characters are designed to serve as models for children. Secondly, he notices that to educate children, the stories, besides depicting filial acts, also include aftermath episodes about the experiences of the famous characters depicted in stories. Finally, he argues that in at least half of the stories, the problems are resolved in an extreme, outrageous manner.

The triumph of Confucianism during the Han Dynasty in the 2nd Century B.C. pre-determined the structure of Chinese society until the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Thus, filial piety as a fundamental virtue of Confucianism permeated Chinese society and influenced all components of society in Traditional China. Rulers of all dynasties invoked filial piety in an attempt to legitimize their power. Chinese laws were written to take into account the concept of filial piety, which manifested itself in particular in higher penalties for offenses judged to be unfilial behaviour. The principles of filial piety were then instilled in Chinese children in schools according to *The Classic of Filial Piety* and *The Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars*. However, with the invasion of Western countries in the mid-19th Century and the fall of the Qing Dynasty in the early 20th

Century, Chinese society was shaken to its foundations and filial piety was identified as one of the main reasons for the decline of Chinese society, as discussed in the following chapter.

4 Filial Piety in Modern China

4.1 The Demise of the Qing Dynasty and the Republican Era (1840-1949)

Chinese modern history began with the First Opium War (1839-1842) when Western powers conquered the Chinese empire and opened its door to the world. Faced with the challenge of survival from the outside world, Chinese culture found itself in the middle of a crisis. As Marx (1853, 3) puts it, complete isolation from the outside world had been the primary condition for the preservation of old China, and when this violation was broken, it was followed by a process of disintegration, just as a mummy carefully preserved in a closed coffin inevitably disintegrates at the touch of fresh air.

In response to the forced opening of China by Western powers, the Qing dynasty (*Qing chao* 清朝 1644 -1911) started to lose control over the governing of China. Leading Chinese thinkers such as Zeng Guofan (曾国藩 1811 – 1872), Li Hongzhang (李鸿章 1823 – 1901) or Zhang Zhidong (张之洞 1837 – 1909) commenced to discuss how to approach the newly emerged threat from Western nations. They came up with reforms that aimed at modernizing the Chinese economy, army, education, and diplomacy on Western principles while preserving traditional Chinese values. This period of reforms, known as The Self-Strengthening Movement (*zhiqiang yundong* 自强运动), however, ended in 1895 when China was defeated in the First Sino-Japanese war (1894 – 1895).

While the leaders of The Self-Strengthening Movement were not much interested in social reforms, some scholars of that time acknowledged that Confucian ideology needed reforms. One of the most prominent of this sort was Kang Youwei (康有为 1858 – 1927). In his utopian treatise *The Book of Great Unity* (*Datong shu* 大同书), Kang (2016, 92–93) admits that filial piety imposes on children a moral obligation to repay parents for their nurture. He saw this obligation as the source of physical pain that could be eased only when men would be able to “abolish” their families without the suffering of leaving it. To achieve this, Kang proposed that public institutions such as public nurseries, hospitals and schools should substitute services historically performed by the family. That would leave men only with a generalized sense of debt to their parents.

After the Chinese defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, Chinese reformers started to advocate deep institutional reforms. The first foray in pushing the task of China’s modernization from the material level to the institutional level was the Hundred Days’ Reform (*Wuxu bianfa* 戊戌变法 June – September 1898), which, although ended tragically for many reformers, led consequently to the abolishment of the imperial examination system (*keju* 科举) in 1905, followed by 1911 revolution (*Xinhai geming* 辛亥革命

命), which ended Qing Dynasty, and resulted in the establishment of the Republic of China (*Zhonghua Minguo* 中华民国) in 1912.

The abolishment of the imperial exam system in 1905 did not ultimately end the promotion of Confucian classics since some institutions continued to teach them (Bil-lioud and Thorval, 2014, 18). However, from 1905 on, the Chinese official education system had stressed the new values of freedom and equality. These new values had both social and political implications. When children who had been educated in the modern system grew to adulthood in the 1910s, they felt that their education in the values of freedom and equality clashed with their subsequent position in the family. The result of this generational crisis was a series of attacks on Confucianism as an ideology and particularly on the virtue of filial piety during the May Fourth Movement (*wu si huodong* 五四活动). For these young men, filial piety, in its demand for complete obedience to parents, was most oppressive. Among the most influential critics of filial piety were Wu Yu (吳虞 1872 – 1949), Chen Duxiu (陈独秀, 1879 – 1942), Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881 – 1936) and Hu Shi (胡适, 1891 – 1962). (Harrison, 2001, 173 - 177).

Wu Yu was a Chengdu scholar who had studied in Japan in the 1900s. He had begun to develop a written critique of Confucianism in the 1900s, but his work did not come to widespread notice until the late 1910s (Harrison, 2001, 173). In the article *On Filial Piety* (*Shuo xiao* 说孝), Wu Yu argued that the Confucian idea was to eliminate any desire to protest against superiors. He pointed out: “The effect of the idea of filial piety has been to make from China a big factory of obedient subjects” (Wu Yu, 1920).

Chen Duxiu was the co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo Gongchandang* 中国共产党) and its first General Secretary. In his article *Confucius' Principle and Modern Life* (*Kongzi zhi dao yu xiandai shenghuo* 孔子之道与现代生活) published in 1916, he claimed that Confucianism was a product of feudal ages which did not fit into the modern society, and that traditional ethical values such as filial piety and loyalty to the ruler are inappropriate in modern society since they did not provide individual rights. (Chen, 1984, 151-158).

Lu Xun, China's acclaimed and influential writer, criticized filial piety in the text *What Is Required of Us as Fathers Today* (*women xianzai zai zenyang zuo fuqin* 我们现在在怎样做父亲), published in 1919. He argued that producing offspring was merely out of animal instinct, and for that reason, the son does not need to feel any obligation to his father. He also criticized the idea of parental authority. He wrote that the idea that one should always serve one's parents or elders before one's children violated the principles of evolution because the later forms of life are always more significant, and the earlier forms of life should be sacrificed to the later (Lu Xun, 1919).

Hu Shi was a Chinese philosopher, essayist and diplomat. In contrast to Lu Xun and Chen Duxiu, his approach in criticizing Confucianism was more academic and fairer (Chow, 1980, 313). His critique of filial piety is contained in his poem *My Son* (*wo de erzi* 我的儿子) published in 1919. He indicated that giving birth to a child was only a biological matter, not something to be regarded as a favour that parents gave to

children. Therefore, the child should not be burdened with the feeling of guilt because s/he did not repay for his/her parents for the favor (Hu, 1919). In another article *On Chastity* (*zhencao wenti* 贞操问题) published in 1918, Hu Shi argued that the demand of chastity for women was unfair and inhuman. Society should not ask a young widow to keep her widowhood for the rest of her life or to commit suicide for her deceased husband (Hu, 1918).

Very few effective defences of filial piety were offered at the end of the 1910s. Only after 1920 some opposition emerged. One of these oppositions came from Sun Yat-sen (孙中山 1866 – 1925). Then-chairman of the Nationalist Party of China (*zhongguo guomindang* 中国国民党) criticized members of the May Fourth Movement for trying to overthrow the Chinese old moral system and adopting the new one. According to Sun Yat-sen (1924, 46), such conduct caused moral disorganization and confusion about which moral code should be followed.

In the 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek (蒋介石 1887 – 1975), the successor of Sun Yat-sen in the head of the Nationalist Party of China, started advocating a return to Confucian values. In 1934 he launched the New Life Movement initiative (*Xin shenghuo yundong* 新生活运动) that advocated a secular and rational Confucianism which constituted a uniquely Chinese spirit compatible with modernity and shared by all Chinese (Mitter, 2004, 114–115). The Chiang Kai-shek government tended to glorify national heritage, especially traditional ethics such as loyalty and filial piety. They also required common people to read Confucian classics and pay homage to Confucius (Chow, 1980, 345).

In sum, despite the fall of the Qing dynasty and relentless assault from intellectuals in the 1920s, Confucian values remained an essential part of public and political life in the Republican era (1912-1949). KMT leaders continued to use Confucian values as a political tool for legitimizing their rule. Moreover, the promotion of Confucian values during the New Life Movement in the 1930s restored their influence on Chinese society.

4.2 Filial Piety in Mao Zedong Era (1949-1976)

In 1949, the PRC under the rule of CCP was founded. Mao Zedong (毛泽东 1893 – 1976), the Chairman of the CPP, regarded Confucianism as a backward ideology that conflicted with Marxist ideology. In the text *On New Democracy* from 1940, Mao Zedong states (Chapter XI) that “Confucianism must be swept away. Unless it is swept away, no new culture of any kind can be built up.” However, Mao’s attitude toward Confucianism was not always that negative. In the article *A Study of Physical Education* (*Tiyu zhi yanjiu* 体育之研究) published in 1917 Mao placed Confucius in parallel with Buddha and Jesus Christ, and acclaimed them as great thinkers (Mao, 1917). Therefore, it is evident that Mao’s stance on Confucianism changed only after he accepted Marxist ideology as his dominant ideology.

As for the value of filial piety, the CCP saw filial loyalty to parents as a threat to the integration of individuals into the political-economic system of the new socialist state. They wanted to revolutionize it through socioeconomic reforms and legislation. For that reason, newly established marriage law stipulated a person's right to decide on their marriage partner, a women's right to property and women's civil equality with men (Wang, 2004, 23).

The CCP agricultural policy further contributed to the change in the mode of social organization. In the pre-1949 period, most social activities were organized within the family, where power and authority were based on the superiority of the senior generation over the junior generation, the older over the younger, and men over women. This familial mode of organization underwent profound changes in the mid-1950 when collectivization campaigns terminated familial ownership of land and other means of production. The fact that families were ridden of their property and villagers were assigned various tasks by their team leaders instead of by parents weakened the family's position. Parental authority was further challenged when the experience and knowledge of the older villages became outmoded in their encounter with ideological education, political campaigns, and new technology in the agricultural process (Yan, 2009, 75-76).

