Confucian Political Obligation

A Philosophical, Historical, and Interview Study

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Chapter One: Introduction

This study is about the theory of Confucian political obligation and its relevance to contemporary China. A theory of political obligation explains why an individual is morally required to obey the state. Moreover, as the demands of the state are usually put forward in the form of laws, some theorists of political obligation have also focused on explaining why citizens have a moral duty to obey the law.

The concept of political obligation is perhaps one of the oldest subjects in the history of Western political philosophy. For example, Sophocles had raised it in *Antigone* and entertained the tragic consequence where an obligation to the laws of men clashed with the duty to comply with the laws of heaven. Plato also addressed it in the *Crito* and developed two theories of political obligation: gratitude and tacit consent. Two and half millenniums later, the question of political obligation is still a topic of debate. Different theories have been proposed, refined, and roughly split into the camps of anarchist, gratitude-based, fair play, and associative obligations. The continuous debate surrounding the concept of political obligation echoes Isaiah Berlin's comment that political obligation "is perhaps the most fundamental of all political questions."

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¹ Sophocles, "Antigone," in *Antigone; Oedipus the King; Electra*, ed. Edith Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

² Plato, "Crito," in *Complete Works of Plato*, ed. John M. Cooper et. al. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

³ Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist?," in *Philosophy, Politics and Society (second Series)*, ed. Peter Laslett and Walter G. Runciman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 7.

Confucian political obligation is relatively limited. For centuries, the literature on Confucian political obligation has supported an unexamined notion that Confucianism endorses subjects' absolute obedience. For example, this idea was perpetuated by leading intellectuals such as Charles de Montesquieu and Samuel Huntington. Today, survey researchers continue to support this belief, i.e., Confucianism supports commoners' political submissiveness. Guided by this central belief, researchers who are interested in the relevance of Confucian political obligation in contemporary China continue to produce research confirming the political submissiveness of Chinese people.

In this dissertation, I challenge the notion of Confucian absolute obedience on the philosophical, historical, and empirical fronts. Philosophically, I revisit the Confucian classics to unearth its theory of political obligation. Historically, I study the Imperial Confucianism to trace the development of Confucian political obligation in pre-modern China. Based on the theory attained through these investigations, I also conduct an in-depth interview study in China to assess the impact of Confucian political obligation on Chinese people today. Ultimately, I hope to extend our knowledge of how Confucians and Chinese people would answer "perhaps the most fundamental of all political questions:" why should people obey the state?

Briefly, the structure of this dissertation is as follows: In this introductory chapter, I review the intellectual reproduction of the notion of Confucian political submissiveness. Chapter 2 revisits the Confucian classics. The historical analysis of Confucian political obligation in Imperial Confucianism is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 is a methodological critique of the survey research on Confucian political obligation in China. The research design of the interview study is also discussed in this chapter. I then report and discuss the interview result in Chapter 5. This dissertation is wrapped up in Chapter 6, the conclusion.

1. The Belief of Confucian Absolute Obedience in Humanistic Scholarship

To demonstrate the historical development of the belief of Confucian submissiveness, I focus my discussion on arguments made by influential scholars. By *influential*, I mean, to my judgment, scholarships that are widely read and that, in turn, have contributed to "the generally held belief that Confucius was a strict believer in hierarchy and the values of absolute obedience to superiors."⁴

Already, in *the Spirit of the Laws* Confucianism was interpreted by Charles de Montesquieu as endorsing subjects' submissiveness to political authority. Montesquieu argued that China's unique circumstances made two things essential to its politics. He said,

"Chinese legislator have had two objects: they have wanted the people to be both submissive and tranquil, and hardworking and industrious. Because the nature of the climate and the terrain, their life is precarious...When everyone obeys and everyone works, the state is in a fortunate situation."

To achieve these objectives, according to Montesquieu, Chinese emperors used Confucianism as the "sacred book that acts as a rule." Political submissiveness was stipulated as the religious virtue.

⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, "Confucius," The Wilson Quarterly 17, no. 4 (1993), 33.

⁵ Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 321.

⁶ Ibid., 211.

Indeed, Montesquieu's interpretation of Confucian political obligation seems to resemble a legend that has been reiterated for generations. For example, John Stuart Mill argued that Confucian sages had succeeded not only "in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conduct by the same maxims and rules," but also in bringing China "to a permanent halt for want of mental liberty and individuality." The arguments of Alex de Tocqueville also bore significant similarity to those of Montesquieu and Mill. He said that China was "the classic example of the sort of social prosperity with which a very centralized administration can provide a submissive people." The belief of Confucian submissiveness also the scholarship of Herbert Spencer. According to Spencer, Confucianism had made China impossible to progress. Particularly, it had given "absolute subordination the religious sanction" and stamped each Chinese "with the appropriate ideas of duty which it is heresy to question."

Ironically, this popular understanding of Confucian political obligation seems to oppose Spencer's principle of social evolution. Without much revision, the stereotype of Confucian political obligation as submissiveness survived in Max Weber's *Religion of China*. Weber explained that underlying the Confucian imperative of filial piety is the general Confucian submissiveness to the existing political and social orders. Deviating from the status quo was

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⁷ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 80.

⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 91n.

¹⁰ Herbert Spencer, On Social Evolution (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972), 162.

understood as a threat because it would "bring evil charms or stir up the spirits." For this reason, the norm of filial piety could not be changed. The fear of spiritual wrath was the crucial source of Confucian absolute obedience. It ensured the "pious conformism with the fixed order of secular powers," 12 and the aversion to "offences against traditional authorities, parents, ancestors, and superiors in the hierarchy of office." All in all, Confucianism contributed to "the taming of the masses." 14

After Weber, the belief of Confucian submissiveness lived on and even became more *scientific*. For example, Lucian W. Pye, one of the important figures in the heyday of the behavioral revolution, polished the long-held belief with the concept of socialization. A large part of Confucian childrearing, Pye told his readers, is to ensure that children would internalize the value "that absolute obedience and unquestioning deference shall be shown to one's elders and more particularly to one's father." ¹⁵ The familial rule of total conformity yields certain political consequence. In Pye's portrait, the Confucian political landscape consists of packed familial units within which every parent practices Confucian childrearing to guarantee that "automatic reactions

¹¹ Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, trans. Hans H. Gerth (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 233.

¹² Ibid, 228.

¹³ Ibid, 229.

¹⁴ Ibid., 235.

¹⁵ Lucian W. Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 138.

of conformity and deference to superiors have generally been well established before the Chinese child leaves home."¹⁶

Further, the legend of Confucian submissiveness has become the basis of Samuel P. Huntington's gloomy prognosis for Chinese democracy. Specifically citing Lucian Pye, Huntington argued that Confucians place emphasis on the "group over the individual, authority over liberty, and responsibilities over rights." These cultural constructs have made the notion of Confucian democracy "a contradiction in terms." Furthermore, Huntington reiterated this incompatibility by stating that "China's Confucian heritage with its emphasis on authority, order, hierarchy, and the supremacy of the collectivity over the individual creates obstacles to democratization."

The perpetuated belief of Confucian political submissiveness has also exerted a great impact on journalism. For instance, in reporting the 2014 ferry disaster in South Korea, some international media blamed the *Confucian culture of obedience* for the loss of 300 young lives. Specifically, CNN international correspondent, Kyung Lah, stated, "What this culture prizes in its children and students is obedience. And so when they were told to stay put by an adult, of course, they would stay put...So it is certainly heartbreaking for them because these are the very

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¹⁶ Ibid., 139.

 $^{^{\}rm 17}$ Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," $\it Journal\ of\ Democracy\ 2,\ no.\ 2\ (1991),\ 24.$

¹⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 248.

parents...who had instilled that sense of obedience and listening to their elders."²⁰ To this, Reuters concurred, "Many of the children did not question their elders, as is customary in hierarchical Korean society. They paid for their obedience with their lives."²¹

The belief of Confucian submissiveness is popular. However, it is highly questionable and may be a stereotype. Before we accept this long-held belief, we have to ask ourselves: Aside from having a fear of persecution or a sadistic personality, can any one of us be made to obey absolutely a political authority? Intuitively, I doubt the possibility of absolute obedience. If Confucianism can create absolute obedience within people, I suggest that it is not only a political philosophy but also a political sorcery. Perhaps some Confucian scholars will support my suspicion. As Henry Rosemont, Jr. suggests, "if Confucian persons aren't free, autonomous individuals, they aren't dull, faceless automatons either." ²²

Surely, the belief of absolute obedience does not constitute the only interpretation of Confucian political obligation. Recent scholars of Confucianism have begun to challenge this long-

²⁰ Kyung Lah, "Update on Ferry Disaster," The Lead with Jake Tapper, April 18, 2014,

http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1404/18/cg.01.html.

²¹ Narae Kim and Jungmin Jang, "'No Response' as Korea Ferry Crew Asked for Orders to Abandon Ship," *Reuters*, April 22, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/22/korea-ship-

idUSL3N0NE01W20140422.

²² Henry Rosemont Jr., "Whose Democracy? Which Rights? A Confucian Critique of Modern Western Liberalism," in *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community*, ed. Kwong-Loi Shun and David B. Wong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2004), 64.

held popular idea. Unfortunately, their challenges are partial. First, critiques of this long-held belief seem to remain within the domain of Classical Confucianism. As for Imperial Confucianism, most scholars maintain that Confucianism was transformed into a doctrine of absolute obedience during China's Imperial period.

Furthermore, the reconstruction of Confucian political obligation in Classical Confucianism is only partially accurate. Many scholars have pointed out that classical Confucian political obligation is not absolute. However, as we will see in Chapter 2, major interpretations emerging from these scholars are problematic.

As for Imperial Confucianism, I question the notion that Confucianism was transformed into a doctrine of absolute obedience during China's Imperial period. As mentioned above, the argument about commoners' absolute obedience is counterintuitive. Based on the problems mentioned above, it is necessary to reexamine Confucian political obligation both in its Classical and Imperial forms.

2. The Belief of Confucian Absolute Obedience in Survey Research

Despite all of the problems above, survey researchers have adopted the belief that Confucianism is equivalent to absolute obedience in their public opinion studies in China. Today, many survey researchers rely on the cross-national and longitudinal dataset, Asian Barometer Survey (from now on referred to as "ABS"), to study Confucian political obligation in China.²³

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²³ The ABS contains data from 13 East Asian political systems (Japan, Mongolia, South Koreas, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Indonesia,

For example, Doh Chull Shin points out a question in ABS that was designed to test the relevance of Confucian political obligation to Chinese people today. The question asks Chinese respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement that "government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions." In the 2008 wave of ABS, approximately 70% of Chinese interviewees agree with this statement. According to Shin, this survey result indicates that a vast majority of Chinese people endorse a Confucian political tradition "which emphasizes the unconditional subordination of ordinary people to their political leaders."²⁴

Again, I remain doubtful that a vast majority of Chinese citizens today would believe in the idea of absolute obedience to the state. It seems to be very unhuman. Moreover, I suggest that the survey findings are problematic both for historical and methodological reasons. Historically, although Confucianism was China's ruling ideology for almost 2000 years, it faced a fundamental crisis in the 20th century. During this period, Confucianism was understood by many Chinese as a reactionary ideology. For the sake of China's modernization, they called loudly that Confucianism must be swept away in the dustbin of history.²⁵

Prior to the Republican Revolution of 1911, Confucianism had already been criticized as being unable to lead China to cope with the challenge posed by Western imperial powers. In 1905,

and Malaysia), and 5 South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal).

See its website: http://www.asianbarometer.org/

²⁴ Doh Chull Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 125.

²⁵ Chung-Ying Cheng, "Confucianism: Twentieth Century," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua (London: Routledge, 2003).

to defuse political criticisms, the Qing government decided to abolish the Confucian civil service examination and institutionalize a Western-style education system. As the government gradually withdrew its intuitional support for classical learning, many Chinese lost one important incentive to study Confucian classics. Namely, Confucian learning could no longer ensure their upward social mobility.

The crisis of Confucianism reached its height during the New Cultural Movement of the 1910s and 1920s. During this time, progressive intellectuals expressed devastating criticism at Confucianism. It was held responsible for China's shameful weakness in comparison to Japan as well as Western powers. For a rebirth of China, intellectuals turned to Western ideas such as democracy and socialism for help. After the New Cultural Movement, "Confucianism had lost its appeal for progressive intellectual and the younger generation." 26

The trend of anti-Confucianism continued after the Communist Revolution of 1949. Before the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the official position on Confucianism was ambivalent. On the one hand, scholars, under the supervision of Communist Party, applied Marxist historiography to the study of Chinese history. Many of them relegated Confucianism to China's condemned past as the oppressive ideology, which merely served the interests of the feudal ruling class. ²⁷ On the other hand, there were clear incidences of endorsement of Confucianism by party leaders. For instance, Liu Shaoqi (劉少青) frequently cited Confucius and Mencius's sayings as a moral guidance for

²⁶ Ibid., 164.

²⁷ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, vol. 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

party members in his book of *How to be a Good Communist*.²⁸ Even Mao Zedong commented in 1964, just two years before the Cultural Revolution, that "[Confucius] came from the masses, and understood something of the suffering of the masses...We must not cast aside the tradition of Confucius."²⁹

This official ambivalence toward Confucianism ended during the Cultural Revolution. Mao stripped many senior party leaders of power and interpreted their oppositions to his radicalism as waging the Confucian doctrines of benevolence and harmony against the historical necessity of class struggles. The atmosphere of anti-Confucianism was brewing within Mao's cult and escalated into a series of "bloody vendetta waged against any supposed remnants of Confucianism." At the end of 1966, Mao's red guards marched into Qufu (曹阜), Confucius's hometown. With the slogan of "Burn down the Confucian Shop" being repeatedly chanted, Confucius's temple and his family cemetery suffered extensive damages. 22

Another nation-wide anti-Confucian campaign was carried on from 1973 to 1975. Newspapers were ordered to circulate official directions of anti-Confucianism. Intellectuals were also organized to provide the public with evidence of the reactionary essence of Confucianism. At

²⁸ Liu Shaoqi [劉少奇], How to Be a Good Communist? (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965).

²⁹ Mao Zedong, Chairman Mao Talks to the People (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 208.

³⁰ A. James Gregor and Maria Hsia Chang, "Anti-Confucianism: Mao's Last Campaign," *Asian Survey* 19, no. 11 (1979).

³¹ Michael Nylan, *The Five* "Confucian" Classics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 330.

³² Liu Yawei [劉亞偉] and Wang Liang [王良], "1966: Burn Down the Confucian Shop [1966:火燒孔家店]," *Time Education [時代教育]*, no. 2 (2010).

this time, Chinese people were mobilized to obliterate any vestige of Confucianism to ensure the ultimate victory of the Cultural Revolution.

After the retreat of Mao's radicalism, Confucianism has in recent years received positive reassessment. However, the legacy of anti-Confucianism has continued to influence the society. For instance, an important Chinese Scholar, Fang Keli (方克立), repeats Marxist historiography. Fang holds that Confucianism belongs to China's feudal past and does not serve the interest of the people. "[Chinese] communists," he declares, "cannot agree or accept Confucian values and world views." Meanwhile, other scholars recall the main theme of the New Cultural Movement. They maintain that Confucian suppression of individuality is antithetical to the development of democracy and human rights in China. It is, therefore, inappropriate to revive Confucianism in contemporary China.³⁴

Based on a sensitivity to China's anti-Confucian legacy in the 20th century, I am surprised by the survey finding that a vast majority of Chinese people agree with the survey question

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³³ Fang Keli [方克立], "Three Letters about the Question of Neo-Confucianism in Contemporary China [關於當前大陸新儒學問題的三封信]," Academic Exploration [學術探索] 2 (2006), 8.

34 For example, see Liu Zaifu [劉再復] and Lin Gang [林崗], Tradition and Chinese [傳統與中國人] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002). Ge Quan [葛荃] and Lu Ying [逯鷹], "The Modern Fate of Confucianism [論傳統儒學的現代宿命]," Journal of Tsinghua University (Philosophy and Social Sciences) 21, no. 4 (2006). Liu Zehua [劉澤華], "Some Questions about the Promotion of Confucian Studies [關於倡導國學幾個問題的質疑]," History Teaching [歷史教學] 10 (2009).

regarding "Confucian political obligation." I suspect that it might be ahistorical. An examination of the survey's methodology further supports my suspicion regarding this particular survey question. As we will see in Chapter 4, the survey question regarding "Confucian political obligation" is methodologically disputable. ³⁵ As a result, this measurement loses its validity and renders the results difficult to analyze.

The problems existing in the humanistic scholarship and survey research on Confucian political obligation make the dissertation a worthwhile project. Indeed, this project is perhaps the first comprehensive study of Confucian political obligation in the literature. The goals of this study are not only to challenge the popular notion that Confucianism supports commoners' absolute obedience, but also to change how the world perceive political obedience among people who are historically under the influence of Confucianism.

3. Finding at a Glance

There are four important findings emerging from this study. First of all, I specify the reciprocal political obligation in Classical Confucianism. I demonstrate that Confucian political obligation in its classical form is not only a reciprocal obligation, but also a reciprocal obligation based on a principle of paternalistic gratitude. Second, I show that Confucian political obligation was not transformed into a doctrine of absolute obedience in Imperial China. During this historical period, Confucian political obligation remained an argument of paternalistic gratitude. Third,

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³⁵ The survey item in question asks respondents whether they agree or disagree that "government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions." [政府領導人是這個大家庭的家長,他們關於國家事務的決定,人民都應該服從]

based on my interview study in China, I suggest that the survey finding noted above is not sound. The notion that a vast majority of Chinese people endorse the idea of absolute obedience is likely an over-interpretation. Fourth, in terms of Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude, the results of my interview study also suggest that this Confucian political tradition is losing its impact on Chinese people today. Contemporary Chinese citizens are more politically assertive than the dependent subjects envisioned by Confucian paternalism.

Chapter Two: Political Obligation in Classical Confucianism

The notion that Confucianism requires subjects' absolute obedience toward the state is a long-held belief in the literature. Though some scholars have begun to question this belief, their efforts are incomplete. The challengers' approach has been fundamentally flawed: while this belief has focused on the absolute obedience of the people, critics have only relied on evidence from Confucian classics that describes the political duty of scholar-officials. A theoretical understanding of the political obligation in Confucianism—namely, the Confucian answer to the question of why ordinary people should obey the state—has not yet been adequately articulated in the literature.

My goal in this chapter is to bring the theory of Confucian political obligation to light. Briefly, in Section 1, I present a critical review of the literature on Confucian political obligation. In Sections 2 and 3, I re-examine the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. The Confucian theory of political obligation is reconstructed these two sections. Section 4 assesses the arguments of Confucian political obligation. Section 5 is the conclusion.

1. Literature Review

As Jonathan D. Spence observes, the idea that Confucianism calls on the strict belief in "hierarchy and the values of absolute obedience to superiors" is not uncommon in the literature.¹ For centuries, scholars have adopted this idea to explain, for example, China's alleged despotism,

² Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 211.

¹ Spence, "Confucius," 33.

its retarded social evolution,³ and its backwardness in capitalist development.⁴ In recent years, the long-held belief was entertained by Samuel P. Huntington to support his pessimistic view of China's democratic future. As Huntington predicts, "China's Confucian heritage, with its emphasis on authority, order, hierarchy, and the supremacy of the collective over the individual, creates obstacles to democratization."⁵

Today, many experts on Confucianism agree that the remark about subjects' absolute obedience toward the state is a stereotypical description. However, the three main interpretations that directly address this stereotype are all inadequate. In these three cases, scholars have again mistaken the elite's political duty for Confucian political obligation. Indeed, passages concerning the people in the *Analects* and other Confucian classics are ignored despite their interpretive relevance.

The first interpretation centers on the idea of reciprocal obligations between the ruler and subjects. ⁶ For example, Xinzhong Yao claims, "Confucius seldom emphasized the one-way loyalty of commoners or ministers to their ruler. Rather, he insisted that the relationship must be

³ Spencer, On Social Evolution, 162.

⁴ Weber, *The Religion of China*, 228-235.

⁵ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 248.

⁶ In this section, the three interpretations are criticized on the ground that their supporters mistake the elite's political duty for Confucian political obligation. A theoretical criticism of them will be presented in the next section after we unearth passages from Confucian classics that link to ordinary people.

reciprocal."⁷ To support this observation, Yao leads us to one of the Master's sayings: "The ruler should employ the services of his 'subjects [臣 *Chen*]' in accordance with the rites. A 'subject [臣 *chen*]' should serve his ruler by doing his best."⁸

Similarly, Gungwu Wang argues that the Confucian ruler-subject relationship is grounded on "reciprocity which depended on both performing their duties." Wang cites from the *Analects*, "When the ruler is ruler and the 'subject [£ *chen*]' is 'subject [£ *chen*],' when the father is father and the son is son, there is government" 10

Although the quotes offered above seem to indicate the ruler-subject reciprocal obligation, the translation is open to dispute. The above English term "subject" is translated from the Chinese

⁷ Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35.

⁸ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*. 3.19. Yao cites this saying from D. C. Lau's translation of the Analects. Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1979). The original text is as follows: 「君使臣以禮,臣事君以忠。」

⁹ Gungwu Wang, *The Chineseness of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 171.

¹⁰ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 12.11. Wang cites this saying from James Legge's translation of the Analects. Confucius, "Confucian Analects," in *The Analects, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of Mean*, trans. James Legge (New York: Dover Publication, 1971). The original text is as follows: 齊景公問政於孔子。孔子對曰: 「君君, 臣臣,父父,子子。」

character " \mathbb{E} (*chen*)." However, the appropriate translation of \mathbb{E} (*chen*) is "minister." Now if we adopt the version in which \mathbb{E} is translated as "minister," what Wang and Yao interpret as the ruler-subject reciprocity becomes the reciprocal obligation between a ruler and his ministers. Consequently, the argument of reciprocity fails to illuminate the theory of Confucian political obligation, which concerns the Confucian answer to the question of why *people* should obey the state.

A second interpretation focuses on the idea of duty-consciousness, an interpretation actively promoted by Weiming Tu. He states that "a sense of duty, rather than a demand for rights, features prominently in Confucian social ethics." In Confucianism, "one's level of independence and autonomy is measurable in terms of the degree to which one fulfills obligations and discharges responsibilities to family, community, state, the world, and Heaven." Moreover, the Confucian duty-consciousness is "the belief that human beings are duty-bound to respect their family, society, and nation."

See, for example, Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Arthur Waley (London: A. Allen
 Unwin Ltd., 1938), 12.11. And Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 12.11. See note 10 above for the original text.

¹² Weiming Tu, "Confucianism," in *Our Religions*, ed. Arvind Sharma (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 220.

Weiming Tu, "Introduction," in *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity*, ed. Weiming Tu(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 8.

Weiming Tu, "A Confucian Perspective on Human Rights," in *Fear of Persecution*, ed. James
 D. White and Anthony J. Marsella (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 113.

Nevertheless, Tu's theory of duty-consciousness provides little help in understanding Confucian political obligation. Simply put, he does not explain *why*, according to Confucian classics, commoners *should* discharge their duty to the state. For instance, he tells his readers many things about the elite's duty to enrich and to educate the people. From this point of view, a student of political obligation may envision two different principles of the people's duty-consciousness. The first possibility is that the people obey the state because they agree in the first place that the duty of their government is "to enrich and to educate the people." Underlying the first possibility is a model of consent in the literature on political obligations. The second possibility is that the people obey because they are *grateful* to the material, and educational benefits received from the state. If this is the case, Confucian political obligation is based on the ethic of gratitude.

Unfortunately, Tu does not specify the principles on which commoners' duty-consciousness rests. Even in his most comprehensive introduction to Confucianism, citations from the classics are exclusively about the duty of a ruler and his ministers to regulate one's self, family, and state, as well as his duty to the well-being of the people. Without specifying the moral principles underlying commoner's duty-consciousness, Tu is unable to help us answer the question of Confucian political obligation.

The third interpretation of Confucian political obligation invokes the idea of role-based obligation. Supporters of this interpretation maintain that Confucians understand obligation as

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¹⁵ Tu, "Confucianism."

being derived from the social roles occupied by an individual.¹⁶ "For Confucians," as A. T. Nuyen puts it in concrete terms, "social relationships are characterized by social positions or roles, and social positions are defined in terms of obligations...I am who I am by virtue of standing in a network of social relationships, a father to A, a husband to B, a friend to C, a citizen of D, and so on. Having such relationships entails that I owe them certain things, such as benevolence, faithfulness, respect, loyalty, and so on."¹⁷ The role-based obligation thus suggests that, say, Brown owes political obligations to the state Y because he is a citizen of Y. His role as Y's citizen generates his political obligation.

Like the other interpretations above, this model of Confucian role-based obligation also ignores the passages related to the people as presented in the *Analects*. For instance, Joshua Cohen's version of the Confucian role-based political obligation is, to borrow his words, mostly "an account of the responsibilities of political officials to care for the common good of the

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¹⁶ See, for example, Joshua Cohen, "Minimalism about Human Rights: The Most We Can Hope For?," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (2004), 207. And A. T. Nuyen, "Confucian Ethics as Role-Based Ethics," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2007).

¹⁷ Ibid., 317-318.

subject."¹⁸ In Nuyen's version, similarly, the elite's duty is meticulously supported with quotes from the *Analects* while the theory of Confucian political obligation once again lacks elaboration.¹⁹

The reason that many serious scholars pay scant attention to passages concerning the people in the *Analects* is perhaps understandable. The eminent scholar of Chinese history and philosophy, Qian Mu (發穆), once re-classified the content of the *Analects* into fourteen books.²⁰ In the Book of Politics, Qian includes thirty-four chapters from the *Analects* in which Confucius specifically discusses political topics.²¹ According to my count, all these chapters are political recommendations to the ruling class.

Similarly, in his seminal study of ancient Chinese philosophy, Benjamin I. Schwartz observes, "There is relatively more stress in the *Analects* on the proper behavior of subordinates

¹⁸ Cohen, "Minimalism about Human Rights: The Most We Can Hope For?" 204. Cohen quotes 15 sayings from the Analects including 1.2, 2.21, 4.11, 5.16, 6.30, 12.7, 12.11, 12.13, 12.17 12.19, 13.6, 13.9, 13.13, 15.21, and 20.2. Despite 1.2 and 2.21 concern filial piety, all of the quotes are about the political duty of scholar-officials.

¹⁹ Nuyen quotes 1.12, 4.10, 5.17, 12.10, 12.11, 13.3, and 9.3 from the Analects to elaborate the Confucian role-based obligation. None of these quotes illuminate the obligation of the people. See Nuyen, "Confucian Ethics as Role-Based Ethics."

²⁰ The original version of the *Analects* is somewhat disorganized. Although there are twenty books in the received text, it seems that none of them narrate a specific topic.

²¹ Mu Qian [錢穆], "Appendix 5: A Newly Edited Version of the Analects [附錄五: 舊作論語新編],"in *The Complete Works of Mr. Qian Binsi* [錢賓四先生全集] (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1974).

than on the behavior of those above. Most of the subordinates discussed—I hasten to add—are also members of the elite broadly conceived." ²² Observations from these two distinguished scholars help us understand why scholars pay much attention to the duty of members of the elite as presented in the *Analects*. Nevertheless, this book does contain some information relating to commoners. These under-discussed passages will help us illuminate the theory of political obligation in Classical Confucianism.

Before our search for Confucian political obligation in its classical form, I shall point out an unavoidable limitation. As mentioned above, the *Analects* is largely a book written for the ruling class. Indeed, it is the fundamental setting of Classical Confucianism as well. Consequently, in the discussions of the relationship between commoners and their ruler, arguments in Classical Confucianism are surrounding on telling political elite that they should take care of the people, and that, if they do so, ordinary people's wholehearted compliance can be expected. Since the latter are not their readers, it is almost impossible to find an argument in Classical Confucianism that directly states to commoners and explains to them *why people should obey the state*.

This limitation is unavoidable. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that, in most human interactions, reasonable expectations start from moral assumptions. For example, we *expect* a contractor to do his job according to the contract because we *assume* the moral importance of promise keeping. We *expect* that our guests will appreciate our hospitality since we *assume* the moral significance of gratitude. We also *expect* that children should share their toys with their playmates for we *assume* the moral prominence of fairness. Similarly, when ancient Confucians

²² Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Though in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 71.

expect commoners' obedience to a ruler, there is also an underlying moral assumption. In what follows, I will, first of all, elaborate on the Confucian expectation about commoners' political obedience. Next, I will bring the moral assumption of this expectation to light.