In promoting new family virtues, CPP created a discourse that emphasized the role of a woman within a family. In traditional China, it was often a man who had to sacrifice his political career to fulfil his filial obligation. This was no longer promoted after 1949. Instead, the central concern of filial piety has been transmitted into caring, where women are the primary agents (Wang, 2004, 25).

In the case of death rituals, CCP objected burial and promoted cremation as the only legitimate means of body disposition. For economic reasons, families were required to reduce the body to "ashes" that could be stored in a container of the size of a jewelry box. Secondly, the CCP proscribed the traditional customs of burning paper goods for the use of the deceased and the setting off firecrackers to frighten away evil spirits because the CCP saw these traditional beliefs incompatible with a scientific viewpoint. Third, the CCP converted public ancestor halls to schools or other community uses because they were afraid of any organized groups capable of questioning their legitimacy (Ikels, 2004, 91-92).

As far as the support of the elderly is concerned, the CCP introduced in 1951 *The Labour Insurance Regulations* to cover most of the workers employed in urban state and collective enterprises. One of the most important provisions of the Regulations was that urban workers would be entitled to old-age pensions when they retired, something almost non-existent in China before 1949 (Chow, 1991, 218). Even though the regulations covering these pensions were revised in 1958 and 1978 to make the eligibility criteria less stringent, entitlements remain confined to urban workers and particularly those employed in state enterprises. Hence, the majority of the Chinese elderly have been excluded from its protection (ibid, 219).

In sum, despite the efforts to reshape the traditional family system to be more suitable with Marxist ideology, the Communist regime did not undermine patrilocal residence in rural China, nor did it change the conventional way of household formation (Parish and Whyte 1978, 131-138). The CCP in Mao's Era introduced the first pension system in Chinese history. However, as most of the elderly were excluded from its protection, family remained the most important social unit in the PRC.

4.3 Filial Piety in Post-Mao Era and Contemporary China

Within only a few years after the end of Cultural Revolution, Confucianism enjoyed an revival. Particularly in coastal areas with lineage links to overseas Chinese communities and/or with high concentrations of the newly affluent who had benefited first from the economic reforms, temples and other sites of worship were rebuilt, new adepts were recruited, fairs were revived, and religious rituals were re-institutionalized. Confucian traditions came to play a growing role in fields, such as religion, spirituality, moral self-cultivation, children's education, and so on (Holbig, 2010, 409).

4.3.1 Filial Piety in Public Discourse

Prior to 1949, the support of the elderly within the Chinese society followed the community care approach. The support of the elderly relied on the combined efforts of the entire community and that the elderly were helped as far as possible outside of the institution, which was regarded only as a last resort. (Chow, 1991, 215).

Hugh Baker (1979, 291) claimed that the Chinese family system in the late 1970s remained the basic unit of village society. The relationships between family members were still very close; parents were responsible for the upbringing of their children, and children were in turn responsible for their aged parents. He also argued that the commune system, established in late 1950s, had not undermined the family institution. On the contrary, it helped to strengthen the family and made it a more efficient unit for social construction.

Deborah Davis-Friedmann (1983, 103), in her study of the elderly in communist China, also came to similar conclusions. She noted that the general patterns of interaction between elderly parents and their adult children continue to show high levels of solidarity between the different generations and a pronounced preference for parent-son interdependence.

However, in response to the rapid modernization that began in the 1980s, the practice of filial piety has changed. Families have become smaller. Ethnographic studies have demonstrated that since the 1980s, newlywed couples move away from their parents and live on their own (Judd, 1994, 173-81; Potter and Potter, 1990, 196-224). In response to this newly emerged custom and to maintain traditional family values, parents often build two-door houses to meet the expectations of their future

daughters-in-law. Furthermore, parents started to more frequently taking care of their grandchildren or helping daughters-in-law with their household chores (Wang, 2004, 28).

On the other hand, Miller (2004, 41) points out that many elders prefer to live away from their children as they find it more comfortable for them because they can “eat what they want it when they want it and throw trash, seeds, and ashes of cigarettes on the floor without being bothered.” Zhang (2004, 74) argues that a significant reason why the elderly people consider living alone is to regain their financial autonomy and control over their budget. He also stresses that although the economic situation of elders is getting better, many of them, especially in rural areas, are still financially dependent on their children and are not self-sufficient.

The desire of elders to live alone follows another change in the Chinese family system since the 1980s. That change is a shift in power and authority from senior to junior generations, which have developed in most families where parents and their adult children live together. According to Yan (2009, 71), this power shift became evident in the 1990s due to the increased importance of building family networks and keeping up with the fast-changing trends in the market-oriented economy. The need for a family head to dress properly, talk skilfully and make connections effectively were not suitable for conservative, old-fashioned fathers. Hence, some of them rather have chosen to live alone.

The modernization of Chinese society has also affected how the respect towards elders is demonstrated. Wang (2004, 26) notices that while there is a basic understanding between younger and older generations of what filial piety means, there are conflict expectations on how filial piety should be expressed. The older generation clings to the traditional standard, whereas the younger generation echoes the state’s promotion of the new family regime, within which equality between parents and children is promoted. The younger generation resists absolute submission to parental commands and hopes that their parents will understand their concerns and difficulties.

Taken together, in modern Chinese society, filial piety expectations and practice have decreased. One cause for this is the rise of the nuclear family without much co-residence with parents. Families are becoming smaller. Other causes of decrease in practice are individualism, the loss of status of elderly, emigration of young people to cities and the independence of young people and women. To amplify this trend, the number of elderly people has increased quickly. But as of today, the care-giving of the young to elderly people had not undergone any revolutionary changes in Mainland China, and family obligations have remained strong.

4.3.2 Filial Piety in Political Discourse

During the reform era, the CCP became more pragmatic about the importance of family relationships in terms of support for the elderly. The CCP's attempt to promote filial piety in national political discourse can be seen as having several end goals.

First, filial piety contributes to social and political stability on Chinese territory (Feng, 2017, 77). It is seen as a basic demand for building a harmonious society and a cornerstone upon which every other virtue can be built (Wang, 2014). Li (2015) argues that without filial piety and other traditional values, China would on its path of modernization encounter a moral crisis. He argues that since the current generation of little emperors has become selfish, fragile, and ungrateful, they will learn to respect and appreciate life only by learning filial piety.

Second, promoting filial piety is the CCP's response to China's ageing society. The rapid drop of fertility rate caused by the one-child policy coupled with the improvement in life expectancy has resulted in a significant disproportion between the growth of the elderly population and a decrease in the availability of family care (Feng, 2005, 4). It is estimated that by 2040, PRC will have 28 % of people aged 60 or over (The United Nations, 2013, 14).

The duty to take care of one's parents is even supported by Chinese laws. In 1981 the CCP implemented the Marriage law, which states that parents have the duty to bring up and educate their children, and children have the duty to support and assist their parents. (Marriage Law, 1981, Article 21). Almost identical article is also incorporated in the Constitution of PRC. Article 49 states that "parents have the duty to rear and educate their minor children and children who have come of age have the duty to support and assist their parents" (Constitution of the PRC, Article 49). Article 45 of the Constitution further states that the elderly have "the right to material assistance from and be supported by their sons in their old age" as well as the "right to material assistance from the state and society" (ibid., article 45).

The importance of mutual assistance among relatives was further stressed in The Seventh Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development 1986-1990. In the chapter on social security, the CCP noted that "We shall continue to foster the fine tradition of mutual assistance among relatives, friends, and neighbours" (Chow, 1991, 220). Finally, in 2013, the Chinese government amended the Law for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly from 1996 to strongly encourage young adults to visit their parents. Hence, since the 1980s, the Chinese government has been clear in their wish to maintain the tradition of respecting the old, though they have been reluctant to employ the concept of filial piety in previous decades.

Third, filial piety is used to further strengthen legitimacy claims as the relationship between the parent and children can be emulated by the relationship between the ruler and the people. This ties in with the idea of the family nation in which a family is the smallest country and a country is made up of thousands of families (Miao, 2020, 175). Patriotism is therefore described as filial loyalty to the state. Another example of

using filial piety as the tool of legitimation relates to Xi Jinping. President Xi is commonly referred to as Uncle Xi (*Xi Dada* 习大大). While this has the effect of familiarizing Xi and making him seem like part of one's family, it also has a very significant meaning within Confucian notions of order, which emphasize filial piety. Thus, when people refer to Xi as Xi Dada, they are equating him with a father figure and making him into China's father figure (Hart, 2016, 15).

Finally, the emphasis on filial piety as a traditional Chinese value reflects the CCP's wariness of Western universal values and Western cultural hegemony. Filial piety continues to be heralded as a defining feature of the Chinese nation a value that promotes Chinese national identity but it also implies that the Western development trajectory will inevitably lead to social crisis (Miao, 2020, 176).

4.3.3 Filial Piety in Academic Discourse

The revival of Confucianism in the 1980s was also evident in the Chinese academic discourse. In 1984, liberal scholars based at Beijing University, such as Feng Youlan (冯友兰 1895 – 1990) or Zhang Dainian (张岱年 1909-2004), founded a nongovernmental academic organization called the Chinese Culture College (*Zhongguo wenhua shuyuan* 中国文化书院). Through this platform, prominent scholars exchanged their views about Chinese and Western culture. Their aim in studying Confucianism has been to initiate a peaceful political transition in order to promote political transparency within China (Holbig, 2010, 409).

Feng Youlan was a Chinese philosopher, historian, and writer. Same as his colleagues, he focused on the synthesis of Marxism and Confucianism on the principle of “remove the dross and select the refined” (*qu zao qu jing* 去噪取景) (Makeham 2008, 243) which was first formulated by Mao Zedong in 1940 when he was talking about ancient Chinese culture (*The Writings of Mao Zedong*, 1986, 668). For that reason, Feng proposed a theory of abstract inheritance. According to Feng, traditional philosophical propositions can be seen from two aspects: specific and abstract. If viewed from the specific aspect, many of these propositions can no longer be judged to sound. In terms of their abstract significance, however, they are worth inheriting. For example, a particular text used to educate young children in premodern China may no longer be seen as appropriate in a modern curriculum, but the “abstract” value of text as an aid to learning is still valid (Makeham, 2008, 243).