2. The Expectation of Commoners' Political Obedience

The *Analects* and the *Mencius* provide the core evidence for this chapter. I consider the *Analects* as the primary source through which we understand the teachings of Confucius. As for the *Mencius*, since its author is revered as the most faithful successor of Confucius and also the Second Sage in the Confucian tradition, this book is treated in this chapter as the authoritative interpretation of Confucius.²³

I begin the study of Confucian political obligation by one chapter in the *Analects*. The chapter records a conversation between Confucius and the ruler of his country: "Duke Ai of Lu inquired of Confucius, asking, 'What must I do to gain the obedience of the common people?' Confucius answered, 'Raise up the straight and place them over the crooked, and the common

²³ Similar strategy is adopted by Daniel A. Bell in his study on the egalitarian features of Confucianism. Bell argues, "I limit myself to the values espoused and defended by the two 'founding fathers' of Confucianism: Confucius and Mencius. *The Analects of Confucius* is, of course, the central, founding text in the Confucian tradition. Mencius, who elaborated and systematized Confucius's ideas, is the second most influential figure in the Confucian tradition. Thus, basing one's interpretation of Confucianism on Confucius and Mencius is, arguably, the least controversial starting point." See Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 234-235.

people will obey; raise up the crooked and place them over the straight, and the common people will disobey." ²⁴ The conversation unmistakably reveals the conditionality of commoners' political obedience. Confucians expect that the people would obey *if* their ruler could raise the straight instead of the crooked.

Elsewhere in the *Analects*, the same metaphors are used again. Accordingly, the meanings of "straight" and "crooked" are elaborated as the promotion of ministers who are able to govern properly. Since this chapter contains important information, I will quote most of its contents:

Fan Chi asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Know your fellow men." Fan Chi did not understand and so the Master explained, "If you promote the straight into positions above the crooked you can make the crooked straight." Fan Chi withdrew and on being received by Zixia, he asked, "Recently I was received by the Master and asked him about wisdom. He replied, 'if you promote the straight into position above the crooked you can make the crooked straight.' What does he mean?" "Rich indeed are the Master's words!" said Zixia. "When Shun ruled the land, he selected Gao Yao from among the multitude and promoted him, and the perverse gave them a wide berth. When Tang ruled the land, he selected Yi Yin from the multitude and promoted him, and the perverse gave them a wide berth."

²⁴ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 2.19. The original text is as follows: 哀公問曰:「何為則民服?」孔子對曰:「舉直錯諸枉,則民服;舉枉錯諸直,則民不服。」

²⁵ Ibid., 12.22. The original text is as follows: [樊遲]問知。子曰: 「知人。」樊遲未達。子曰: 「舉直錯諸枉,能使枉者直。|樊遲退,見子夏。曰: 「鄉也吾見於夫子而問知,子

Accordingly, wisdom means to know fellow men. Moreover, to know one's fellow men indicates a ruler's ability to raise the straight and set them over the crooked. According to this passage, the very wisdom is epitomized in cases when King Shun raised Gao Yao (皋陶), and King Tang promoted Yi Yin (伊尹). Considering that both Gao Yao and Yi Yin are widely-acknowledged great ministers in the history of ancient China, to raise the straight and set them over the crooked means that a ruler must employ ministers who have appropriate qualities in terms of governance.

This interpretation leads to another question: what is the ability of Gao and Yi in terms of governance? As no discussion is given in the *Analects*, we may turn to the *Mencius* for clarification. Mencius interprets the appropriate quality of governance as governing with virtue. In the *Mencius*, while the character of Gao is not portrayed, the story of Yi Yin is told in relatively elaborate fashion. According to Mencius, Yi possesses the supreme quality of governance, i.e., virtue (@ de). The world exalts three things, says Mencius: "At court, rank is supreme; in the village, age; but for giving help to the world and ruling over the people it is virtue (@ de)." Thus,

曰, 『舉直錯諸枉, 能使枉者直』, 何謂也? 」子夏曰: 「富哉言乎! 舜有天下, 選於眾, 舉皋陶, 不仁者遠矣。湯有天下, 選於眾, 舉伊尹, 不仁者遠矣。」

²⁶ Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 2B.2. In this chapter, all citations of the Mencius are from D. C. Lau's translations. In some cases I have made minor modifications to his translations. The original text is as follows: 「天下有達尊三: 爵一, 齒一, 齒一。朝廷莫如爵, 鄉黨莫如齒, 輔世長民莫如德。」

it is very plausible that "to raise the straight" means to raise the men of virtue to the official positions. Indeed, this interpretation should not be controversial because virtue is arguably *the* core ingredient in Confucius's political thought. "Governing with virtue (德 *de*)," says Confucius, "can be compared to the Pole Star. The North Star dwells in its place, and the multitude of stars pay it tribute."²⁷

What then does governing with virtue mean? I suggest that virtue in this context is the practice of benevolent governance. Confucius once praises a famous statesman of his time, Zichan (子產), as a man of moral excellence. According to Confucius, Zichan is "gracious [恭 gong] in deporting himself, deferential (敬 jing) in serving his superiors, generous [惠 hui] in attending to needs of the common people, and appropriate [義 yi] in employing their services." The last two virtues are especially related to governance.

Fragmented information is given in the *Analects* concerning how to be "generous" and "appropriate." To attend to the needs of common people, the ruler and his ministers shall "make sure there is sufficient food to eat and sufficient arms for defense."²⁹ They should also "give the

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²⁷ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 2.1. The original text is as follows: 「為政以德,譬如北辰,居其所而眾星共之。」

²⁸ Ibid., 5.16. The original text is as follows: 子謂子產, 「有君子之道四焉: 其行己也恭, 其事上也敬, 其養民也惠, 其使民也義。」

²⁹ Ibid., 12.7. The original text is as follows: 子貢問政。子曰: 「足食。足兵。民信之矣。」

common people those benefits that will really be beneficial to them."³⁰ To employ their service, the ruling class shall "employ the service of common people only in the proper seasons,"³¹ and in bad years they should reduce the tithe from the people.³² Praise for these virtues of governance is undeniable in the *Analects* because Confucius has used the word "sage (聖 *shen*)" to describe whoever can be "broadly generous with the people and is able to help the multitude."³³

Benevolent governance is surely a good in itself that members of the ruling class attain through self-cultivation.³⁴ However, in the *Analects* this noble theme always parallels a practical political consideration; namely, the obedience of the people. It is noble to "raise up the straight and place them over the crooked." Nevertheless, the noble theme becomes a practical consideration when Confucius immediately relates the former sentence to the expectation that "the common

³⁰ Ibid., 20.2. The original text is as follows: 子曰: 「君子惠而不費...」子張曰: 「何謂惠而不費? |子曰: 「因民之所利而利之, 斯不亦惠而不費乎? |

³¹ Ibid., 1.5. The original text is as follows: 「使民以時。」

³² Ibid., 12.9. The original text is as follows: 哀公問於有若曰: 「年饑, 用不足, 如之何?」有若對曰: 「盍徹乎?」曰: 「二, 吾猶不足, 如之何其徹也?」對曰: 「百姓足, 君孰與不足?百姓不足, 君孰與足?」

³³ Ibid., 6.30. The original text is as follows: 子貢曰: 「如有博施於民而能濟眾, 何如? 可謂仁乎?」子曰: 「何事於仁, 必也聖乎!」

³⁴ Ibid., 14.42. The original text is as follows: 子路問君子。...子曰: 「脩己以安百姓。脩己以安百姓, 堯舜其猶病諸! |

people will obey."³⁵ It is noble to demand that the ruling class "cherishes appropriate conduct." Nevertheless, it is a practical consideration to relate this noble demand, once again, to the expectation that "none among the common people would dare be disobedient."³⁶

Mencius further elaborates that the people will obey a benevolent ruler. He notes, "There is a way to win the hearts of common people; amass what they want for them; do not impose what they dislike on them." What the people want from their government, according to Mencius, is simply "sufficient means for the care of their own parents, wife and children, and sufficient food in good years while basic security in the bad years." To secure these wants, he recommends that a ruler should "reduce punishment and taxation, get the people to plough deeply and weed promptly." If a ruler could govern with virtue, the common people, claims Mencius, will "find it easy to obey him." Even the foreigner will come and say, "I, a man from distant parts, have heard that you, my lord, practice benevolent government. I wish to be given a place to live and become

³⁵ Ibid., 2.19. See note 24 above for the original text.

³⁶ Ibid., 13.4. The original text is as follows: 「上好義,則民莫敢不服」

³⁷ Mencius, *Mencius*, 4A.9. The original text is as follows: 「得其心有道: 所欲與之聚之, 所惡勿施爾也。」

³⁸ Ibid., 1A.7. The original text is as follows: 「是故明君制民之產,必使仰足以事父母,俯足以畜妻子,樂歲終身飽,凶年免於死亡。然後驅而之善,故民之從之也輕。」

³⁹ Ibid., 1A.5. The original text is as follows: 「王如施仁政於民, 省刑罰, 薄稅斂, 深耕易 耨。」

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1A.7. See note 38 above for the original text.

one of your subjects."⁴¹ On the other hand, if a ruler turns to be malevolent, it is justifiable for a member of the ruling class to dethrone the malevolent ruler and rescue the people from suffering.⁴²

Mencius narrates a case that vividly illuminates the politics of benevolent governance. In the story, Duke Mu of Zou, after a border clash with the neighboring state of Lu, complains to Mencius that none of his people come to the rescue of endangered officials. Mencius replies,

In years of bad harvest and famine, close to a thousand of your people suffered, the old and the young being abandoned in the gutter, the able-bodied scattering in all directions, yet your granaries were full and there was failure on the part of your officials to inform you of what was happening. This shows how callous those in authority were and how cruelly they treated the people. Zengzi said, "Take heed! Take Heed! What you mete out will be paid back to you." It is only now that the people have had an opportunity of paying back what they received. You should not bear them any grudge. Practice benevolent government and the people will be sure to love their superiors and die for them.⁴³

廩實, 府庫充, 有司莫以告, 是上慢而殘下也。曾子曰: 『戒之戒之! 出乎爾者, 反乎爾

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⁴¹ Ibid., 3A.4. The original text is as follows:「遠方之人聞君行仁政,願受一廛而為氓。」

⁴² Ibid., 1B:8. The original text is as follows: [齊宣王]曰: 「臣弑其君可乎?」 [孟子]曰: 「賊仁者謂之賊, 賊義者謂之殘, 殘賊之人謂之一夫。聞誅一夫紂矣, 未聞弑君也。」
⁴³ Ibid., 1B.12. The original text is as follows: 鄒與魯鬨。穆公問曰: 「吾有司死者三十三人, 而民莫之死也。誅之, 則不可勝誅; 不誅, 則疾視其長上之死而不救, 如之何則可也?」 孟子對曰: 「凶年饑歲, 君之民老弱轉乎溝壑, 壯者散而之四方者, 幾千人矣; 而君之倉

The exegetical evidence above helps us further assess the validity of the three main interpretations of Confucian political obligation mentioned in Section 2. In that part of this chapter, I illustrate how advocates of these three interpretations generally ignore passages concerning the people in the Confucian classics. As a result, they have mistaken the elite's political duty for a theory of political obligation. In other words, I do not rule out the possibility that there may yet be evidence relating to the people in the *Analects* and *Mencius* that supports ideas of duty-consciousness, role-based obligations or reciprocal obligation of the people.

The text evidence above allows us to examine the possibility. According to the evidence, first, the idea of duty-consciousness is not a clear account of Confucian expectation of commoners' political obedience. As we have seen, to Confucius and Mencius, ordinary people will feel duty-bound to obey the state if the ruler would sustain their basic welfare. That is, the Confucian people obey not because they have an *ex-ante* belief in duty-consciousness. ⁴⁴ Indeed, the people's duty-consciousness is an *ex-post* reciprocal response. It is a consequence of governmental benevolence, not an automatic consciousness in Confucian political discourses.

Second, the interpretation of Confucian role-based obligation is also problematic. Nuyen, for example, states that, in Confucian role-based ethic, "moral rules concerning duties and obligations and the moral virtues are all derived from the roles that define an individual as a person or an agent."⁴⁵ However, as the exegetical evidence has shown, neither Confucius nor Mencius argues that a person's political obedience is derived from his or her role as a subject. Rather, they

⁴⁴ Tu, "A Confucian Perspective on Human Rights," 113.

⁴⁵ Nuyen, "Confucian Ethics as Role-Based Ethics," 319.

expect commoners' political obedience on the ground of a ruler's benevolent governance. Indeed, it would be absurd to argue that Confucius and Mencius promote the idea that a commoner will obey a tyrannical ruler because her role is the subject of that ruler. All in all, the idea of role-based obligation is not a correct account of Confucian political obligation.

Third, given the clear evidence about the reciprocal relationship between the ruler and commoners found in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, the notion of reciprocal obligations seem to be a promising candidate for the theory of Confucian political obligation. However, it should be noted that the idea of reciprocity merely scratches the surface of Confucian political obligation; ultimately, it is philosophically imprecise as an account of political obligations.

As George Klosko notes, "reciprocity is actually a family of moral requirements, each of which centered on returning benefits for benefits received. The principles underlying different requirements... are...consent, gratitude, fairness—and perhaps others." For instance, when the people in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* agree to give up some of their natural rights in exchange for the government's impartial judgment and execution of the Natural Law, undergirding this reciprocal relation is in effect the principle of consent and social contract. At any rate, says Klosko, "in any given case in which an obligation of reciprocity can be identified, it actually rests on one of these principles rather than on reciprocity *simpliciter*." In this sense, to say that Confucian political obligation is reciprocal is philosophically imprecise. We have to ask

⁴⁶ Klosko, *Political Obligations*, 149.

⁴⁷ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Klosko, *Political Obligations*, 149.

further what kind of reciprocity are Confucius and Mencius describing. Answering this question will lead us closer to the moral assumption underlying the Confucian expectation of commoners' political obedience.

3. The Moral Assumption of Confucian Political Obligation

As we have seen, both Confucius and Mencius expect that ordinary people will obey a ruler if the latter practices benevolent governance. To the extent that a reasonable expectation starts from a moral assumption, what then is the moral principle of Confucian political obligation?