Du Weiming (杜维明, born 1940) was one of the overseas scholars who came to China during the 1980s on the invitation of Chinese Culture College. Among other things, he also focuses on the meaning of filial piety in China. In his work, he acknowledges that in traditional China, filial piety provided a theoretical foundation for authoritarian order. However, he argues that filial piety is meant as an ethical-religious symbol and only marginally is connected with political control. He emphasizes that a filial son is not necessarily an obedient son, and therefore filial son should not blindly follow

father's wishes. Instead, the duty of a filial son is to transmit father's ways by adjusting them to his own context. Du also argues that maintenance of the ancestral line is not done only by bearing male heirs. Filial son should instead honour his parents in his moral rectitude, public service and ethical leadership (Du, 1989, 41-46).

In response to the foundation of Chinese Culture College, the party-state leadership felt the need to react and to recapture lost grounds in academic discourse. In March 1986, Fang Keli (方克利 1938-2020), professor of philosophy at Tianjin's Nankai University, was put in charge of various government-funded academic projects on New Confucianism. In this official interpretation of Confucianism, the aim is to enrich Marxism by drawing on the essence of traditional doctrines. Traditional elements of Confucianism most appealing to this tailor-made socialist Confucianism are the love of social order and stability, acceptance of hierarchy, devotion to the family and the state (Holbig, 2010, 410).

Fang Keli promoted the application of four principles to create a new interpretation of Confucianism: using the past to serve the present; using the foreign to serve China; critical inheritance; and synthetic creation. He insisted on carrying on traditional Chinese culture while also learning from the experiences of Western culture. He argued that even though Confucianism was a feudal ideology, Confucianism does have historical value and modern significance. Fang identifies several Confucian values that should be passed on: respect for the elderly and loving care of the young, harmony, solidarity, and mutual help. Fang argued that these values should be subjected to critical inheritance so that they can serve as important traditional resources for creating a new ideology. However, he noted that Confucianism could only be "vocabulary" of future civilization, not its "grammar" (Makeham, 2008, 248-249).

At the end of the 1980s, the third interpretation of Confucianism was established, represented mainly by Jiang Qing (蒋庆 born 1953). Jiang seeks to rediscover benevolence, filial piety and other Confucian values as an alternative to Marxist ideology. Jiang claims that since Marxism is a foreign ideology, it cannot underpin the political legitimacy of the CCP for the long run. The main source of legitimacy must come from Confucianism because it is a Chinese ideology. Moreover, Jiang rejects the idea of equality. According to Jiang, everyone should have an equal right to be educated, but those who are more talented should gain more political power than those who are not (Bell, 2008, 233-253).

The perception of filial piety changed significantly after the beginning of the reforms in the 1980s. The end of the Mao Zedong era marked the return of Confucian values to the political discourse of the CCP and to the academic discourse of Chinese scholars. The CCP came to see the filial piety as an anchor and source of stability in a time of economic development and the associated changes that affected the whole of Chinese society. In academic discourse, the topic of filial piety was discussed primarily in terms of its application in contemporary Chinese society and the possibility of its integration into Marxist doctrine. Thus, the only area where filial piety experienced a

decline in interest after the end of Mao Zedong's era was the public discourse. Economic reforms have caused filial piety to decline in importance and thus it does not play as important a role in the contemporary life of the Chinese population as it did in the past.

5 Discourse Analysis

Applying the critical discursive analysis to chosen Xi Jinping's speeches, it was found that Xi Jinping creates discourse on filial piety through three basic discourse strands: "filial piety in relation to social harmony and stability", "filial piety is the loyalty to the state" and "filial piety and The Chinese Dream". These discursive strands are further discussed in the following subsections.

5.1 Filial piety in relation to social harmony and stability

In the first discourse strand, Xi Jinping uses filial piety to promote social harmony and stability. This is most evident in the speeches that are given by Xi Jinping on the occasion of the Chinese New Year celebration. Since the Spring Festival is very often the only time of the year for many families to reunite and spend time together, Xi Jinping thus uses this opportunity to remind the Chinese people how important the family is in the Chinese society. In the *Spring Festival Gathering Speech 2015* he says:

家庭是社会的基本细胞，是人生的第一所学校。
Family is the basic cell of the society and the first school of life.

However, Xi Jinping also stresses the importance of the family in other speeches. For example, in the speech *Family Values, Family Education and Family Tradition* he states:

中华民族历来重视家庭。正所谓“天下之本在家”。
The Chinese nation has always valued the family. As an ancient saying goes, „The family is essential under Heaven.“

It is clear from both passages that Xi Jinping regards the family as the basic unit of society. In the second excerpt, Xi Jinping illustrates his belief by quoting Xun Yue 荀悦 (148-209), who was a historian and thinker in the Han Dynasty. In his speeches, Xi Jinping is very fond of using quotations of the ancient Chinese scholars from the era of Imperial China. One reason for doing so may be that he wants to add importance to his speeches. The other reason may be that Xi Jinping sees Traditional China as a model, and by quoting selected ancient Chinese scholars he is trying to bring certain values into the present day.

The family plays the most important role in the initial stage of child rearing. This is consistent with the position of the family in traditional Chinese culture. According to the traditional concept of filial piety, parents are responsible for the upbringing of their

child and are obliged to provide the best possible care and education. This is thus in line with the principles of filial piety as introduced in the first chapter of this thesis.

The concept of family as the first school of life Xi Jinping further elaborates in the Speech *Family values, family education and family tradition*:

广大家庭都要重言传、重身教，教知识、育品德，身体力行、耳濡目染，帮助孩子扣好人生的第一粒扣子，迈好人生的第一个台阶。要在家庭中培育和践行社会主义核心价值观，引导家庭成员特别是下一代热爱党、热爱祖国、热爱人民、热爱中华民族。

Parents should instruct their children through word and deed, giving them both knowledge and virtue and practicing what they teach. They should help their children button the first button in their lifetime and take the first step on the ladder of the life. We should all strive to foster and practice the core socialist values in families, encouraging family members, especially the younger generation, to love the Party, the motherland, the people and the Chinese nation.

And the same thoughts Xi Jinping expresses in a speech to Chinese students *Foster and Practice Core Socialist Values from Childhood*:

家庭是孩子的第一个课堂，父母是孩子的第一个老师。家长要时时处处给孩子做榜样，用正确行动、正确思想、正确方法教育引导孩子。要善于从点滴小事中教会孩子欣赏真善美、远离假丑恶。要注意观察孩子的思想动态和行为变化，随时做好教育引导工作。

The family is the first classroom, and a parent is the child's first teacher. Parents should always set a good example for their children, and guide them with correct actions, ideas and methods. Parents should teach children to appreciate the true, the good and the beautiful, and to keep away from the false, the bad and the ugly in everyday life. Parents should observe children closely for any change in idea or action, and educate and guide them when needed.

Xi Jinping considers parents to be a child's first teachers. Parents have the task of setting an example for their children, focusing on developing their moral qualities in their upbringing, and ensuring that the child does not go astray with their behaviour. Xi Jinping explicitly says that the parents should take notice and possibly take corrective action in the event of any change in a child's behaviour. Hence, it is obvious that Xi Jinping wants to prevent unexpected changes in the behaviour and thoughts of the young generation.

In these passages, it is possible to see Xi Jinping's strong emphasis on teaching moral qualities to Chinese children. Parents should act as role models who will set an example for their children by their behaviour. In China, family education has its

justification. Chinese children are exposed to great pressure from an early age about their future because of the high level of competition. Their parents in general have the most important say in their upbringing and in their choice of life direction. Xi Jinping is aware of this influence and tries to influence parents to consider moral values in their upbringing.

Xi Jinping's worries about the proper behaviour of the young generation are from the point of view of the CCP understandable. The current Chinese young generation grew up in the very different environment than their parents. They were born under the one-child policy and influenced by the Western culture from an early age. They know Mao Zedong era only from the history textbooks. They do not know neither famine nor crushing poverty as their parents do. While their parents grew up in times when being average was prized, current Chinese young generation can choose from many different career paths to follow. Many of them donates to charity, support women's rights, stage protests on climate change, and even help factory workers to form unions (The Economist, 2021).

In his speech *Family values, family education and family tradition*, Xi Jinping gives one other reason why family education is so important:

家庭是人生的第一个课堂，父母是孩子的第一任老师。孩子们从牙牙学语起就开始接受家教，有什么样的家教，就有什么样的人。家庭教育涉及很多方面，但最重要的是品德教育，是如何做人的教育。也就是古人说的“爱子，教之以义方”，“爱之不以道，适所以害之也”。青少年是家庭的未来和希望，更是国家的未来和希望。

Family is the first school, and parents are their children's first teachers. Family education begins as a child learns to talk. The kind of family education a child receives determines his or her future conduct. Though there are many aspects to family education, the most important is character-building. As ancient scholars put it, „If you love your children, teach them the right path“, and „Love your children the right way, or you will cause them harm.“ Young people are the hope of the future for not just families but also the nation.

The description of how Xi Jinping envisions the role of parents in the early years of a child is the same as in the previous passage. Yet this passage differs from the previous one in one aspect. Xi Jinping adds here that educated young people are the hope of the Chinese nation. The role of the family is therefore not only to educate children for the needs of the family but also for the needs of the nation. In his speeches, Xi Jinping very often emphasises patriotism, which in Chinese political discourse serves as a means to maintain the legitimacy of the CCP. Zhao (2016, 1169) argues that even though communism has always been the official ideology of the CCP, nationalism has

provided the most reliable claim on the Chinese people's loyalty. Claiming that young people are the hope of the nation, Xi Jinping wants to strengthen the bonding between Chinese families and the nation.

Regarding the concept of family, Xi Jinping refers in his speeches to family values, which should characterise the ideal Chinese family. In his Spring Festival Gathering Speech 2015 and Family Values, Family Education and Family Tradition (2016), he defines family values as follows:

中华民族自古以来就重视家庭、重视亲情。家和万事兴、天伦之乐、尊老爱幼、贤妻良母、相夫教子、勤俭持家等，都体现了中国人的这种观念。

Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has valued family and familial love. These values are embodied in qualities such as familial harmony, familial happiness, respect for the elderly, cherishing the young, the virtuousness of wives and mothers, mothers assisting their husbands teaching their children, and diligent and thrifty housekeeping.

尊老爱幼、妻贤夫安，母慈子孝、兄友弟恭，耕读传家、勤俭持家，知书达礼、遵纪守法等中华民族传统家庭美德。

Traditional Chinese family virtues include: One should respect the elderly and love the young, a virtuous women brings her husband good; a kind mother brings up children dutiful to the family; the younger brother should respect the elder brother and the elder brother should be gentle with the younger brother; passing good traditions of readings and farming from generation to generation; one should run the family diligently and thriftily; one should be learned and practice etiquette; one should observe discipline and the law.

From the way Xi Jinping defines family values, it is clear that the concept of the ideal family comes from Confucian philosophy. There are elements of filial piety (respect the elderly, love the young) as well as hints of family hierarchy based on the Confucian concept called five cardinal relationships (*wulun*): younger brother should respect the elder brother and the elder brother should be gentle with the younger brother.

By putting "respect the elderly" at the top of the list of family values in the second excerpt, Xi Jinping makes it clear that this defining characteristic of filial piety is very important to him. Ancient Confucian scholars considered filial piety to be the "root of all virtues," and Xi Jinping continues in this discourse.

To describe the concept of the family in more detail, Xi Jinping uses Chinese idiomatic expressions. In general, Xi Jinping makes much use of Chinese idioms, which have their origins in traditional Chinese culture, to illustrate the meaning of his words. The

idiom “respect the old and cherish the young” (*zun lao ai you* 尊老爱幼) then indirectly refers to the basic definition of the concept of filial piety, confirming that Xi considers filial piety an important part of the concept of the Chinese family.

In the first passage, Xi emphasizes the importance of the family by referring to the time period “since ancient times” (*zigu yilai* 自古以来). Through this reference, Xi indicates continuity of the privileged position of the family in Chinese society. To describe the family values in more detail, Xi Jinping makes use of qualities that were typical in traditional China. Such description suggests that Xi Jinping wants to preserve traditional Chinese family values as much as possible up to the present day and maintain the continuity. In Chinese political discourse in general, continuity is often emphasized. For example, Consecutive leaderships of the CCP are often referred to as “generations” with Mao Zedong being the member of the first generation and Xi Jinping as the member of the fifth generation of the CCP leaders. Holbig (2009, 39) argues that ideological continuity can help to stabilize social expectations and reduce anxieties and resistance within the society. In the context of the changes that have affected China since the early 1980s, the emphasis on continuity, whether in its ideological form or in this case the continuity of family values, is an effort to maintain social stability within Chinese society. Xi Jinping wants to remind Chinese people that despite profound changes which have undergone in Chinese society, basic features of Chinese society remain unchanged.

Another important aspect of this message is its inclusiveness. Xi Jinping uses the term 中华民族 (*zhonghua minzu*), which can be translated as the Chinese nation. This term encompasses all Chinese ethnic groups, and by using this term, Xi Jinping shows that he considers the concept of the family equally important to all Chinese. The reason why Xi Jinping uses the term “Chinese nation” (*zhonghua minzu*) as the subject of the family is the same as with promoting continuity of family values. Xi wants to use family values to preserve stability within the Chinese society and for that reason he wants to make sure that all the Chinese, no matter their ethnicity, are included in this message with no one being left behind.

The Confucian values on which family values are defined mean that the filial piety plays an important role in Chinese political discourse. This Xi Jinping confirms in his 2019 Spring Festival speech where Xi Jinping elaborates specifically on the concept of filial piety:

自古以来，中国人就提倡孝老爱亲，倡导老吾老以及人之老、幼吾幼以及人之幼。

Since ancient times, the Chinese have advocated filial piety and love for the family, honouring other elders as we do our own parents and caring for other children as we do our own children.

Xi works with the concept of filial piety in the sense of care and respect for the elderly population. But at the same time, by using idiomatic expressions 老吾老以及人之老 (*lao wu lao yiji ren zhi lao*) “to honour old people as we do our own aged parents” and 幼吾幼以及人之幼 (*you wu you yi ren zhi you*) “to care for other children as we do our own children”, he implies that he understands filial piety in the sense of caring for parents and children, regardless of whether they are one's children/parents or not. Here, too, we can see between the lines Xi Jinping's desire to put nation before family. It is necessary to honour all elders and it is necessary to care for all children because they all make up the one Chinese nation.

Further in the speech, Xi Jinping explains why the concept of filial piety is so important in contemporary China (2019):

我国已经进入老龄化社会。让老年人老有所养、老有所依、老有所乐、老有所安，关系社会和谐稳定。

China has already become an aging society. Providing the elderly with care, support, entertainment, and security are important for social harmony and stability.

According to Xi, conducting of filial piety helps to maintain social harmony and stability in China.

The concept of harmony is the most important Chinese traditional value. It was a central concept in ancient philosophy. All the main ancient Chinese schools of thought prized it as an ultimate value. *The Doctrine of The Mean* (*zhongyong* 中庸) defines harmony as a state “when heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 1).

Since the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, the Chinese leadership has been extremely sensitive about maintaining stability. According to Bremmer (2006, 260), the Chinese government is trying carefully to avoid instability by jumping from a controlled social environment on one end to complete openness on the other. In response to the social inequalities caused by the rapid economic development, Hu Jintao, the chairman of the CCP (2003-2013) presented a concept of Harmonious Society (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会). According to Hu Jintao (Chan, 2009, 821), a harmonious society is a society that is “democratic and ruled by law, fair and just, trustworthy and fraternal, full of vitality, stable and orderly, and maintains harmony between man and nature.”

Although Xi Jinping do not use the concept of Harmonious Society anymore, the passage above shows that he, same as Hu Jintao, favors the concept of harmony prevailing in the Chinese society. Delury (2008, 42) offers an explanation why is the concept of harmony popular in the CCP discourse. He states that harmony serves as an universal value from which the entire Chinese society can benefit. To those who are benefiting most from China's economic growth, “harmony” implies social stability and status quo that will protect assets acquired and ensure their future enjoyment. To

those on the side-lines of the boom, “harmony” sounds like a renewed socialist commitment to the welfare of the rural masses and urban poor. To educated elites “harmony” hints at the toleration of dissent and gradual implementation of democracy and the rule of law. To nationalists, “harmony” is a vehicle for the revival of Chinese traditional values. To party loyalists, “harmony” reassures the political elite that the party intends to maintain its monopoly of force and philosophy. In the end, by referring to the harmony, the CCP is able to maintain peaceful coexistence among the winners, losers, and critics of reform.

In 2017 Spring Festival speech, Xi Jinping elaborates on the discourse of family values as a source of social harmony and stability. He introduces the term “true feelings” (*zhenqing* 真情):

中华民族历来重真情。

The Chinese nation has always valued true feelings.

真情，是不虚、不私、不妄之情。真情不虚就是要忠诚老实、诚恳待人，真情不私就是要砥砺品德、刚正无私，真情不妄就是要光明磊落、坦坦荡荡。

True feelings are feelings which are not false, selfish, or delusional. Not having false feelings means to be loyal, honest and sincere to others. Not having selfish feelings means to be moral, upright and selfless. Not having delusional feelings means to be open, candid and generous.

Same as with promotion of family values, Xi Jinping emphasizes continuity throughout the Chinese history, and ethnical inclusiveness of true feelings. When describing true feelings in more detail, Xi Jinping first mentions the quality “to be loyal” (*zhong* 忠), which is used in Confucian texts to refer to loyalty to the ruler. This can suggest that for Xi Jinping, loyalty, whether it is to the family, friend, or state, is the most important virtue of “true feelings.”

The need to define “true feelings” suggests that Xi Jinping is aware that true feelings are not taken for granted in contemporary Chinese society, which he confirms later in the speech (2017)

当今社会快速变化，人们为工作废寝忘食，为生计奔走四方，但不能忘了人间真情，不要在遥远的距离中割断了真情，不要在日常的忙碌中遗忘了真情，不要在日夜的拼搏中忽略了真情。

Today's society is changing rapidly. People forsake sleep and forget to eat because of work, and they rush about to make a living. However, we must not forget about the true feelings between humans, we must not let

true feelings be severed by distance, must not forget true feelings during the hustle and bustle of everyday life, and must not ignore true feelings during the struggles of day and night.

Very similar tone of speech Xi Jinping uses also in the *Spring Festival Gathering Speech 2015* where he talks about the importance of preserving family values:

不论时代发生多大变化，不论生活格局发生多大变化，我们都要重视家庭建设，注重家庭、注重家教、注重家风

No matter how much times have changed, no matter how much the pattern of life has changed, we all need to pay attention to family building, family values, family education and family culture

Xi Jinping is aware that today's society is different from the past. Due to the modernisation and higher level of individualism, the Chinese people, according to Xi, have started to neglect the traditional values of Chinese society. Xi Jinping encourages Chinese people to cultivate true feelings and family values because he believes that true feelings and family values must preserve.

In the passage from the *2015 Spring Festival Speech* Xi Jinping clarifies how he wants to address the issue of changing society. He encourages Chinese people to start a family, teach children moral values, cultivate family values in them, and to maintain family culture (*jiafeng* 家风). In the speech *Family values, family education and family tradition* Xi Jinping says that family culture "is an integral part of social ethos (...) A family will thrive with a good culture while a bad culture can bring trouble to a family and even to society". Family culture thus can be defined as a set of characteristics that are typical for a given family and are passed on from generation to generation.

By preserving core family values within the family and passing them down from generation to generation, Xi Jinping is trying to achieve stability in China's changing society. By urging families to continue to cling to traditional Chinese values despite the changes that have affected Chinese society under the economic reforms, Xi Jinping is likely trying to preserve the status quo in Chinese society.