I find the idea of gratitude a strong candidate for Confucian political obligation. Confucius does not merely recommend the ruling class to practice benevolent governance. He also describes the benevolence as political *largesse* (\mathbb{B} ci) to the people. The Chinese character \mathbb{B} (ci) is usually translated as "gift" or "largesse." This word also has the connotation of hierarchy. It represents a gift that a superior bestows upon his inferiors.⁴⁹ In his appraisal of an ancient statesman, Confucius argues, "When Guanzhong served as prime minister of Duke Huan, he enabled the Duke to become leader of the various feudal lords, uniting and bringing order to the empire. Even today the people still benefit from his largess [\mathbb{B} ci]."⁵⁰ When one receives largesse from others, we normally

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⁴⁹ Wang Li [王力], ed., *Ancient Chinese Character Dictionary* [古漢語字典] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2000), 1334.

⁵⁰ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 14.17. The original text is as follows: 子曰: 「管仲相桓公,霸諸侯,一匡天下,民到于今受其賜。」

expect gratitude as an appropriate response. As Confucius also notes, it is right to "repay benevolence with gratitude." ⁵¹

Similarly, Mencius' moral assumption about commoner's political obedience is also a gratitude-based political obligation. The first evidence of gratefulness appears when Mencius uses

⁵¹ Ibid., 14.34. The original text is as follows: 「以德報德。」 Various translations have been made of this paragraph over time. For example, it is translated as "recompense [報 bao] kindness [德 de] with kindness [德 de]" in Legge's version, and "repay [報 bao] a good turn [德 de] with a good turn [德 de]" in that of Lau. See Confucius, "Confucian Analects", 288; Confucius, The Analects, 129. Though differences exist, the translation of Ames and Rosemont Jr., on which I rely in this chapter, has strong support from etymological studies. Donald J. Munro, for instance, argues that, at the time of Confucius, "one key component in the meaning of de (德) was the eliciting of a response of lovalty or gratitude from the people," see Donald J. Munro, The Concept of Man in Early China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 193. Likewise, David S. Nivison points out that, in many classical texts, de (德) is used in describing the benevolence-gratitude reciprocity, see David S. Nivison, "De (Te): Virtue or Power," in Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy, ed. Antonio S. Cua (London: Routledge, 2003), 234-237. Recently, a detailed analysis of the evolution of the concept of de (德) also suggests that the connotation of the benevolence-gratitude reciprocity is especially strong when de (德) is used in the context of requital (報 bao), see Scott A. Barnwell, "The Evolution of the Concept of De 德 in Early China," Sino-Platonic Papers, no. 235 (2013). It is thus not implausible to follow Ames and Rosemont's translation of Analects 14.34—"repay [報 bao] benevolence [德 de] with gratitude [德 de]".

the Chinese character \mathbb{B} (*en*) in his critique of a king's failure to practice benevolence. He says, "One becomes a true King by tending the people…The people have not been tended because you fail to practice \mathbb{B} (*en*)."⁵²

Kindness is usually the translation of 恩 (*en*) in English. In the Chinese linguistic and social contexts, when one receives others' 恩 (*en*), gratitude is presupposed as the appropriate response. For example, the Chinese idioms 恩將仇報 (en jiang chou bao, i.e., requite kindness [恩] with enmity) and 忘恩負義 (wang en fu yi, i.e., forget kindness [恩] and violate appropriateness) are used to criticize ungrateful behaviors. The phrase 知恩圖報 (zhi en tu bao, i.e., acknowledge other's kindness [恩] while plan to requite), on the contrary, denotes one's gratefulness. Therefore, when Mencius asks a ruler to practice 恩 (*en*), he expects that the people will return the kindness out of gratitude.

The parents-state analogy, as used by Mencius, is another evidence for the gratitude theory of Confucian political obligation.⁵³ In the *Mencius*, the analogy that a benevolent ruler is similar

⁵² Mencius, *Mencius*, 1A.7. The original text is as follows: 曰:「保民而王...百姓之不見保, 為不用恩焉。」

Mencius does not invent the phrase of the "father and mother of the people." Indeed, in Classical Confucianism this parent-state analogy is a common lexicon. See, for example, Qichao Liang, History of Chinese Political Thought during the Early Tsin Period, trans. L. T. Chen (New York: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO., LTD., 1930), 150-152. And Zhang Fengqian [張豐乾], "Classical Confucianism and the 'Father and Mother of the People' [早期儒家與'民之父母']," Modern Philosophy [現代哲學], no. 1 (2008).

to "father and mother of the people" appears many times.⁵⁴ For example, Mencius has once detailed five measures for a benevolent governance and argues that if a ruler can practice them accordingly, "even the people of the neighboring states will look to him as to their *father and mother*." Similarly, in his critique of a bad lord, Mencius states,

There is fat meat in your kitchen and there are well-fed horses in your stables, yet the people look hungry and in the outskirts of cities men drop dead from starvation. This is to show animals the way to devour men. Even the devouring of animals by animals repugnant to men. If, then, one who is *father and mother to the people* cannot, in ruling over them, avoid showing animals the way to devour men, wherein is he *father and mother to the people*. ⁵⁶

Simply put, the parent-state analogy serves to help the rulers grasp the meaning of governing with virtue and benevolence. That is, a ruler should tend the welfare of his subjects as if they were his children. And, if a ruler can take care of the people, he can also expect that just as

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1A.4, 1B.7, 2A.5 and 3A.3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2A.5. Italics mine. The original text is as follows: 「信能行此五者,則鄰國之民仰之若父母矣。」

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1A.4. Italics mine. The original text is as follows: 「庖有肥肉, 廐有肥馬, 民有飢色, 野有餓莩, 此率獸而食人也。獸相食, 且人惡之。為民父母, 行政不免於率獸而食人。惡在其為民父母也?」

children owe an obligation of gratitude to the care of their loving parents, his subjects would also owe a debt of gratitude to the benevolent governance.⁵⁷

In the literature on political obligations, when a scholar employs the parent-state analogy, it is usually a sign of an argument of gratitude-based political obligations. The parent-state analogy

⁵⁷ Confucius does not use the phrase of "father and mother of the people" in the *Analects*. Nevertheless, we have evidence to suggest that he endorses it. For example, in the *Analects*, Confucius encourages his students to study the Book of Songs. In his opinion, the Book of Songs "can be covered in one expression: 'Go vigorously without swerving off the ways.'" Confucius, The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation, 2.2. The original text is as follows: 詩三百,一言以蔽之,曰『思無邪』。」Given this high opinion of the Book of Songs, it is not unreasonable to assume that Confucius agrees with its comparison of a good ruler to "the father and mother of the people." Arthur Waley, trans., The Book of Songs (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 146 and 254. Further, in another Confucian classic, the Book of Rites, Confucius is also recorded to directly use the parent-state analogy to illuminate the meaning of a good ruler. In one of these passage, for instance, Confucius states that a benevolent ruler will "cause the people honour him as their father, and love him as their mother." James Legge, trans., Li Chi: Book of Rites, vol. 2 (New York, 1967), 340-341. Although it is open to question, the editor of these two Confucian classics is traditionally believed to be Confucius. The original text is as follows: 「君 子之所謂仁者其難乎!《詩》云:『凱弟君子,民之父母。』凱以強教之;弟以說安之。 樂而毋荒, 有禮而親, 威莊而安, 孝慈而敬。使民有父之尊, 有母之親。如此而後可以為 民父母矣,非至德其孰能如此乎?

is thus an important evidence to supports the interpretation that underlying the Confucian expectation of commoners' political obedience is the moral assumption of gratitude. Based on all the evidence offered above, it is thus safe to conclude that Confucian political obligation is an argument of gratitude.

4. Assessing Confucian Gratitude Theory of Political Obligation

In his seminal work, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, A. John Simmons points out that there are five necessary conditions to generate an obligation of gratitude. In this section, I will assess the compatibility between Simmons' conditions and the Confucian gratitude theory of political obligation. As we will see, the comparison will help us highlight the distinctive characteristics of Confucian gratitude-based political obligation. The five conditions laid down by Simmons are the following.

- (1) The benefits must be granted by means of some special effort or sacrifice.
- (2) The benefit must not be granted unintentionally, involuntarily, or for disqualifying reasons.
- (3) The benefit must not be forced (unjustifiably) on the beneficiary against his will.
- (4) The beneficiary must want the benefit, or, 4a, it must be the case that the beneficiary would want the benefit if certain impairing conditions were corrected.
- (5) The beneficiary must not want the benefit not to be provided by the benefactor, or, 5a, it must be the case that the beneficiary would not want the benefit not to be provided by the benefactor if certain impairing conditions were corrected.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, 178-179.

Simmons argues that the conditions 1 and 2 are the most difficult to be satisfied in the relations between citizens and their government. Nevertheless, the merit of the Confucian gratitude theory is precisely its ability to satisfy these two conditions. According to the condition 1, Amber, say, is deemed to owe an obligation of gratitude to Bob only if Bob has made some effort or sacrifice in providing Amber with the benefit in question. For example, most of us will agree that Amber should feel grateful to Bob if the latter saves her from accidental drowning. However, few of us will think that obligation of gratitude is generated between these two persons when there is no sacrifice and effort involved.

Consider the following example. Amber had decided to quit smoking for her health. One night, she suddenly felt the urge to smoke. Being unable to quench the desire, Amber walked to the nearby convenience store for a pack of cigarettes. The store clerk, Bob, told Amber that cigarettes were sold out. Amber was initially frustrated but became happy for she realized that if she were to satisfy the urge, she would thwart her quit plan. Few people would say that Amber should feel grateful to Bob in this case for he did not make any effort or sacrifice to help Amber fight her craving. Indeed, Bob would even felt weird if Amber said "thank you" to him.

According to Simmons, the requirement of effort from a benefactor poses serious problems to the gratitude-based obligation in relations between citizens and their government. Specifically, Simons argues, "the fact remains that government services are almost paid for by citizens through taxes...And certainly, very little sacrifice is involved in converting these funds into public services." Since benefits received from the state are paid by taxes, the effort and sacrifice involved in the provision is largely made by citizens themselves instead of the government. In this

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⁵⁹ Ibid., 189.

sense, a political obligation of gratitude does not exist because it is absurd to require citizens to feel grateful to their personal effort.

However, the gratitude theory of political obligation in Classical Confucianism seems to satisfy the condition 1. To Confucius and Mencius, the benefits citizens received from the states are products of great effort and sacrifice made by a ruler. In a passage in the *Analects*, Duke Ai asks one of Confucius' students, Master You Rou,

"The harvest has been bad and there is not enough in the government coffers. What should I do?"

Master You Rou replied, "Have you not levied a tithe?" "

Never mind a tithe," said the duke, "I would not have enough even if I levied twice that amount." 60

Here is the tension between commoners and their government realized by Confucians. That is, in reality, commoners may need help from their government, but the latter might disregard their difficulty and even exploit them further. To solve this tension, Confucians put all their energy into persuading the ruling class to "cultivate themselves by bringing accord to the people." ⁶¹ In everyday life, for instance, they should "refrain from intimidation, from self-importance, from ill

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⁶⁰ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 12.9. See note 32 above for the original text.

 $^{^{61}}$ Ibid., 14.42. See note 34 above for the original text.

will and from greed."⁶² As for governance, Confucius recommends political elites to "carry out your official duties respectfully and make good on your word; be frugal in your expenditures and love your peers; and put the common people to work only at the proper time of years."⁶³

The emphasis on elite's self-restraint and self-cultivation is a hallmark of Confucian political philosophy. These virtuous behaviors are not easy tasks. It is human for Duke Ai to follow his self-interest and increase the taxes. However, it is hard for him to keep his desire at bay and put people's interest first. Thus is the proverb cited by Confucius, "Ruling is difficult, and ministering is not easy either."

To Simmons, for a political obligation to be generated the benefit in question must be provided by "means of some special effort or sacrifice". As discussed above, the Confucian gratitude theory of political obligation can satisfy this condition. In the ideal Confucian context, not only a good ruler's willingness to "sacrifice[] substantial prerogatives and goods in order to provide for, nurture, and guide his people…but also his ability to restrain himself are important for a full appreciation of the value of his actions."

62 Ibid., 14.1. The original text is as follows: 「克、伐、怨、欲不行焉, 可以為仁矣?」子曰:

「可以為難矣, 仁則吾不知也。|

63 Ibid., 1.5. The original text is as follows: 「道千乘之國: 敬事而信, 節用而愛人, 使民以時。」

⁶⁴ Ibid., 13.15. The original text is as follows: 人之言曰: 「為君難,為臣不易。」

⁶⁵ Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Filial Piety as a Virtue," in *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, ed. Alan Kam-leung Chan and Sor-hoon Tan (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 197.

Confucianism is also able to satisfy the second condition Simmons lays down for a successful gratitude theory of political obligation; namely, the benefit must not be granted unintentionally, involuntarily, or for disqualifying reasons. First, according to Simmons, the benefactor's provision of the benefit must be intentional. Consider the above example again. If Amber knew that it was Samuel who bought the last pack of cigarettes and who accidentally helped her fight tobacco cravings, did Amber need to write a thank-you note to Samuel? Her note would very likely make Samuel bewildered indeed.

In addition to the criteria of intentionality, Simmons argues that gratitude is justifiably owed if the benefactor benefits the beneficiary voluntarily. That is to say, gratitude is not generated if, for instance, Grace gave Thomas a million U.S. dollars when she was extremely drunk. Thomas might be very happy but from a moral perspective perhaps he should feel guilty, instead of grateful, by taking advantage of a drunk person.

As for the criteria for qualifying reasons, Simmons maintains that to generate gratitude "the benefactor must not have provided the benefit for reasons of self-interest." Consider the example. David is a treasure hunter. He identified that there was a vast treasure buried under the house of his friend, Matthew. Davie thus planned to persuade Matthew to sell the house so that he was able to uncover the treasure. When David knew that Matthew was in great financial difficulty and must sell the house immediately, David bought it by the original list price without any bargain. Did Matthew need to feel grateful to David if he knew the latter's true intention? Perhaps, in this case, gratitude was generated if David gave Matthew a gratuitous financial support or if he informed Matthew about the secret of the treasure hoard. Otherwise, as Simmons points out, "when a man

⁶⁶ Simmons, Moral Principles and Political Obligations, 171-172.

benefits us in order to advance his own interests, he will not earn our gratitude, for he treats us simply as a means to an end."67

To Simmons, it is especially the criteria of qualifying reasons which poses a particular challenge to the generation of political obligation among citizens. In reality, after all, most politicians benefit citizens for the sake of self-interests. He explains, "We certainly have sufficient experience, even in the best of states, of benefits being conferred as a part of a drive to solicit votes, or to advance the status of the government in international circles, etc."68 Therefore, Simmons maintains that we do not owe political obligations of gratitude to the self-interested politicians and the government they run.

A Confucian might reply that although many politicians in a democratic regime benefit their constituents out of self-interests, Confucian officials are required to benefit the people sincerely. First, as mentioned above, Confucians use the metaphor of "father and mother of the people" to encourage a ruler to care for his subject as he would do his children. As parents selflessly nurture their children, so should a Confucian ruler and his ministers act genuinely to improve the welfare of the people.

Second, the Confucian project of self-cultivation is exactly to prevent politicians from acting in their self-interests. For instance, a Confucian statesman is expected to cultivate the Confucian cardinal virtue of humaneness (1), i.e., the virtue of loving others. 69 He helps the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 172.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 189-190.

⁶⁹ Confucius, The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation, 12.22. The original text is as follows: 樊遲問仁。子曰:「愛人。|

people not because he wants to keep his throne, but because he loves the people. Thus, in a Confucian context, commoners may rightly owe a political obligation of gratitude to the state since "it is a response to a grant of benefits...which was motivated by a desire to help us."⁷⁰ In a nutshell, Simmons' condition 2 is satisfied in a Confucian world.

Now let us see if the Confucian gratitude theory of political obligation also satisfies the third condition set out by Simmons. The condition 3 states, "The benefit must not be forced (unjustifiably) on the beneficiary against his will." In Simmons' discussion of this condition, he assumes that the recipient in question does want the benefit; however, the benefactor cannot impose the benefit by "morally prohibited behavior" on the benefactor. Consider again the example of Amber. Suppose Amber wanted to stop smoking but she simply lacked the will to carry out a quit plan. When Alexander knew the situation, he kidnaped Amber and forced her to be smoke fee. In this case, although Alexander seemed to act in Amber's interest, few people would agree that Amber should feel grateful to Alexander. The reason is simple: the means Alexander employed in helping Amber is illegitimate. Thus, according to the condition 3, a government will not earn its citizens' gratefulness if it uses morally prohibited behavior to benefit them.

Confucians also believe that political benevolence should not impose on commoners by morally prohibited behavior. For instance, Confucius asserts that an ideal government does not rule the people by punishments. Instead, it should "lead them with virtues and keep them orderly

⁷⁰ Fred B. Berger, "Gratitude," *Ethics* 85, no. 4 (1975), 299.

⁷¹ Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, 176.

with the rites so the people will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves."⁷² Similarly, when a minister asks Confucius if it is adequate to use the method of killing to lead commoners toward the Way, Confucius replies, "What need is there for killing? Just to be good yourself and the common people will be good. The virtue of the gentleman is the wind, while that of commoners is the grass. As the wind blows, the grass is sure to bend."⁷³ In short, since the practice of Confucian benevolent governance does not involve morally prohibited behavior, the Confucian theory of political obligation satisfies the condition 3.

However, Confucianism has great difficulty to meet the fourth condition laid down by Simmons. The condition four states, "The beneficiary must want the benefit, or, 4a, it must be the case that the beneficiary would want the benefit if certain impairing conditions were corrected." Underlying this condition is a liberal assumption for it implies that an individual has rights to decide whether or not he wants the benefits provided by his government. It is precisely this liberal assumption that crashes into the paternalistic nature of Confucianism.

The imagined debate surrounding the fourth condition between a liberal and a Confucian may run as follows:

⁷² Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 2.3. The original text is as follows:「道之以政,齊之以刑,民免而無恥;道之以德,齊之以禮,有恥且格。」

⁷³ Ibid., 12.19. The original text is as follows: 季康子問政於孔子曰:「如殺無道,以就有道,何如?」孔子對曰:「子為政,焉用殺?子欲善,而民善矣。君子之德風,小人之德草。草上之風,必偃。」

Liberal: As you know, the first clause of the condition 4 states, "the beneficiary must want the benefit in question." How do you know that common people really want the benefits you provide?

Confucian: Let us not talk in the abstract. To Confucians, "When determining what means of support the people should have, a clear-sighted ruler ensures that these are sufficient, on the one hand, for the care of parents, and, on the other, for the support of wife and children, so that the people always have sufficient food in good years and escape starvation in bad; only then does he drive them towards goodness."⁷⁴ We Confucians believe that most people will want these benefits.

Liberal: Well, I can for the time being agree that most people want to have sufficient food and adequate means to avoid starvation and support their families. However, besides the satisfaction of these basic needs, I suspect that they also want to be driven toward goodness. Would you please be more specific about the benefits of goodness?

Confucian: I am glad that you ask this question. By goodness, I mean the quality of being morally right. To drive people toward goodness is to "make them understand human relationships."⁷⁵ Specifically, the goodness includes "to be good sons and good younger brothers, loyal to their prince and true to their word, so that they will, in the family, serve their fathers and elders brothers,

⁷⁴ Mencius, *Mencius*, 1A.7. See note 38 above for the original text.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 3A.3. The original text is as follows: 「設為庠序學校以教之: 庠者, 養也; 校者, 教 也:序者,射也。夏曰校,殷曰序,周曰庠,學則三代共之,皆所以明人倫也。|

and outside the family, serve their elders and superiors."⁷⁶ I believe that moral goodness is the greatest benefits commoners want to enjoy. Do you agree?

Liberal: No, I do not agree. I think that moral goodness is a matter of individual choices. To get back to you example, I believe that if an individual does not want to be tied up by human relationships and prefers to live as a hermit, his personal choice needs to be respected and protected. You may argue that moral goodness is a great benefit to him, but it may not be what he personally wants. If he does not want your benefits, you are not entitle to claim his gratefulness because "obligations of gratitude must be voluntarily undertaken."

Confucian: Please don't reach to the conclusion so fast. Doesn't the second clause of the fourth condition also states that "it must be the case that the beneficiary would want the benefit if certain impairing conditions were corrected?" I believe that, for example, the reason that an individual decides to be a hermit is because he is intellectually and morally impaired. Indeed, we Confucians consider that most people simply lack the moral and intellectual capacity to realize the beneficial effects of being drove toward goodness. As Confucius says, "The common people can be induced

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1A.5. The original text is as follows: 「壯者以暇日修其孝悌忠信,入以事其父兄,出以事其長上。」

⁷⁷ George Klosko, "Four Arguments Against Political Obligations from Gratitude," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1991): 42.

to follow the way, but they cannot be induced to understand it."⁷⁸ To this, Mencius also concurs, "The common people can be said never to be aware of what they practice, to notice what they repeatedly to, or to understand the way they follow all their lives."⁷⁹ Because commoners are ignorant, they should be ruled by those who are most moral and intelligent. This is why Confucians compare an ideal ruler to the "father and mother of the people". He should tend the welfare of his subjects as if they were his children. He should love, care and make decisions for commoners for they cannot survive without his guidance and benevolence. In short, I maintain that commons must want the benefit of moral goodness even though they do not know it. I am confident to say that moral goodness is their real interest. Get back to the example of the hermit. If he does not encounter the impairing condition, he must want to be morally good and would feel grateful to be drove toward goodness. This is why I think that the Confucian gratitude theory of political obligation satisfies the condition 4 laid down by Simmons.

Liberal: Wait! You seem to have a unique understanding of the condition 4. Since you argue in the line of paternalism, let me use it to highlight our difference in interpreting the criteria of "the beneficiary must want the benefit in question". To liberals, "parental power is nothing but that which parents have over their children, to govern them for the children's good, till they come to

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⁷⁸ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 8.9. The original text is as follows: 「民可使由之,不可使知之。」

⁷⁹ Mencius, *Mencius*, 7A.5. The original text is as follows: 「行之而不著焉, 習矣而不察焉, 終身由之而不知其道者, 眾也。」

the use of reason, or a state of knowledge."80 Simply put, parental power has its limit. If children's impairing condition is their minority, it is corrected when they reach adulthoods. In other words, we liberals maintain that "each adult person is, in general, the best judge of his or her good or interests" and therefore "no adult members are so definitely better qualified than the others that they should be entrusted with making binding collective decisions."81 In principle, when we liberals say that "the beneficiary must want the benefit in question," we mean that he voluntarily wants it. Whether or not he wants Confucian goodness, it is up to him to decide. However, underlying the Confucian metaphor of "father and parent of the people", as you suggest, is the assumption that commoners are children forever. Their moral and intellectual impairment are by default their nature. In a Confucian world, common people do not voluntarily want the moral benefits. It is the government that imposes benefits on them. Your Confucian parental attitude toward commoners makes you disregard what ordinary people voluntarily want. Since your interpretation on "the beneficiary must want the benefit in question" is opposed to Simmons' liberal assumption, I must say that the Confucian gratitude theory of political obligation fails to satisfy not only his condition 4 but also the condition 5. In these two conditions, the beneficiary's voluntary choice is the core criteria. As Simmons says, "a gratitude account of political obligation would have to allow that a citizen who could honestly say that he did not want the benefits his government provided, or that he did not want to get them from his government, would not be bound by his receipt of benefits."82

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⁸⁰ Locke, Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration, 176.

⁸¹ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 105.

⁸² Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, 187.

Confucian: Well, I insist that we ought to lead ordinary people toward moral goodness. This is the real interests of them and the greatest benefit a government should provide for them. If we let people voluntarily choose what they want, "they will go astray and fall into excess, stopping at nothing." Just like you cannot accept the Confucian paternalistic assumption, I also cannot agree with your liberal assumption about the individual agency. Since our assumptions are radically different, it seems that we are unable to negotiate our disagreements. Alas, "People who have chosen different ways cannot make plans together."

As we have seen, Confucian gratitude theory of political obligation can satisfy the conditions 1 through 3 laid down by Simmons. However, the conditions 4 and 5 pose a significant challenge to Confucianism. While Simmons emphasizes on whether the citizens *want* the political benefit in question, the Confucian paternalism rules out the importance of commoners' preferences. Certainly, Confucianism does not need to meet Simmons' conditions to be a successful gratitude theory of political obligation. After all, Confucians are not liberals. Their philosophy might not be welcomed in a liberal democratic world. However, their resistance to tyranny and their emphasis on ruling class's virtue and responsibility for the people had made Confucianism a progressive political thought in ancient China. Based on its standard, Confucianism can claim a gratitude theory of political obligation in its own rights.

⁸³ Mencius, Mencius, 1A.7. The original text is as follows: 「若民, 則無恆產, 因無恆心。苟無恆心, 放辟, 邪侈, 無不為已。」

⁸⁴ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 15.40. The original text is as follows:「道不同,不相為謀。」

To avoid confusion between the liberal and Confucian gratitude accounts. I thus suggest that we should call Confucian political obligation as an argument from *paternalistic gratitude*. There are five basic elements in this Confucian paternalistic gratitude theory. Accordingly, Confucians believe that

- (1) ordinary people are like children and not qualified to govern themselves;
- (2) the ruler is compared to commoners' parents and responsible for the latter's welfare;
- (3) people should feel grateful to benefits received from a benevolent ruler;
- (4) people should demonstrate their gratefulness by obeying the benevolent ruler as they do their loving parents; and
- (5) although ordinary people are ignorant, they nevertheless are able to judge the impact of political decisions on their personal economic welfare. If the ruler deprives them of their basic needs, the people are morally right to disobey.

To bring this section to a close, I would like to discuss an important critique of gratitude-based political obligations. According to this criticism, "the difficulty of political obligations based on gratitude is that a theory of political obligation demands a specific response; the recipient is not under a general obligation to express his gratitude to the state in some appropriate way but has a specific obligation to obey the law." Klosko calls this the *specificity requirement* of gratitude-based political obligations.

The specificity requirement is counterintuitive. In reality, it seems to be unacceptable that a benefactor unabashedly require his beneficiary to demonstrate her gratefulness in a particular

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⁸⁵ Klosko, "Four Arguments Against Political Obligations from Gratitude," 34.

way. For example, we might feel grateful for a waiter's good service and be willing to leave him a generous tip. However, we would feel uncomfortable or even angry if this waiter demanded us to pay a specific amount of tip to his satisfaction. The puzzle generated by this requirement thus revolves around two related question: Why must an individual demonstrate his gratefulness by obeying the law? Why can't he express his gratitude by giving the state, say, a flower?

The political theorist, A. D. M. Walker, has attempted to reconstruct an argument from gratitude to meet the specificity requirement. Walker suggests that a successful gratitude-based obligation should, first of all, clarify "the attitudes grateful individuals are presumed to have." To Walker, there are two attitudes necessary for a grateful response. The first attitude is declarative; namely, a beneficiary must show her benefactor that she appreciates the benefit received. The second attitude is substantive. She must prepare to show her good will and respect for her benefactor. The attitude of good will requires her not to act against her benefactor's interests.

According to Walker, a theory of gratitude-based political obligations should theorize these two attitudes within its model to meet the specificity requirements. It should, on the one hand, appeal to our appreciation of the benefit received. On the other hand, it should also "appeal[] to our obligation not to act in ways that betray the lack of good will to the [state],"⁸⁷ and, therefore, not to act in a manner that contradict the interests of the state. Moreover, because noncompliance with the law will damage the interests of the state, a grateful citizen should obey the law. In this

⁸⁶ A.D.M Walker, "Political Obligation and the Argument from Gratitude," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 17, no. 3 (1988): 200.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 202.

way, Walker's argument seems to satisfy the specificity requirement. If Walker is right, a citizen, of course, can give the state a flower to show his gratefulness; however, he must also obey the law to demonstrate his good will to it.

Nevertheless, problems exist in Walker's arguments. First, it is not always the case that noncompliance with the law damages the interests of the government. Civil disobedience, such as the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements of the 1960s, might indeed serve and promote the interest of the state. Second, it is not sure that an individual's noncompliance with the law will jeopardize the interests of his country. For example, an individual's tax evasion is almost unlikely to damage the financial interests of the state with a large population. In this sense, Walker's gratitude argument will be insufficient to persuade a grateful citizen that their non-compliance with the tax requirement will cause any harm to the state. If a citizen in question realizes that "the actual consequences of a given individual's actions in a society of many millions, or tens of millions, are often negligible or undetectable," his feeling of gratefulness to the state might not specifically lead him to obey the law. As it stands, Walker does not meet the specificity requirement. The puzzle remains. Why must a grateful citizen obey the state? Why can't he just give the government a flower?