That true feelings (*zhenqing* 真情) and family values are connected is evidenced by another passage from the *Spring Festival Gathering Speech 2017*:

真情，需要用社会主义核心价值观来引领，需要用中华民族传统美德来滋养。

True feelings should be guided by socialist core values and nurtured by traditional virtues of the Chinese nation.

In order to preserve true feelings, Xi states that they should be guided with core socialist values and traditional Chinese virtues. Thus, same as family values, true feelings should be based on Chinese traditional virtues. Family values are incorporated into true feelings as they both are based on traditional Chinese virtues.

Core socialist values (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan* 社会主义核心价值观), which serves as the second source of true feelings, were implemented by the CCP in 2012 in response to the alleged moral crisis caused by the economic development of Chinese society. It is a set of 12 values (prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship) which the Chinese government and media promote on a daily basis across PRC. Even though it may be not evident at the first glance, these socialist values are linked with the Confucian teaching. First, the connection to Confucius teachings is reflected in the structure of the values. The values are categorized on an individual, social, and national scale² which echoes the Confucian principle that one must first put his personal life in order. Only then can he put his family, the country, and the world in order. Second, the Core Values feature the six Confucian virtues: wisdom, benevolence, faith, righteousness, loyalty, and harmony, and the six virtuous actions: filial piety, friendship, kindness charity, honest and respect (Gow, 2016, 100).

The presence of filial piety among core socialist values confirms also Miao (2020, 174). He noted that the virtue of filial piety is very often promoted with official core socialist values in the Chinese media. True feelings can therefore be understood as an all-encompassing concept which puts together all the good virtues which have origin in the Chinese history, including filial piety.

Relation of the core socialist values to the traditional Chinese culture confirms Xi Jinping in the speech *Cultivate and Disseminate Core Socialist Values*:

培育和弘扬社会主义核心价值观必须立足中华优秀传统文化。的核心价值观，都有其固有的根本。抛弃传统、丢掉根本，就等于割断了自己的精神命脉。

To cultivate and disseminate the core socialist values we must take traditional Chinese culture as the base. All concrete core values are deeply rooted. So, to renounce such values is tantamount to severing our cultural lifeline. The extensive, profound and outstanding traditional Chinese culture is the foundation for us to stand firm upon in the global mingling and clashing of cultures.

² Individual values are patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendship. Social values are freedom, equality, justice and rule of law. National values are: prosperity, democracy and civility.

Xi says that all core socialist values are deeply rooted in the traditional Chinese culture and their abandonment would lead to the demise of Chinese culture, which is a fundamental pillar in today's world of globalization.

The status of the Chinese nation in the modern world is a theme that has resonated in Chinese society since the mid-19th century when imperial Western powers invaded China and severely curtailed its independence. Since then, China has been looking for a way to match the West economically and militarily on the one hand, and to preserve its traditional culture, ideals and uniqueness based on Chinese history on the other.

By saying that true feelings should be guided by core socialist values, Xi Jinping aims to put the Chinese government in charge of guiding true feelings since Core socialist values are values implemented and promoted by the CCP. Xi Jinping thus tries to persuade Chinese people to cultivate true feelings based on the ideology of the CCP. That would enable the CCP to maintain social harmony and stability in China. This is indicated in the final part of the Xi Jinping's *2017 Spring Festival Gathering Speech*:

我们要让真情大义像春风一样吹遍神州大地，吹进千家万户，给每一个中华儿女带来温暖。唯有如此，亲情、友情、爱情、同志之情才能高尚恒久，才能有益于自己，有益于亲人、友人、所爱之人、同志之人，也才能铸就守望相助、天下同心的人间大爱。

True feelings should reach to every family and bring warmth to all Chinese like a spring breeze blowing across the nation. Only in this way can affection between relatives, friendship, romantic love and comradeship be noble and permanent and be beneficial to ourselves, our relatives, our friends, our loved ones and our comrades, and can forge a world of mutual support and unity.

Cultivating of true feelings will eventually lead to the harmony in the society – to a world of mutual support and unity. This Xi Jinping's statement thus corresponds with the ultimate goal of the CCP: creating a harmonious society where is no place for social unrest.

5.2 Filial piety is the loyalty to the state

However, Xi Jinping does not use filial piety only to promote social harmony. Further in his 2019 Spring Festival Gathering speech he states:

在家尽孝、为国尽忠是中华民族优良传统。

It is a fine tradition of the Chinese nation to be filial at home and loyal to the country.

Ancient Confucian scholars defined filial piety as a virtue of respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors. In broader way, they also defined it as a virtue of loyalty toward the ruler. However, Xi Jinping defines filial piety as a virtue of the loyalty to the state. He prefers loyalty to the Chinese nation to the loyalty to the CCP which would correspond with the traditional meaning of the filial piety.

This shift in the meaning of filial piety in contemporary Chinese political discourse is explained by Yan (2021, 223-252) who argues that China's individualization process has recently entered a second stage. In the first stage the Chinese state, through institutional reforms pushed individuals to take more responsibility and enter the market economy with a goal to create a state-led socialist market economy. The individual was dis-embedded from the traditional family and thrust onto the market. In the second stage, where the Chinese nation is right now, the state-led socialist market economy has already been established, and the focus is on re-embedding the individual into it through nationalism. Yan argues that China is becoming a "society of family-state" (*ji-aguo* 家国) in which individuals are linked to the state through their families rather than self-organized communities as it was before. Chinese state tries to ideologically incorporate the family into the state by connecting the family dream and the national dream together. By doing so, Chinese state wants to ensure that no other form of social organization can insert itself between the individual and the state.

By saying that filiality in home and loyalty to the state is a fine tradition, Xi Jinping thus follows in the efforts of the Chinese state to incorporate the state and Chinese families together. He confirms this intention in the following two excerpts of the speech *Family values, Family education and Family tradition* (2016):

广大家庭都要把爱家和爱国统一起来，把实现家庭梦融入民族梦之中。

We should combine the love we have for our families with our love for our nation and integrate our family dreams with the dream of the nation.

历史和现实告诉我们，家庭的前途命运同国家和民族的前途命运紧密相连。我们要认识到，千家万户都好，国家才能好，民族才能好。国家富强，民族复兴，人民幸福，不是抽象的，最终要体现在千千万万个家庭都幸福美满上，体现在亿万人民生活不断改善上。同时，我们还要认识到，国家好，民族好，家庭才能好。

Both history and reality show that the future of families is closely connected with that of the nation. We must be conscious that a nation can do well only when its families do well. A prosperous and strong nation, the national rejuvenation and the happiness of the people are embodied by the happiness of the families and the better life of hundreds of millions of people. Similarly, only when a nation does well can its families do well.

Here, Xi Jinping says the family and the nation are intertwined. Not only Chinese should love their families, but they should also love their nation. He also says that families can do well only when a nation does well. Xi Jinping wants to strengthen the national sentiment of Chinese society with this statement. Xi Jinping's point is to convince the Chinese people that the desire for a better life only leads through a prosperous state. For Xi Jinping, the family is the basic unit of society, but the state comes first. Xi Jinping has thus once again within this analysis put the nation over a family. Defining filial piety as the loyalty to the state allows the CCP to more easily persuade the Chinese people to fulfil the CCP's goals. The ultimate goal is the national dream

Filial piety, in its form of loyalty to the state, thus serves as a means to promote nationalism, which began to appear in Chinese political discourse to a large extent after the events at Tiananmen in 1989. The CCP's embrace of patriotism after 1989 was the result of many factors that originated both abroad and within China. Foreign factors included the imposition of sanctions on China by the international community after the events at Tiananmen, Sino-Japanese disputes, China's unsuccessful bid for the 2000 Olympics or bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade. All this events negatively affected the relation between China and the West and led to the patriotic nationalism. As domestic factors, the most important one was probably the change of leadership of CCP and the rise of Jiang Zemin, who, unlike his predecessors, advocated a return to cultural traditionalism (Modongal, 2016, 4). Ying Jiang (2012, 51) explains that several factors motivated the CCP to promote Chinese nationalism including collapse of the Soviet Union, Chinese re-evaluation of Western culture and a society that was changing more quickly than prevailing ideology.

The main task of the Chinese government is to promote national development. Therefore, it is important that the Chinese people are loyal to the Chinese nation. The role of traditional Chinese values is summarized by Xi Jinping in the following passage of his 2018 Spring Festival Gathering Speech:

我们要积极培育和践行社会主义核心价值观，弘扬中华民族传统美德，把爱家来，把实现个人梦、家庭梦融入国家梦、民族梦之中，用我们 4 亿多家庭、13 亿多人民的智慧和力量，汇聚起夺取社会主义伟大胜利、实现中华民族伟大复兴中国梦的磅礴力量。

We must actively cultivate and practice core socialist values, promote the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, the love of family to, the realization of personal dreams, family dreams into the national dream, national dream, with our 400 million families, more than 1.3 billion people's wisdom and strength, converge to win the great victory of socialism, to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation's majestic power.

Here, Xi Jinping defines the role of traditional Chinese values, and thus the filial piety, in Chinese political discourse. Xi Jinping's main goal since he took office in 2012 has been to achieve the Chinese Dream, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To achieve this goal, Xi Jinping believes it is necessary to cultivate core socialist values and promote traditional Chinese values. As this analysis shows, the filial piety is a co-part of this effort because it is understood in contemporary Chinese political discourse as primarily loyalty to the state. This is manifested in particular by the demand to incorporate the family dream and national dream together. According to Xi Jinping, only if the Chinese people can be convinced that it is not enough to love one's family, but that it is necessary to love the Chinese nation in the same way, can the Chinese Dream be realised.

The filial piety in contemporary Chinese political discourse thus serves as a means to promote nationalism, which in turn serves as one of the means to achieve the main goal of Xi Jinping's government – The Chinese Dream.

5.3 Filial Piety and The Chinese Dream

In the third discourse strand, Xi Jinping uses the concept of filial piety as one of the means to realize the Chinese dream.

The Chinese Dream has been Xi Jinping's key political slogan since he came to power in late 2012. It describes the heading of all sectors of Chinese society towards prosperity and the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (*zhonghua minzu weida fuxing* 中华民族伟大复兴) under the leadership of the CCP. To put it more concretely, Chinese Dream is described as achieving Two Centenaries: the first is the material goal of China becoming a moderately well-off society by 2021, the 100th anniversary of the CCP. The second goal relates to modernization: to become a fully developed nation by

2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. A moderately well-off society is a society where all Chinese citizens enjoy high standards of living. The modernization goal consists of China becoming a world leader in science, military and economic spheres and participating in all areas of human endeavour.

Xi Jinping makes the achievement of the Chinese Dream conditional on the joint efforts of the CCP and the Chinese people. In his speeches, he mentions that the CCP's responsibility is to fight against poverty, improving medical care, achieving environmental goals, expanding middle-income group, ensuring accessibility of housing, building world-class universities etc. On the other hand, he expects that all Chinese individuals will also contribute to achieving this dream.

The thesis analyses Xi Jinping's demand in four of his speeches. All four analysed speeches have a common theme. Xi Jinping uses these speeches to promote the Chinese Dream and presents a way in which the Chinese Dream can be achieved. However, the speeches differ in content, and depending on to whom they are addressed. The speeches *Realize Youthful Dreams (zai shixian zhongguo meng de shengdong shijian zhong fangfei qingchun mengxiang 在实现中国梦的生动实践中放飞青春梦想)* and *Young People Should Foster Core Socialist Values (qingnian yao zijue jianxing shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan 青年要自觉践行社会主义核心价值观)* are addressed to Chinese students. The speeches *Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True (Shixian zhonghua minzu weida fuxing shi hai neiwai zhonghua renv gongtong de meng 实现中华民族伟大复兴是海内外中华儿女共同的梦)* and *The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation is a Dream Shared by All Chinese* are addressed to Overseas Chinese. For both groups, Xi Jinping uses different means to achieve his goal. The purpose of this analysis is thus to compare these means and to highlight the different conceptions of the concept of filial piety in these speeches.

In his speeches to Chinese students, Xi Jinping builds on the argument we encountered in the first part of this analysis. In the speech *Foster and Practice Core Socialist Values from Childhood* Xi Jinping says that the young generation is the future of the Chinese nation:

少年儿童是祖国的未来，是中华民族的希望。

Children are the future of our country and the hope of the Chinese nation.

这就是《少年中国说》中所说的：少年智则国智，少年富则国富，少年强则国强，少年进步则国进步。新陈代谢是不可抗拒的历史规律，未来总是由今天的少年儿童开创的。

As Liang Qichao said in his "Young China": "If the youth are wise, the country will be wise. If the youth prosper, the country will prosper. If the youth are strong, the country will be strong.... If the youth

progress, the country will progress.” The new replacing the old is an irresistible law; and the future will always be created by today’s children.

Xi Jinping connects the bright future of the Chinese nation with the bright future of the young generation. The emphasis on the youth is not new in the political discourse of the CCP. In fact, already in 1915, Chen Duxiu, the later co-founder of the CCP, wrote in the opening essay of the New Youth Magazine: *Youth are like the early spring, like the morning sun, like the blooming grass, like the sharp blade fresh off the whetstone; youth is the most valuable time of life.* (Chen, 1984, 79).

The young generation played a decisive role in many events of the modern Chinese history. Ash (2020, vii) recognizes six different young generations that helped to shape the Chinese history. The first generation brought down the Qing Empire, the next one was the generation of the May Fourth Movement followed by the war generation defined by conflict and founding of the PRC. The post-war children, generation four, lived through Great Leap Forward and participated as Red Guards in Cultural Revolution. The fifth generation came of age in 1980s which ended by the tragedy on Tiananmen Square in 1989. Their successors, the sixth generation, are the Chinese which have been born after 1989.

As can be seen from the quotes of Chen Duxiu, and Xi Jinping, and from the historical events that formed China, the CCP puts the emphasis on the young generation since its founding. It was the young generation who founded CCP, contributed to the foundation of PRC in 1949 and played an important role as Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. These decisive roles of the Chinese young generation are in contrast with the role of young generation in Imperial China, when the younger generation, especially in the service of the state, had to honour their parents’ wishes and subordinate their careers to their parents will. This aspect of filial piety, very typical for the traditional Chinese society, vanished during the May Fourth Movement when the excessive obedience of children to their parents was labelled as one of the main causes of the backwardness of the Chinese nation in comparison with its Western counterparts.

The role of younger generation in contemporary China is much more important than it was in the past. Xi sees it as the natural order of things that the young generation will replace the old. He encourages them to achieve their goals, as the following passage from the speech *Realize Youthful Dreams* show:

广大青年要勇敢肩负起时代赋予的重任，志存高远，脚踏实地，努力在实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦的生动实践中放飞青春梦想。

Young people need to boldly assume the heavy responsibilities that the times impose on you, aim high, be practical and realistic, and put

your youthful dreams into action in the course of realizing the Chinese Dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

在革命、建设、改革各个历史时期，中国共产党始终高度重视青年、关怀青年、信任青年，对青年一代寄予殷切期望。

During all periods of revolution, construction and reform, the Party has always valued, cared about and trusted young people, and placed great expectations on the younger generations.

Xi encourages the younger generation to pursue their dreams so they can contribute to the realization of the Chinese Dream. He also reminds students that CCP has great expectations on them. This Xi's attitude corresponds with the concept of filial piety and the strict education which is common to lot of Chinese families. In this case, however, it is not the wish of the student's parents but the wish of the CCP. Hence, Xi Jinping again puts the national interest on the first place.

In the second excerpt, Xi Jinping mentions that the CCP always cared about and trusted young people. One way to verify this statement is to look at the data on the admission of new members to the CCP. And the data shows that the proportion of young people in the structures of the CCP has risen over the last two decades. In 2000, members below the age of 35 accounted for 22% of the total membership. In 2019 it was 24% (People's Daily, 2021). The data also shows that as of 2020, the CCP has little over 95 million members from which more than 50 % of the members have at least a bachelor's degree while there are only 15% of such people in the whole China (ibid.).

The data shows that CCP has started to focus on recruiting young people in recent years. In addition, the data shows that CCP has started to prefer educated people. Thus, the data suggests that CCP has become an elite organization that increasingly relies on the young generation. (Bian 2001, 810-812) offers an explanation of this transition. He argues that in the early years of the CCP, the party focused mainly on recruiting people from three classes: peasants, workers and soldiers which were seen as revolutionary. However, this method changed in 1970s, when the Party found itself in the midst of political turmoil caused by the tragic consequences of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao Zedong. New leadership of the CCP led by Deng Xiaoping started to prefer younger educated technocrats over the uneducated leftist to advance with reforms and modernization of the country.

However, the motivation of young people for entering the party does not necessarily have to be ideological. Although more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of Chinese students are the members of the Communist Youth League, the studies shows that the main reason for youth generation to apply for membership in the CCP is to "improve their CVs" as the membership in the party provides them with better accessibility of job opportunities in state-owned enterprises and the government (The Economist, 2021).

Xi Jinping communicates the importance of the young generation to the CCP with the following demand that the young generation be loyal to the Chinese state:

广大青年要坚持用邓小平理论、“三个代表”重要思想、科学发展观武装头脑，把理想信念建立在对科学理论的理性认同上，建立在对历史规律的正确认识上，建立在对基本国情的准确把握上，不断增强道路自信、理论自信、制度自信，增强对坚持党的领导信念，永远紧跟党走高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜。

Young people should guide your actions with Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of the Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development; base your ideals and convictions on the rational recognition and acceptance of scientific theories, on a correct understanding of the laws of history, and on an accurate understanding of the basic national conditions; keep enhancing your confidence in the Chinese path, theories and system; have more faith in the Party's leadership; and always follow the Party in upholding Chinese socialism.

The second part of this analysis introduced the filial piety in contemporary Chinese political discourse as loyalty to the state. The same discourse is present in this excerpt. Xi Jinping is trying to convince Chinese students that the only proper way to realize their goals and dreams is to follow the Chinese path of socialism. Xi Jinping thus continues to emphasize nationalism, but at the same time it is clear from this passage that Xi Jinping is already more specifically demanding loyalty to the CCP from Chinese students when he says that young people are required to always follow the Party in upholding Chinese socialism.

Since loyalty of the children to the parents is one of the main characteristics of filial piety, Xi, by this statement, directly requests the young generation to be filial toward the CCP. Xi Jinping has chosen to address Chinese students in this way is because he assumes that Chinese students have not yet developed a strong bond with the CCP. Hence, he feels the need to strengthen this bond as the devoted young generation is crucial for maintaining the rule of CCP in the future. Because, as already mentioned above, CCP needs the loyalty of the younger generation to survive in the fast-developed world.

Studies show that young people do not intend to challenge the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party. They are comfortable with a rising, assertive China. A research project in China published in 2019, based on a survey of more than 10,000 university students in nine provinces, reflected strong nationalistic views. Nine out of ten Chinese students agreed with a statement that “one should not dare to forget the interests of the nation even if one's status is humble” (*Wei bei wei gan wang you guo* 位卑未敢忘忧国) (Xinhuanet, 2019).

In the first part of this analysis, it was mentioned that CCP promotes core socialist values to retain its legitimacy. Apart from promoting core socialist values in Chinese media and by the Chinese government, core socialist values should also been taught in schools as Xi Jinping states in his speech *Foster and Practice Core Socialist Values from Childhood* (2014):

学校要把德育放在更加重要的位置，根据少年儿童特点和成长规律，循循善诱，春风化雨，努力做到每一堂课不仅传播知识、而且传授美德，让同学们都得到倾心关爱和真诚帮助，让社会主义核心价值观的种子在学生们心中生根发芽。

Schools should attach greater importance to moral education. Teachers should take into consideration children's personalities and traits, and patiently impart knowledge and cultivate virtues in every class. Schools should also ensure that all students receive sincere care and help, making the seeds of core socialist values take root and grow in their hearts.