The theory of political obligation in Classical Confucianism also cannot meet the specificity requirement. Indeed, this requirement is arguably the Achilles heel of a gratitude-based theory of political obligations. A specific demand on grateful citizens' compliance with the law is just going against our moral intuition regarding the ethic of gratitude. However, the evidence

⁸⁸ Klosko, "Four Arguments Against Political Obligations from Gratitude.," 36.

discovered in the following chapters suggests a solution to this puzzle. I will present this finding in the conclusion chapter.

5. Conclusion:

Our search for Confucian political obligation begins with one conversation in the *Analects*: "Duke Ai of Lu inquired of Confucius, asking, 'What must I do to gain the obedience of the common people?' Confucius answered, 'Raise up the straight and place them over the crooked and the common people will obey." ⁸⁹ I suggest that in order to understand Confucian political obligation we have to clarify Confucius' metaphor of "raise up the straight and place them over the crooked." Following Confucius's arguments in the *Analects* and referring to the *Mencius* as the most authoritative commentary on them, I illuminate the paternalistic gratitude theory of Confucian political obligation. Without distorting its original meaning, I revise the conversation between Duke Ai of Lu and Confucius as follows:

Duke Ai of Lu inquired of Confucius, asking, 'What must I do to gain the obedience of the common people?' Confucius answered, 'A ruler is like commoners' parent who is responsible to take care of them. If he could promote virtuous men to help him practice benevolent governance, the people would feel grateful for the benefits received from his leadership. If the common people feel grateful to his governance, they would also demonstrate their gratefulness by obeying the ruler as they do their loving parents. Conversely, if a ruler turns to be malevolent, the people are morally right to disobey.'

⁸⁹ Confucius, The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation, 2.19.

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This chapter offers one of the first specified accounts of Confucian political obligation in the literature. Indeed, Confucian political obligation is not absolute. It is neither simply reciprocal nor role-based nor grounded in duty-consciousness. It is conditional and conditioned upon a theory of paternalistic gratitude.

Not surprisingly, some scholars may agree with the essence of my arguments, but they may yet doubt the scope of their application. They might argue that even though Classical Confucianism expresses a theory of paternalistic gratitude, that theory would have been transformed into an orthodoxy of absolute obedience during China's imperial period. Does Confucian paternalistic gratitude become a doctrine of absolute obedience in its empirical form? I will deal with this question in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Political Obligation in Imperial Confucianism

Many scholars argue that since the Han Emperor of Wu (漢武帝, r. 141-87 B.C.E.) adopted Confucianism as the state ideology, "the officially reconstructed version of Confucianism had...ensured the indoctrination of the populace, transforming the people into docile subjects during the Imperial era." While this understanding is commonplace, it is not convincingly supported. As we will see, the failure arises from a lack of persuasive textual evidence from China's Imperial period.

The present chapter readdresses the question of Imperial Confucian political obligation; namely, the question of why people should obey the state, according to the teaching of Imperial Confucianism. Briefly, the discussion is in three parts. In Section 1, I critically review scholarship that suggests that Imperial Confucian political obligation is a doctrine of absolute obedience. In Sections 2, 3 and 4, I define the Imperial Confucianism as what the emperors said it was to commoners. Following this definition, I select three critical cases for the present study. The three cases are the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* (神注孝經), the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* (御制大誥), and the *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict* (聖諭廣訓). Contrary to the popular notion of absolute obedience, the evidence strongly suggests that, as it is

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¹ Zhengyuan Fu, *Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 66. Also see, for example, Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, trans. Frederick W. Mote (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Ping-ti Ho, "Salient Aspects of China's Heritage," in *China in Crisis*, ed. Ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968). Tu, "Confucianism."

in Confucian classics, the political obligation in Imperial Confucianism remains a theory of paternalistic gratitude. This chapter is then concluded in Section 5.

It is important to note that after Confucianism became a state ideology during China's Imperial period, the interpretive problem we encountered in Chapter 2 disappears. We have argued that the central theme of Classical Confucianism is to make political recommendations for the ruling class. Its theory of political obligation is not directly stated. Interpretively, we have to unearth the moral assumption about why Confucians expect commoners' obedience to a benevolent ruler. However, in the case of Imperial Confucianism, ordinary people are invited to be the audience of political discourses. The question of why they should obey the state is directly addressed to them by Imperial Confucians.

1. Literature Review

Although the notion that Imperial Confucianism calls on subjects' absolute obedience frequently appears in the literature, advocates have not adequately supported the claim. For example, Vitaly A. Rubin argued that Xunzi (荀子, ca. 312-230 B.C.E.) played a significant role in turning the classical Confucianism into an ideology of absolute obedience. However, this statement is ungrounded. Indeed, Xunzi did not take commoners' obedience for granted. Like Confucius and Mencius, he believed that to secure the obedience of the people a ruler should treat them with generosity. He said,

² Vitaly A. Rubin, *Individual and State in Ancient China*, trans. Steven I. Levine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 17-18.

If the common people are uneasy with the government, then the gentleman will not feel secure in holding his position...When the common people are uneasy with the government, then nothing works better than treating them generously: Pick out those who are worthy and good. Elevate those who are dedicated and respectful. Promote those who are filial and act as good younger brothers. Take in those who are orphaned or widowed. Assist those who are poor and in dire straits...There is a saying, "The lord is the boat. The common people are the water. The water can support the boat. The water can also overturn the boat." This expresses my meaning. Thus, if the lord of men wishes to be secure, then nothing works better than governing then evenhandedly and showing concern for the people. ³

Confucian political obligation in the above description is clearly not absolute.

Similarly, Ping-Ti Ho argues that Cheng Hao (程颢, 1032-1085 C.E.), Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107 C.E.) and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200 C.E.) of Sung Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.) are responsible for the establishment of absolute obedience in Imperial Confucianism.⁴ Regrettably, Ho does not provide textual evidence to support his assertion. He simply says in a footnote, "This

³ Xunzi, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. Eric L. Hutton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 70. The original text is as follows: 「庶人駭政,則君子不安位。…庶人駭政,則莫若惠之。選賢良,舉篤敬,興孝弟,收孤寡,補貧窮。…傳曰:『君者、舟也,庶人者、水也;水則載舟,水則覆舟。』此之謂也。故君人者,欲安、則莫若平政愛民矣。」

⁴ Ho, "Salient Aspects of China's Heritage."

is my own impression based on sampling the collected works of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi."⁵ However, contrary to Ho's impression, Cheng Yi argued that "the people can be inspired but not fooled, educated but not threatened, led but not coerced, employed but not bullied."⁶ Likewise, in a memorandum to the Song Emperor Xiaozong (宋孝宗, r. 1162-1189 C.E.), Zhu Xi urged the Emperor to promote the public good in order to make the commoners obey him sincerely. If the Emperor were to put his personal interests first, the people, warned Zhu Xi, would develop a consciousness of disobedience.⁷ Obviously, Ho's impression is inconsistent with the evidence.

Zhengyuan Fu's all-out attack on Confucianism in the *Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics* gives another problematic reading of the Imperial Confucian political obligation. For instance, Fu chooses the *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (白虎道, hereafter referred to as "*Comprehensive Discussions*") of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) as one of

⁵ Ibid., 14, note 23.

⁶ Cheng I [程頤], *The Collected Works of the Cheng Brothers* [二程集] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981), 319. The original text is as follows: 「民可明也,不可愚也;民可教也,不可愚也;民可倾也,不可强也;民可使也,不可欺也。」

⁷ Zhu Xi [朱熹], *The Complete Works of Master Zhu [朱子全書]*, vol. 20 (Shanghai: Shanghai Classic Publishing House, 2002), 621. The original text is as follows: 「臣聞天無私覆, 地無私載, 日月無私照, 故王者奉三無私以勞於天下, 則兼臨博愛, 廓然大公, 而天下之人莫不心悦而誠服。儻於其間復以新舊而為親疎, 則其偏黨之情, 褊狹之度固已使人憪然有不服之心。」

⁸ Fu, *Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics*, chapter 4.

his cases to illuminate the oppressiveness of Imperial Confucianism. He says that its concept of "Three Mainstay (三綱)"—which stipulates the ruler as the mainstay of the minister, the father as the mainstay of the son and the husband as the mainstay of the wife—commanded subjects' absolute obedience.

However, Fu's interpretation on the *Comprehensive Discussions* is possibly wrong. On the one hand, the "Three Mainstay" simply asserted that the ruler is the source of political authority. It did not state the idea of absolute obedience. On the other, the *Comprehensive Discussions* also justified revolutions against tyranny as being "in accordance with the Mandate of Heaven, and in response to the wishes of the people." If regicides were justifiable and the people's wishes for revolution were legitimate, it seems safe to say that political obligation in the *Comprehensive Discussions* was not absolute. Again, Fu's interpretation of the "Three Mainstays" is not well-grounded.

Indeed, we can also argue that political obligation in the *Comprehensive Discussions* is consistent with the argument of paternalistic gratitude as we presented in the previous chapter. Consider the following textual evidence:

A son is entitled to avenge his father because he has the same duty towards him as the subject has towards his lord. Neither a faithful subject nor a filial son can ever be resigned

⁹ Ban Gu [班固], *Po Hu Tung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, trans. Tjan Tjoe Som (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1948), 174b. Slight modifications are made to the original translation. The original text is as follows: 「湯武革命,順乎天而應乎民也。」See Ban Gu [班固], *The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* [白虎通] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985), 193.

to the murder of his lord or father, for his feelings of gratitude and obligation cannot be taken away from him.¹⁰

According to this quote, the *Comprehensive Discussions* used the Confucian parent-state analogy and commoners' gratefulness to justify the revenge.

Another case provided by Fu is the Essentials of the Moral Way (原道, from now on referred to as "Essentials") written by Han Yu (韓愈, 768-824 C.E.). 11 He argues that, as an orthodox Confucian, Han Yu was an advocate of absolute autocracy. Fu quotes a passage from the *Essentials* to justify his argument:

The ruler is the one who gives the command; the ministers are those who implement the ruler's command and extend it to the people; and the people serve their superiors by providing grain, rice, hemp, silk, utensils, and commerce. If the ruler fails to issues commands, he ceases to be a ruler. If the ministers do not implement the ruler's command

臣孝子所以不能已,以恩義不可奪也。」See Ban Gu [班固], The Comprehensive Discussions

in the White Tiger Hall [白虎通], 108.

¹¹ Han Yu [韓愈], Essentials of the Moral Way, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, trans.

Charles Hartman, Sources of Chinese Tradition, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press,

1999), 569-573.

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¹⁰ Ibid., 98a. The original text is as follows: 「子得為父報仇者, 臣子於君父, 其義一也。忠

and extend it to the people, and the people do not provide grain, rice, hemp, make utensils and trade, then they should be executed.¹²

Because Han Yu did not offer justification for his argument of political obligation in this passage, it seems correct to agree with Fu that Han was an ardent supporter of commoners' absolute obedience. However, if we read the *Essentials* as a whole, it seems that Fu presents a problematic interpretation of Han Yu's theory of political obligation. In the *Essentials*, the above quotation appeared after Han Yu identified the benevolence that a ruler can bring to his subjects including the provisions of life necessities, social order, and national security. ¹³ Putting the

¹² Fu, Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics, 57.

¹³ Han Yu [韓愈], Essentials of the Moral Way, 570-571. The original text is as follows: 「古之時,人之害多矣。有聖人者立,然後教之以相生養之道。為之君,為之師,驅其蟲蛇禽獸,而處之中土。寒,然後為之衣。飢,然後為之食。木處而顯,土處而病也,然後為之宮室。為之工,以贍其器用。為之賈,以通其有無。為之醫藥,以濟其夭死。為之葬埋祭祀,以長其恩愛。為之禮,以次其先後。為之樂,以宣其湮鬱。為之政,以率其怠倦。為之刑,以鋤其強梗。相欺也,為之符璽斗斛權衡以信之。相奪也,為之城郭甲兵以守之。害至而為之備,患生而為之防。今其言曰: 『聖人不死,大盗不止。剖斗折衡,而民不爭。』嗚呼! 其亦不思而已矣! 如古之無聖人,人之類滅久矣。何也? 無羽毛鱗介以居寒熱也,無爪牙以爭食也。是故君者,出令者也。臣者,行君之令而致之民者也。民者,出粟米麻絲,作器皿,通貨財,以事其上者也。君不出令,則失其所以為君。臣不行君之令而致之民,則失其所以為臣。民不出粟米麻絲,作器皿,通貨財,以事其上,則誅。」 See Han Yu

quotation back into its original context, we should interpret the political obligation in the *Essentials* as follows: because a ruler can bring benevolence to his subjects, the latter should obey him as a way of requital. If they do not, execution is justified. In this interpretation, the political obligation in the *Essentials* is reciprocal. Han Yu did not, as Fu claims, justify subjects' absolute obedience.

Despite all the questions described above, scholars who argue that Imperial Confucianism called on subjects' absolute obedience share a serious problem. Namely, the texts upon which most of these scholars rely may not merit the designation of Imperial Confucianism. Because the latter is understood by many scholars as the state ideology that transformed ordinary Chinese into docile subjects, I believe that two conditions are necessary to determine whether a text belongs to the category of Imperial Confucianism. The first condition is the authorship. To be considered as the ideology of the state, the texts of the Imperial Confucianism should be written or, at least, endorsed by the emperors in the first place. The second necessary condition is the readership. As a means to transform ordinary people's political consciousness, the selected texts should also be issued for popular consumption. In sum, a piece of Imperial Confucianism should be issued by the courts as well as read by common people.

According to this definition, many Confucian documents written during China's Imperial era should not be included in the study of the Imperial Confucian political obligation. It is not self-evident that every intellectual discussion and political memorandum of Confucian scholar-officials belong to the category of Imperial Confucianism. For example, Han Yu's *Essentials* should not be considered as a piece of Imperial Confucianism. Indeed, Han Yu's Confucian arguments were

[[]韓愈], The Collected Works of Han Yu [韓愈文], ed. Li Daoying [李道英] (Beijing: People Daily Press, 1997), 9-10.

greeted with the outrage of Emperor Xianzong (憲宗, r. 806-820 C.E.) of Tang Dynasty and "earned him exile to southern China." ¹⁴ Similarly, we should also carefully select Zhu Xi's scholarship for a study of Imperial Confucianism for "it is fair to say that in his lifetime emperors...did not accept the role [he] aimed to cast them in." ¹⁵ Moreover, it is also very possible that commoners had never read both Han and Zhu's scholarships.

In other words, we must be sure that the texts we choose were endorsed by the throne and published as popular propaganda. To facilitate the investigation of whether Imperial Confucianism helped transform ordinary Chinese into submissive subjects, we must select the texts rigorously.

Based on the conditions of authorship and readership, I choose three cases for the present study. These three cases are the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* (御注孝經) written by the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang Dynasty (唐玄宗, r. 712-756 C.E.), the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* (御制大誥) by the Emperor Taizu of Ming Dynasty (明太祖, r. 1368-1398 C.E.), and the *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict* (聖諭廣訓) by the Yongzheng Emperor of Qing Dynasty (清世宗, r. 1661-1735 C.E.). ¹⁶

¹⁴ Charles Hartman, "Han Yu and the Confucian 'Way," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York, 1999).

¹⁵ Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 137.

¹⁶ The *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (hereafter refer to as "Comprehensive Discussions") is a borderline case. Although it was compiled under the patronage of the Emperor Zhang of Han Dynasty (漢章帝, r. 75-88 C.E.) in the attempt to put an official interpretation on Confucian classics, there is no evidence that this text was made available for popular consumption.

The selection is by no means idiosyncratic. On the one hand, the importance of the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* and the *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict* are reflected in their inclusion in the Sources of Chinese Tradition. ¹⁷ This two-volume book is one of the most authoritative anthologies of Chinese civilization; it indicates the representativeness of the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* and the *Amplified Instructions on the Sacred Edict* to Chinese history. Second, the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* is important in its own right. It was arguably the most widespread commentary on the *Classic of Filial Piety* during China's Imperial period. A study on these three important documents shall, therefore, help us triangulate the contents of Imperial Confucianism.

2. The Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety

Before we examine the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* (御注孝經), it is worth noting that we should be careful in adumbrating the contents of Imperial Confucian political obligation directly from the *Classic of Filial Piety*. The *Classic of Filial Piety* is the shortest of the thirteen Confucian classics. Some might argue that it was succinctly written while

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In other words, the *Comprehensive Discussions* is more like a scholarly discussion of the meanings of Confucian classics than a work of ideological propaganda. Because it does not satisfy the condition of readership, I exclude this case from the present study. But, as discussed above, even if the *Comprehensive Discussions* would satisfy the condition of readership, it would be a counter-example to the idea that Imperial Confucianism called on subjects' absolute obedience.

¹⁷ William Theodore de Bary, Irene Bloom, and Richard Lufrano, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1–2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

containing deep meanings. However, this very character has made this Confucian classic open to diverse interpretations. For example, in his introduction to the *Classic of Filial Piety*, Wm. Theodore de Bary argues that this text is a "classic statement not only of the virtue of filial piety but of the Confucian values of self-preservation, reciprocity, reverence, moderation, diligence, service to others and moral remonstration."¹⁸

In contrast, Tse-Tsung Chow explains that filial piety, since the Han Dynasty, had been identified as "a one-way obligation of ministers and subjects toward the monarch." Most importantly, Chow argues that this interpretation was "set down definitively in the *Classic of Filial Piety*...[so that] subjects' absolute obedience to their sovereign became an unequivocal duty." How shall we decide then which interpretation above represents the spirit of Imperial Confucianism? Fortunately, we can rely on a commentary that exemplifies the imperial interpretation; namely, the *Imperial Commentary of Classic of Filial Piety*.

On March 26, 719 C.E. the emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Xuanzong (玄宗), issued a decree: "The *Classic of Filial Piety*…has two commentaries, the *Kong Commentary* and the *Zeng Commentary*. The two commentaries offer contradicting interpretations of the classic. If what are supposed to represent fine principle and exquisite reasoning never reach an agreement, where else may one direct his study? It will be well to have our Confucian scholar-officials conduct an inquiry

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¹⁸ William Theodore de Bary, "Heaven, Earth, and the Human in the Classic of Filiality," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, ed. William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). 326.

¹⁹ Tse-Tsung Chow, "The Anti-Confucian Movement in Early Republican China," in *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 304-305.

to settle the conflicts. Let us have a report of the result of their deliberations."²⁰ Accordingly, the Emperor was trying to intervene in a scholarly disagreement of his time; he hoped that this intervention would encourage scholar-officials to establish an imperial guiding principle for the study of the *Classic of Filial Piety*.

However, the Emperor's intervention did not reconcile the scholarly difference. Rather, it fueled a controversy over the authenticity of these two commentaries. About one month after the decree was issued, the then First Secretary to the Crown Prince, Liu Ziyuan (劉子元), submitted a memorandum to the court. In this memorandum, Liu asked the Emperor to "use the *Kong Commentary* and to abolish the *Zheng Commentary*." Liu came up with twelve reasons to demonstrate that the *Zheng Commentary* was forged by some literati other than the great Confucian scholar of Han Dynasty, Zheng Xuan (鄭玄, 127-200 C.E.). After questioning the authenticity of the *Zheng Commentary*, Liu then condemned its literary quality and philosophical depth. He concluded, "The *Zeng Commentary* does not deserve to be handed down to the posterity." 22

A few days later, the Head of the Imperial University, Sima Zhen (司馬貞), presented a counter-argument to the court. Similarly, Sima claimed that the *Kong Commentary* was a forged book falsely attributed to the descendent Confucius, Kong Anguo (孔安國, ca. 2nd century B.C.E.).

²⁰ Wang Pu [王溥], *The Institutional History of Tang Dynasty* [唐會要] (Taipei: The World Book Co. Ltd, 1963), 1405. Quotations about this court controversy are based on William Hung's translation. See Willaim Hung, "A Bibliographical Controversy at the T'ang Court AD 719," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20, no. 1/2 (1957).

²¹ Wang Pu [王溥], The Institutional History of Tang Dynasty [唐會要], 1408.

²² Ibid., 1407.

Moreover, he argued that even if Zeng Xuan did not author the *Zheng Commentary*, this book truthfully followed the Confucian tradition. The request for its abolition was, therefore, not appropriate. By contrast, he criticized the *Kong Commentary* as not only superficial but also contrary to the teachings of Confucius. Nevertheless, the tone of Sima's advice was one of compromise. He recommended, "We hope a request may be made that...both the Zeng and the Kong commentaries on the Classic be permitted to remain in use as before." 23

Whether Xuanzong also received other memorandums is not known to us. Nevertheless, the record suggests that he must have been frustrated with the debates. On May 28, 719 C.E., he declared, "The court keeps the books of both schools in order to promote the study of Confucianism. Hence, this kind of mutual attack is already contrary to our ultimate goal. Now, I order, 'Let...the *Zeng Commentary* remains in use as before. As for...the *Kong Commentary*, since few have used [it], let encourage the study of [it]...so that [its] transmission might not terminate."²⁴

In fact, Xuanzong did not submit to the scholarly disagreement. His frustration with the scholar-officials only encouraged him to solve the problem by himself. On July 19, 722 C.E., the Emperor completed the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* (from now on referred to as "*Imperial Commentary*") and had it circulated in the empire. ²⁵ On June 5, 743 C.E., he updated his *Imperial Commentary* and made this new version, again, available to the general

²³ Ibid., 1409.

²⁴ Ibid., 1409-1410.

²⁵ Ibid., 658.

public. 26 Finally, in September, 745, he had the revised version of the *Imperial Commentary*, along with the text of the Classic of Filial Piety, engraved on a stele. The stele was then set up in the capital of Tang Dynasty, Changan (長安), and is still extant today.²⁷ As a result of Xuanzong's personal crusade, "his imperial commentary superseded the Kong and Zeng commentaries as the standard text."28

Confucian political obligation as being interpreted by Xuanzong is a theory of paternalistic gratitude. Specifically, the parent-ruler analogy was articulated in the Classic of Filial Piety and preserved in Xuanzong's *Imperial Commentary*. For instance, the author of *Classic of Filial Piety* stated,

The proper way between father and son is a natural propensity that by extension becomes the appropriate relationship between ruler and ministers. There is no bond more important than the father and mother giving life to their progeny, and there is no generosity more profound than the care and concern the progeny receives from their ruler and parents.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., 658.

²⁷ Wang Chang [王昶], The Collection of Stone Inscriptions [金石萃編] (Taipei: Guo Feng Publishing House, 1964), 1517-1522.

²⁸ Henry Rosemont Jr. and Roger T. Ames, "Introduction," in *The Chinese Classic of Family* Reverence (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 20.

²⁹ Zengzi [曾子](disputed), The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence, trans. Henry Rosemont Jr. and Roger T. Ames (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 110. The original text is as

The *Imperial Commentary* elaborates this passage only in one place. To the first sentence of the above quotation, Xuanzong added the following explanation:

The proper way between father and son is a natural propensity. When respect in this relation is further increased, it is also the appropriateness between ruler and ministers.³⁰

As we have seen in Chapter 2, behind this parent-state analogy is the idea of the gratitude-based political obligations. The same analogy appeared again in chapter 13 of the *Classic of Filial Piety*. It read,

The *Book of Songs* says, 'The *Kai* (愷) and *Ti* (悌) lord—he is the father and mother of the people.' If he were not someone of consummate excellence, how could he be the person to bring such remarkable accord to the people?³¹

follows:「父子之道,天性也,君臣之義也。父母生之,續莫大焉。君親臨之,厚莫重焉。」

³⁰ Xuanzong [玄宗], "Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety [御注孝經]," in *The Origin and Development of the Studies on the Classic of Feilial Piety [孝經學源流]*, ed. Chen Tie-Fan [陳鐵凡] (Taipei: The National Institute for Compilation and Translation Press, 1986), 329-330. The original text is as follows: 「父子之道天性之常,加以尊嚴,又有君臣之義。」 ³¹ Zengzi [曾子](disputed), *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence*, 113. The original text is as follows: 「《詩》云: 『愷悌君子,民之父母。』非至德,其孰能順民如此其大者乎!」

Concerning this passage in the Classic of Filial Piety, Xuanzong explained,

While *Kai* (愷) means "congeniality," *Ti* (悌) refers to "kindness." This chapter from the *Book of Songs* indicates that when a ruler influences and even transforms the people through his kindness and congeniality, he becomes the father and mother of all creatures under heaven.³²

It is worth noting that despite the preservation of Confucian parent-state analogy, the *Classic of Filial Piety* did not clearly articulate how commoners shall respond to their ruler's benevolence. It maintained that a ruler is the supreme political authority who should "educate and transform the common people." It also asserts that a filial minister was one who does not "simply obey the commands" and, moreover, "if confronted by reprehensible behavior on his ruler's part, a minister has no choice but to remonstrate with his ruler."

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³² Xuanzong [玄宗], "Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety," 345. The original text is as follows: 「愷, 樂也。悌, 易也。義取: 君以樂易之道化人, 則為天下蒼生之父母也。」

³³ Zengzi [曾子](disputed), *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence*. 106. The original text is as follows: 「愛、敬盡於事親,而德教加於百姓,刑于四海,蓋天子之孝也」

³⁴ Ibid., 114. The original text is as follows: 曾子曰: 「若夫慈愛、恭敬、安親、揚名,則聞命矣。敢問子從父之令,可謂孝乎?」子曰: 「是何言與! 是何言與! 昔者天子有爭臣七人,雖無道,不失其天下; 諸侯有爭臣五人,雖無道,不失其國; 大夫有爭臣三人,雖無道,不失其家; 士有爭友,則身不離於令名;父有爭子,則身不陷

However, in the *Classic of Filial Piety*, commoners seemed to be politically irrelevant. He was not expected to remonstrate with his ruler. His filial duty was simply "to make the most of the seasonal cycle and discriminate among the earth's resources to best advantage, and to be circumspect in their conduct and frugal in what they use [so that] they can take proper care of their parents."³⁵ No idea about commoners' political obedience was mentioned.

It was in the *Imperial Commentary* that commoners' obligations to the state were specified. Xuanzong charged ordinary people with a political duty. In addition to those tasks that were already put forward in the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the Emperor added that the people should also discharge their tax obligations before taking care of their parents.³⁶ It was a politician's sensitivity with which the scholar wrote the *Classic of Filial Piety* did not share. An empire cannot function without taxation.

In sum, in the *Imperial Commentary* Xuanzong asserted that, on the one hand, a ruler should love, educate, and transform the people as parents would do to their children. On the other,

於不義。故當不義,則子不可以不爭於父,臣不可以不爭於君。故當不義則爭之。從 父之令.又焉得為孝乎!|

³⁵ Ibid., 108. The original text is as follows: 「用天之道 , 分地之利 , 謹身節用 , 以養父母 , 此庶人之孝也 。」

³⁶ Xuanzong [玄宗], "Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety [御注孝經]," 313. The original text is as follows: 「春生、夏長、秋斂、冬藏。舉事順時,此用天道也。分別五土,視其高下,各盡所宜,此分地利也。身恭謹,則遠恥辱。用節省,則免飢寒。公賦既充,則私養不闕。庶人為孝,唯此而已。」

the people should focus on agricultural production, contribute taxes to the state, and to be ruled. Xuanzong's employment of the parent-state analogy indicates that his understanding of political obligation was consistent with the argument of paternalistic gratitude in Classical Confucianism. Ultimately, the conventional wisdom that Confucian political obligation was transformed into a doctrine of absolute obedience is not supported in the *Imperial Commentary*.

3. The Imperial Grand Pronouncements

Our second case for the study of Imperial Confucian political obligation is the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* (御制大誥). This text was written by the Taizu (太祖, i.e., founding emperor) of Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (朱元璋, r. 1368-1398 C.E.). Issued over a four-year span (1385-1388 C.E.), this book has four volumes and a total of 236 items. Except the fourth volume, which was directed at the military personnel, the first three volumes were issued for public consumption.

The Emperor imposed several measures to assure that the first three volumes of the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* were distributed throughout the empire. When the first volume was issued, he ordered every household to have a copy.³⁷ Also, he decreed that a criminal was entitled to a one-degree-reduction in punishment if his household owned a copy of the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements*; otherwise, his punishment would increase one degree.³⁸ In each of the

³⁷ Zhu Yuanzhang [朱元璋], "The Grand Pronouncement [大誥]," in *The Collected Works of the Ming Dynasty*, ed. Bocheng Qian, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai Classic Publishing House, 1992), 621.