In addition to providing students with practical knowledge, Xi Jinping believes that schools must do much more to cultivate moral virtues. Xi Jinping talks about how a school must be a place where students acquire an understanding of the core socialist values that define Chinese socialism. With this demand, Xi Jinping is trying to ensure the loyalty of the young generation to the Chinese regime.

The Chinese government has been pushing patriotic education in its classrooms since after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests when there was undoubtedly an erosion of the authority of the CCP within the Chinese society. The then-General Secretary of the CCP Jiang Zeming launched a movement called “state-of-the-nation education” (*guoqing jiaoyu* 国情教育) aimed particularly at workers and the young. The movement came to its climax in 1994 when the CCP issued the “Outline for the Implementation of the Policy on Patriotic Education which summed up the aims of patriotic education as follows: “the invigoration of the spirit of the nation, the enhancement of national cohesion and the establishment of national self-respect and pride”. (Barmé, 1999, 257).

The emphasis on patriotic education continues also in the era of Xi Jinping. Students take obligatory courses on Marxism, nationalism, the doctrines of Mao and Xi Jinping Thought. In 2019, CCP unveiled Outline for the Implementation of Patriotic Education in the New Era which followed on the document from 1994 mentioned above. Chao (2019, 106) argues that patriotic education in the Xi Jinping era has three goals: to deal with the economic globalization which weakens the state boundaries; to promote core socialist values; and to pursuit the Chinese Dream.

Xi Jinping thus uses the filial piety in his speeches to Chinese students to achieve the Chinese Dream. He demands Chinese students to contribute to the realisation of the Chinese Dream by making every effort to achieve their goals, which Xi Jinping believes must be the highest. Xi Jinping expects students to follow the path of Chinese socialism and be loyal to the CCP on their journey. Loyalty to the CCP is to be ensured by patriotic education, which has become even more intense since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012.

Speeches that Xi Jinping addresses to Overseas Chinese *The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation is a Dream Shared by All Chinese* (实现中华民族伟大复兴是海内外中华儿女共同的梦) and *Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True* (创新正当其时，圆梦适得其势) have the same theme of realizing the Chinese Dream as the previous speeches to students, but they differ in the form of content. Xi Jinping is aware that Overseas Chinese have not cultivated such a relationship with the CCP and does not require such loyalty to the CCP. Instead, Xi Jinping seeks to cultivate Overseas Chinese loyalty to China by referring to a common Chinese culture and thus using this feature to persuade Overseas Chinese to participate in the realization of the Chinese Dream.

Reference to Chinese culture, as a common feature between Mainland Chinese and Overseas Chinese Xi Jinping stresses in these passages of the speech *The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation is a Dream Shared by All Chinese*:

中华文明有着 5000 多年的悠久历史，是中华民族自强不息、发展壮大的强大精神力量。我们的同胞无论生活在哪里，身上都有鲜明的中华文化烙印，中华文化是中华儿女共同的精神基因。

Chinese civilization, with a history going back more than 5,000 years, provides strong intellectual support for the country's ceaseless self-improvement and growth. No matter where a Chinese is, he always bears the distinctive brand of the Chinese culture, which is the common heritage of all the sons and daughters of China.

在世界各地有几千万海外侨胞，大家都是中华大家庭的成员。长期以来，一代又一代海外侨胞，秉承中华民族优秀传统文化，不忘祖国，不忘祖籍，不忘身上流淌的中华民族血液。

The tens of millions of overseas Chinese across the world are all members of the Chinese family. In the best of Chinese traditions, generations of overseas Chinese never forget their home country, their origins, or the blood of the Chinese nation flowing in their veins.

Xi Jinping in these passages focuses on promoting cultural nationalism. Nationalism was introduced to China during the late Qing Dynasty (Wang, 2017, 3). However, the imagination or the sense of a unified nation preexists the Western conception of nationalism. Some Chinese scholars interpret this sense of unification as cultural nationalism (Guo 2004), because the imagination of the nation or a common identity in ancient Chinese dynasties was premised on culture, such as Confucianism and the Heavenly Principle, rather than clear boundaries between the geographical nation-states. Guo (2004) further uses the term “cultural nationalism” to refer to the type of Chinese nationalism which incorporates Confucianism. He argues that this Confucianist nationalism has been very frequent in the CCP’s politics.

Xi refers to the fact that China’s 5,000-year-old culture provides a strong enough bond between Overseas Chinese and China. Chinese leaders very often refer to the concept of the 5000-year-old Chinese culture to emphasize the uniqueness and superiority of the Chinese culture. In this case, Xi Jinping uses this phrase to emphasize that it doesn’t matter where a Chinese person is, because when the blood of a 5,000-year-old culture flows through their veins, they find a home all over the world.

Xi Jinping also works with the concept of children of China in these excerpts. Although Overseas Chinese do not live in the mother country, Xi Jinping considers them to be children of China. This means that Overseas Chinese, like the people living in the Mainland China, have an obligation to participate in shaping the Chinese Dream. This is also evident in the following passages of the speech *The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation is a Dream Shared by All Chinese* that Xi addressed to Chinese scholars who studied abroad:

希望广大留学人员充分发挥自身优势，加强内引外联、牵线搭桥，当好促进中外友好交流的民间大使，多用外国民众听得到、听得懂、听得进的途径和方式，讲述好中国故事，传播好中国声音，让世界对中国多一分理解、多一支持。

I hope you will make full use of your advantages to strengthen connections and exchanges between China and other countries, acting as unofficial ambassadors to promote people-to-people friendship, and explaining China’s culture, history and points of view in such a way that the people from other countries can understand and identify with China, and be ready to give it greater appreciation and support.

希望广大留学人员继承和发扬留学报国的光荣传统，做爱国主义的坚守者和传播者，秉持“先天下之忧而忧，后天下之乐而乐”的

人生理想，始终把国家富强、民族振兴、人民幸福作为努力志向，自觉使个人成功的果实结在爱国主义这棵常青树上。

I hope that you will carry forward the glorious tradition of studying hard to serve the country and be defenders and messengers of patriotism, always bearing in mind the ideal of "being the first to worry about the affairs of the state and the last to enjoy oneself," always taking the well-being of the country, the nation and the people as the goal of your endeavors, and willingly associating the fruits of personal success with the evergreen tree of patriotism.

In these excerpts, as in his speeches to Chinese students in China, Xi Jinping again works with the concept of filial piety. Overseas Chinese students are understood here as children of China who have duties (spreading Chinese culture) to their family (the Chinese state) and whose efforts are meant to contribute to the welfare of the Chinese people. In one crucial aspect, however, Xi Jinping's speeches to Mainland Chinese students and Overseas Chinese students differ. Xi Jinping does not explicitly demand loyalty to the CCP. One of the main reasons for this may be that Xi is likely aware that Overseas Chinese may have an indifferent relationship with the CCP because they are people who may not have lived in China for a long time, may not even have been born in China, may only visit China for short periods of time, or may have never even been to China. The second reason may be purely pragmatic. The CCP, as the ruling party, can only exercise its authority within the territory of the PRC. To demand party loyalty from people who live in places where the CCP has no real authority is thus unnecessary.

Instead, Xi Jinping is trying to appeal to patriotism and make overseas Chinese to be loyal to the Chinese nation. He asks overseas Chinese to play the role of ambassadors by spreading awareness of Chinese culture abroad. All the efforts of overseas Chinese should be aimed at enhancing the well-being of the Chinese state, nation, and people. Although Xi Jinping does not explicitly mention it in these passages, it is clear that this is how overseas Chinese can contribute to achieving the Chinese Dream.

The role of the CCP in relation to Overseas Chinese is explained by Xi Jinping as follows:

党和国家尊重广大留学人员的选择，回国工作，我们张开双臂热烈欢迎；留在海外，我们支持通过多种形式为国服务。大家都要牢记，无论身在何处，你们都是中华儿女的一分子，祖国和人民始终惦记着你们，祖国永远是你们温暖的精神家园。

The Party and the country respect the choice you make. If you decide to return, we will welcome you with open arms. If you decide to stay abroad, we will support you in serving the country in various ways.

All of you should remember that wherever you are you are a member of the Chinese family; the country and the people back home always care about their sons and daughters, and your homeland is always a warm spiritual land for you.

Similar to his speeches to Mainland Chinese students, Xi Jinping again fits the CCP into the role of the parent of the Chinese nation and Overseas Chinese into the role of the children. However, the tone of this passage is markedly different compared to the speeches to Mainland Chinese students. Whereas in the speeches to Mainland Chinese students Xi focused more on the expectations placed on Mainland Chinese students by the CCP, here Xi chooses a much more welcoming tone. He assures overseas Chinese students that the CCP fully supports them in their life decisions, that they will always be members of the extended Chinese family, and that they will always have the option to return to their homeland. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that despite the very friendly tone that Xi Jinping adopts, he does not forget to reiterate that the duty of overseas Chinese is to serve the country.

According to the survey of the Chinese Ministry of Education, from the 6.2m Chinese who left to study overseas between 2000 and 2019, more than 4m have returned. Moreover, the rate of return has picked up. In 2001 just 14% went home. But in every year since 2013, China has welcomed back at least four in five overseas graduates (The Economist, 2021).

6 Discussion

Based on an analysis of Xi Jinping's speeches, this paper found out that filial piety is understood by Xi Jinping as the duty of the Chinese people to take care of the welfare of the older generation and at the same time as a duty of loyalty to the state. While the duty to ensure the welfare of the older generation is in line with the traditional understanding of filial piety, the requirement of loyalty to the state is different from the traditional understanding of filial piety. The Confucians understood filial piety in an extended sense as the loyalty of the people to the ruler, which is confirmed by the classical Confucian wulun social organization, where the relationship between ruler and subject is listed as the most important one. But Xi Jinping's speeches demand most of all loyalty to the Chinese state.

This paper further found out that Xi Jinping uses the concept of filial piety for three purposes. In the first discursive block, which is mainly composed of an analysis of Spring Festival speeches, Xi Jinping uses filial piety as one of the means to maintain social harmony and stability in Chinese society. Xi Jinping's view of the filial piety is thus, in this respect, the same as that of the rulers of traditional China. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Xi Jinping often refers to the traditional China period to emphasize the privileged position of the Chinese family within Chinese society. Achieving (and maintaining) social harmony is one of the CCP's main goals after the events of 1989 and in the wake of increasing economic disparities within Chinese society. However, Xi Jinping is aware that as a result of modernisation and the growth of individualism in Chinese society, family values are losing strength. For this reason, he uses Spring Festival Speeches to remind the importance of family values and encourage the Chinese people to uphold them.

According to Xi Jinping, the preservation of family values is also to be served by the cultivation of core socialist values, which comprise the 12 basic values by which Chinese society should be guided in order to cope with the alleged moral decline caused by rapid economic development. Even though filial piety is not on the list of core socialist values, it has been shown that core socialist values are largely based on Confucian thought and that the Chinese government promotes filial piety as part of core socialist values. The CCP's effort to use core socialist values to maintain social harmony and stability within Chinese society has two main reasons. First, core socialist values were created "artificially" by the CCP through its own decision. This gives the CCP wide latitude in the way it uses them. Second, the CCP has ample means to promote core socialist values through state institutions and the media. By emphasizing core socialist values, Xi Jinping is thus trying to persuade the Chinese people to follow the CCP's ideology. Only in this way, according to the Chinese political discourse, can the stability of Chinese society be maintained in the future.

Analysis of the second discourse strand revealed that contemporary Chinese political discourse understands filial piety as loyalty to the state. As mentioned above, this is a major change between the current understanding of filial piety and the traditional understanding of filial piety according to Confucian doctrine. The Chinese nation is understood as a collection of families that form one great Chinese family: one nation. The national interest is thus linked to the interest of the family. Xi Jinping constantly reminds the Chinese people that the family will only be well off if the state is well off, and vice versa. In Chinese political discourse, then, this means that the family dream is compatible with the national dream. This allows Xi Jinping to better promote his own political goal - the Chinese dream.

In the third discursive block, Xi Jinping uses filial piety as a means to achieve the Chinese Dream, which is the main political program of his governance. This goal is evident in the speeches, which are given by Xi Jinping to the Mainland Chinese students and to the Overseas Chinese. In these speeches, Xi Jinping acts like a parent who calls on his children (in this case, Chinese students and the Overseas Chinese) to direct all their efforts towards achieving the Chinese Dream. However, the way to contribute to the Chinese Dream differs for Chinese students and Overseas Chinese. In the speeches addressed to the Chinese students, Xi Jinping talks about the fact that a student must have high goals and pursue those goals. In addition, Xi Jinping stresses to students that they are the future of the Chinese nation and that they can rely on the support of the CCP.

On the other hand, Xi Jinping clarifies to the students that the CCP has high expectations of them. According to Xi Jinping, the outcome of the Chinese Dream is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Thus, once again, in his speeches, he prioritizes the welfare of the Chinese nation over loyalty to the CCP. At the same time, however, it should be mentioned that loyalty to the CCP also plays a vital role within this discourse. Xi Jinping stresses to students that on the road to realising the Chinese Dream, it is necessary to be loyal to the CCP and follow the path of Chinese socialism.

In the speeches addressed to the Overseas Chinese, Xi Jinping tells Overseas Chinese that their task is to contribute to the national rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Unlike the Chinese students, however, Xi Jinping in no way targets loyalty to the CCP as a prerequisite for achieving this goal. This is probably because the CCP has no real power over the lives of Overseas Chinese abroad. Instead, Xi Jinping focuses on promoting patriotism. He asks Overseas Chinese to become Chinese ambassadors to contribute to the spread of Chinese culture abroad. The tone Xi Jinping uses in his speeches to Overseas Chinese is also different. While Xi Jinping uses a tone in his speeches to students in Mainland China that suggests that the CCP has high expectations of students, the tone in his speeches to Overseas Chinese is much more welcoming. A tone that suggests that the CCP does not have much ability to influence the lives of the Overseas Chinese.

In sum, from all three discourses on filial piety, it is clear that Xi Jinping uses filial piety primarily to strengthen the relationship between the Chinese people and the Chinese state. In the first discourse, he achieves this by referring to social harmony and stability; in the second discourse, he focuses on promoting filial piety as the loyalty to the state; and in the third discourse, he uses filial piety to fulfill Chinese Dream. All of these discourses place the Chinese nation on the first place. Thus, using filial piety to promote nationalism is a change from the traditional concept of filial piety, which regulates the relationship of the subject to the ruler as the highest authority. However, even though Xi Jinping's discourses on filial piety omit to the large extent loyalty to the CCP and replace it with loyalty to the Chinese state, it should be noted that loyalty to the CCP is still at least indirectly part of all three analyzed discourses in the form of cultivating core socialist values, which include loyalty to the CCP, and which Xi Jinping explicitly demands in both the Spring Festival Speeches and his speeches to Chinese students.

7 Conclusion

This thesis focused on the concept of filial piety and its perception in contemporary Chinese political discourse. The study examined what role filial piety plays in the modern Chinese political discourse. This thesis aimed to find out what kind of discourse the current Chinese Government creates on filial piety, to what extent this discourse differs from the traditional definition of filial piety provided by Confucian Classics and what role does filial piety play in promoting the Chinese Dream.

The thesis finds that the concept of filial piety plays a significant role in contemporary Chinese political discourse. The finding is in the contrast with the fact that the importance of filial piety in modern Chinese society has declined compared to the past. While in Traditional China filial piety was regarded as the most fundamental Confucian virtue, by the end of the Qing Dynasty the perception of filial piety had changed. Many members of the May Fourth Movement vehemently denounced filial piety as a sign of the decline of the Chinese nation. After the end of the rule of Mao Zedong, filial piety, along with other Confucian values, began again to be officially supported by the Chinese government and regained its position in academic discourse. The significance of filial piety, however, decreased in the Chinese public discourse. The main reason for this decline is found in the economic reforms initiated in the 1980s, which have resulted in higher degree of individualism in Chinese society.

In his speeches, Xi Jinping continues to uphold filial piety as one of the core family values of the Chinese society and refers to it when he talks about the obligation to ensure the welfare of the Chinese elderly. At the same time, he also conditions the preservation of family values to maintain social harmony and stability. This discourse is thus entirely in line with the traditional understanding of filial piety, where concern for the older generation forms the cornerstone of this concept, and harmony in the family subsequently leads to harmony in the whole society.

But much more often, Xi Jinping uses the concept of filial piety to promote nationalism and the Chinese Dream. In this case, however, the traditional idea of filial piety as understood by ancient Confucian scholars is different. While Confucianists in traditional China used filial piety to regulate the relationship between ruler and subject, it is evident in the speeches of Xi Jinping analyzed here that the primary task of Chinese society should be to care for the welfare of the Chinese nation. In other words, Xi Jinping uses filial piety in his speeches to define the relationship between the Chinese people and the Chinese state, as he prioritizes calling for loyalty to the Chinese state rather than loyalty to the CCP. In short, Xi Jinping is trying to create a discourse in which the Chinese nation comes first. This attitude corresponds to the main point of his political program, the achievement of the Chinese Dream, which will lead to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To this goal, all the efforts of the Chinese people should be subordinated.

The way how Xi Jinping uses the concept of filial piety to achieve the Chinese Dream is evident in the speeches that the General Secretary of the CCP addresses to Chinese students. In these speeches, Xi speaks as a parent who tells students that they are the future of the Chinese nation, reassuring them that they can count on the Party's unlimited support, but also reminding students that the CCP has high expectations of them and that they must do their part to achieve the Chinese Dream by striving to be the best they can in the activities closest to their hearts.

An important aspect that fosters filial piety to the Chinese nation among Chinese students is patriotic education, which specifically focuses on strengthening awareness of the Chinese Dream and on nurturing of core socialist values. But in general, as the name suggests, this education focuses on strengthening national awareness of Chinese students. Based on empirical studies, it is clear that this kind of education bears fruit, with the vast majority of Chinese students putting national interest before their own.

In Xi Jinping's speeches to overseas Chinese, the welfare of the Chinese nation already plays the most important role. Xi Jinping asks that they too contribute to the creation of the Chinese Dream, namely by spreading Chinese culture abroad. Compared to Xi Jinping's speeches to Chinese students, what is most striking is the difference in the role he attributes to the CCP. While he reminded Chinese students that they are the future of the Chinese nation, that the CCP has high expectations of them, and that they must be loyal to the CCP on the road to fulfilling the Chinese Dream, there is no aspect of loyalty to the CCP in the speeches to Overseas Chinese. Xi Jinping instead highlights Chinese culture and loyalty to the Chinese nation.

In conclusion, this thesis found out that filial piety still plays a crucial role in the contemporary Chinese political discourse. However, the usage of filial piety in contemporary political discourse is to some extent different from the tradition concept of filial piety defined by ancient Confucian scholars. While Xi promotes filial piety in its basic meaning of taking care for elderly and preserving social order, he also uses filial piety to promote its own political goal of achieving China Dream and also to promote nationalism.

This work has however some limitations. The most fundamental limitation was the number of analyzed speeches. Xi Jinping certainly have given more speeches related to filial piety. However, the corpus of this thesis is founded only on the collections of books *Governance of China* and therefore the selection of the speeches was limited. At the same time, I am aware that the corpus does not contain speeches where the main recipients would be Chinese elders. Although this would be a very important contribution to my study, I based my selection of speeches on a publication that did not contain any speech primarily intended for Chinese elders. The reason I primarily used *Governance of China* as a source of my analysis is because of covid-19 measures, which prevented me from traveling and finding other sources that could be used for a more thorough analysis. Another limitation of this work is that it focuses only on Xi Jinping's speeches and does not consider the addresses of other members of the Chinese

government. The limitations of this work can serve as an incentive for further studies of the concept of filial piety in contemporary Chinese political discourse, whether it would be a work that further explores an understanding of the discourse that Xi Jinping produces about filial piety or work that compares the position of filial piety in Chinese political discourse across time.

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