³⁸ Ibid., 621.

following two volumes, the Emperor handed out the sentence of permanent exile for households that dared not to obtain and study the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements*.³⁹

Moreover, in 1391 C.E., Taizu required it to be studied in the schools and tested in the civil examination.⁴⁰ In that same year, he issued an edict to establish schools in every sub-county district, *li* (里), to teach children the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements*.⁴¹ According to this edict, a recitation contest would also be held in the future. Participants would receive prizes based on how much text they could recite from memory. In 1397 C.E., around 193,400 teachers and students visited the Capital of the Ming Dynasty for the contest. After the event, they were all given money and sent home.⁴²

It is also worth noting that, to facilitate public understanding, the Emperor also wrote the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* in a colloquial style. Due to the problem of illiteracy, Taizu further ordered village elders to proclaim and explain its contents to the community.⁴³ All in all, the promulgation of the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* exemplified the Ming founder's

³⁹ Ibid., 676 and 728.

⁴⁰ Dong Lun [董倫], ed., *The Veritable Records of Taizu [太祖實錄]* (Taipei: Institue of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1962), 3141 and 3158.

⁴¹ Ibid., 3159. By design, each li (里) consists of 110 neighboring households. See Charles O. Hucker, *The Traditional Chinese State in Ming Times* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1961), 25-27.

⁴² Dong, The Veritable Records of Taizu [太祖實錄], 3652.

⁴³ Zhu Yuanzhang [朱元璋], *The Selected Works of August Ming [皇明制書]*, ed. Lu Zhang (Taipei: Chengwen Publishing House, 1968), 1418.

"imperial populism that fostered a direct connection between the ruler and the mass of common people."44

The Imperial Grand Pronouncements offer scholars considerable information about Taizu's statecraft. Focusing on the Emperor's active intervention in the local affairs, Anita M. Andrew considers it a vivid example of Taizu's distrust of officialdom and a reflection of his strategy "to achieve the ideal social order in a manner that appealed directly to the masses." 45 To explain Taizu's harsh punishments, Yang Yifan (楊一凡) argues that the Imperial Grand Pronouncements is a historical record that documents the Emperor's practice of "the use of physical penalties to assist moral inculcations (明刑函教)." Accordingly, the harsh punishments served not only to rectify the immoral behaviors of wrongdoers but also to force others to abide by moral norms.⁴⁶

Conversely, John W. Dardess interprets the harsh punishments as a testament to the Emperor's growing disillusionment with the possibility of moral exhortation. The widespread criminality offered a hard lesson to Taizu; namely, "if it was vain to expect the huge masses of villainous men to heed his teachings and warnings, it was all the more necessary to extirpate them

Approach to Transformation and Control in the 'Great Warning,'" Ming Studies, no. 1 (1985). 59.

⁴⁴ Edward L. Farmer, Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 105.

⁴⁵ Anita M. Andrew, "The Local Community in Early Ming Social Legislation: Ming Taizu's

⁴⁶ Yang Yifan [楊一凡], A Study on the Grand Pronouncements of the Ming Dynasty [明大語研

完] (Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1988), chapter 6.

altogether to salvage the few good people who were left."⁴⁷ To the Emperor, says Dardess, "punishment changed from a rehabilitative device to a simple instrument of destruction."⁴⁸

Most importantly, the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* constitute another set of data which is relevant to the present study, i.e., the Imperial Confucian political obligation. For instance, Farmer calls our attention to a passage that represents Taizu's views of the relationship between the ruler and subjects. Here is the entire passage, i.e., one part of Volume 1, Chapter 31 (1.31), in the *Imperial Grand Pronouncement*,

If they wish sincerely to repay [the kindness of] the Soil and Grain (社稷), the ruler's people, as soon as the ruler has a command, must hasten to the task, rendering service and taxes without failing the responsibility. With this sort of sincerity, enjoying the benefits of the Earth and the securing of Heaven's mandate, the favor is repaid. Everyone says, "The ruler nourishes the people." However, how does he nourish them? The ruler's clothing and food are all supplied by the people. If clothing and food are all supplied by the people, then how does he nourish the people? The ruler's nourishing of the people is through the five teachings and five punishments. If you did away with the five teachings and the five punishments, the people could never have lived. Thus, the five teachings nourish the people's peace. These are: between parents and child there must be affection, between ruler and minister rightness, between husband and wife differentiation, between

⁴⁷ John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 250.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 250.

senior and junior precedence, between friends trust. When the five teachings are established, how can there fail to be peace.⁴⁹

Farmer offers two different interpretations of this passage. In one place, he says that it indicates "a formulation of a sort of *social contract* that tied the ruler and people together by mutual obligation." ⁵⁰ In another article, according to him, the very same passage suggests "Zhu Yuanzhang wanted the people to *appreciate* what he was doing for them and to reciprocate his rule by obeying the norms." ⁵¹ "Social contract" and "appreciativeness" imply two different theories of political obligation. Whereas the social contract denotes the political obligation of consent, appreciativeness indicates the political obligation of gratitude.

⁴⁹ Zhu Yuanzhang [朱元璋], "The Relationship of the Ruler and His Subjects: From One of Taizu's Grand Pronouncements," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, ed. William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, trans. Edward L. Farmer, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 784. The original text is as follows: 「若欲展誠以報社稷,為君之民,君一有令,其趨事赴功,一應差稅,無不應當。若此之誠,食地之利,立命之恩,斯報矣。咸云:君養民,果將何以育之?君之服食,皆民所供,衣食既系民供,果何養民哉?人君之養民,五教五刑焉。去五教五刑而民生者,未知有也。所以五教育民之安,曰:父子有親,君臣有義,夫婦有別,長幼有序,朋友有信。五教既興,無有不安者也。」 See Zhu Yuanzhang [朱元璋], "The Grand Pronouncement [大誥]," 599-600.

⁵⁰ Farmer, Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation, 56. Italics mine.

⁵¹ Edward L. Farmer, "Social Regulations of the First Ming Emperor: Orthodoxy as a Function of Authority," in *Orthodoxy in Late Imperial China*, ed. Kwang-Ching Liu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 122. Italics mine.

Does the passage 1.31, as Farmer interprets, suggest these two theories of political obligation simultaneously? First, this passage does point to a social contract. No information from 1:31 tells us that Taizu's subjects had ever consented (expressively or tacitly) to the Emperor's "five teachings" and voluntarily accepted their responsibility for "service and taxes." Farmer overreaches when he argues that the passage offers a social contract theory of sorts.

Nevertheless, though not mentioned by Farmer, the Emperor did entertain the idea of the social contract elsewhere in the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements*. In 2.2, for example, after condemning the problem of vagrancy, Taizu proclaimed, "Once again, *I reach the following agreement with you...* Except for those who are conscripted for public service, every household must register its male members and their jobs. Vagrant is not allowed." In 2.46, the Emperor once again pointed out, "As the sovereign, *I reach an agreement with the people...* Some of you fail to fulfill the promise and consequently incur penalties. How stupid you are!" 53

Considering the autocratic nature of Chinese Empires, the notion of a voluntary agreement between a ruler and his subjects is at most a rhetorical device. However, if we assume that an orator is good at adopting the rhetoric that contains a shared idea of a given society, Taizu's political rhetoric might result from his understanding of that shared idea. Therefore, the following question arises: Did any tradition in Imperial China imply the idea of a social contract?

⁵² Zhu Yuanzhang [朱元璋], "The Grand Pronouncement [大誥]," 623. Italics mine. The original text is as follows: 「於是復誥, 再與吾民約。...除充官用外, 務要驗丁報業, 毋得一夫不務生理。是農是工, 各守本業, 毋許閑惰。」

⁵³ Ibid., 650. Italics mine. The original text is as follows: 「朕, 君也。與民約, 民失信不從教, 而置身於禍, 愚哉。」

There were two possible sources. First, the Emperor might have acquired the idea of the social contract from the theory and practice of the "community compact (鄭約)". A community compact was a voluntary village association organized by Confucian literati for the purpose of moral encouragement and mutual assistance. The earliest known community compact is the Community Compact of the Lu family (from now on referred to as "Lu Compact"). The *Lu Compact* was formed roughly around 1076 C.E. in a village near today's Xian (西安), China.⁵⁴ After Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200 C.E.), arguably the most important Confucian scholar-officials in late Imperial China promoted this local practice, the idea of community compact gained intellectual prominence. According to history records, one of Taizu's favorite ministers, Xie Jin (解縉), did recommend the Ming Founder to propagate the *Lu Compact* to have the subjects organize themselves and practice proper Confucian rites.⁵⁵

I suggest that another possible source of the Taizu's social-contract language was his personal experience. As a previous commoner rising from a humble background, he would have been acquainted with ordinary Chinese's cooperative schemes that emerged from community necessities. He might, for example, witness the voluntary worship associations, the village regulations regarding the public water systems, or the rules of guild organizations. Most importantly, he would also be familiar with the fact that many of these grassroots activities were

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⁵⁴ Lu Dajun [呂大鈞], "The Community Compact [鄉約]," in *The Literary Remains of the Lu Family of Lantian* [藍田呂氏遺著集校] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1993), 563-567.

⁵⁵ Zhang Tingyu [張廷玉], ed., *The Ming History [明史]* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974), 4117.

based upon participants' mutual agreements.⁵⁶ Knowledge about these voluntary practices might encourage the Emperor, for the sake of persuasiveness, to use the idea of mutual consent between commoners and him in his *Imperial Grand Pronouncement*.

We may not know the actual source of Taizu's discourse regarding the idea of social contract. Nevertheless, since the agreement-reaching process between the ruler and subjects was absent from Taizu's statecraft, his language of social contract language should be seen as a rhetorical strategy. The *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* perhaps contained a seed of the social

⁵⁶ For a discussion of voluntary worship associations, see, for example, Joseph P. McDermott, *The* Making of a New Rural Order in South China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chapter 1. In Imperial China, a villagers' agreement concerning the public well management was usually inscribed on stone steles as a record. A well-preserved example from the Ming Dynasty is the "Note on the New Public Well in the Dongguan Village (東官莊創開新井記)," in The Selected Steles in Shanxi Province, Ming-Qing China [明清山西碑刻資料選讀], ed. Zhang Zhengming [張正明],vol. 1 (Taiyuan: Shanxi Classic Publishing House, 2007), 176. In addition, the earliest known voluntary guild rule is the "Guild Compact of Zhong Ban Gong Shi (中舨共侍約)." It is a wooden tablet inscribed roughly around 157 B.C.E. The tablet was buried in a Han Dynasty grave found in 1974. See Dang Xiaohong [黨曉虹], "When Did Village Rules First Appear: An Analytical Framework about Rural Governance [鄉規民約何時出現: 一個關於村莊治理的分析 框架]," Journal of Nanjing University of Technology [南京工業大學學報] 11, no. 1 (2012). Readers may also consult Kwang-Ching Liu's work for information related to the voluntary merchant guilds in late Imperial China. Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds: An Historical Inquiry," The Pacific Historical Review 57, no. 1 (1988).

contract. Nevertheless, it was a dormant seed suppressed by the Emperor's autocracy. Contrary to Farmers' suggestion, the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* is not a book propounding a consent theory of political obligation.

As mentioned above, Farmer also suggests that the 1.31 of the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* indicates that "Zhu Yuanzhang wanted the people to *appreciate* what he was doing for them and to reciprocate his rule by obeying the norms." This interpretation is well supported by the *Imperial Grand Pronouncement*. As we will see, the political obligation in the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* is an argument of paternalistic gratitude.

To begin with, the Ming founder did want his subjects to *appreciate* what he was doing for them. For example, the 1.31 was entitled, "Ungrateful Commoners (民不知報)." Also, the opening sentence reads, "There are ungrateful commoners. While they enjoy the happiness, they absolutely do not appreciate where the happiness comes from." After setting up the topic of passage 1.31, Taizu then told his subjects the rewards of gratefulness and the consequences of ungrateful disobedience. These elements thus support Farmer's interpretation that the Emperor wanted his subjects to appreciate his ruling by obeying the laws. Similar gratitude arguments also

⁵⁷ Farmer, "Social Regulations of the First Ming Emperor: Orthodoxy as a Function of Authority," 122. Italics mine.

⁵⁸ Zhu Yuanzhang [朱元璋], "The Grand Pronouncement [大誥],"599.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 599. The original text is as follows: 「民有不知其報,而恬然享福,絕無感激之心。」

appear elsewhere as the Ming Fonder argues that the people ought to appreciate the peaceful environment in his kingdom and must not breach the etiquette and disobey the laws.⁶⁰

Second, the parent-ruler analogy once again appeared in Taizu's *Imperial Grand Pronouncements*. Indeed, the Ming Founder proclaimed himself as the subjects' "born-again parents (再生父母)." He said,

Your parents can only give birth to you. However, you cannot live without me. This is what the proverb means by 'the born-again parents.'...It is because of me that you do not need to worry about bullies and thieves...Since these are the graces you desire even in dreams, you should, in the whole of your life, not forget my kindness in securing your life and your rebirth.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid., 606-607. The original text is as follows: 「若使知報之道,知感激之理,則於閑中起居飲食,不時舉手加額,乃曰:歲糧供矣,夫差役矣,今得安閑,上奉父母於堂,下撫妻子於室。雖篤廢殘疾,富有家資,除依差稅外,餘廣家資。本身生不能捍本家之患災,其兇頑之徒,孰敢稱名道姓而盜取之。雲何?蓋君禮法之所治也。禮,人倫之正,民間安份守禮者多;法,治奸繩頑。兩者並舉,遍行天下,人民大安。」

⁶¹ Ibid., 702-703. The original text is as follows: 「且人之生,父母但能生其身體而已,其保命在君。雖父母之命,非君亦不能自生,况常人云有再生父母...爾所以不憂淩暴,家財不患人將,所以有所怙恃者,君也。...其全生保命之恩,再生之德,其夢寐於終身,有所不忘。」 The language used here is strikingly similar to a passage in Plato's *Crito*. In this dialog, the personified laws argue, "It is impious to bring violence to bear against your mother or father; it is much more so to use it against your country...We have given you birth, nurtured you, educated

Here, Taizu tried to persuade his subjects that just as children owe an obligation of gratitude to the care of their parents, they also owe a political obligation of gratitude to their benevolent ruler. Moreover, he maintained that the gratitude his subjects owes to him is even higher than their gratefulness for their parents.

In sum, Taizu's *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* contained the basic elements of the argument of paternalistic gratitude as we presented in the previous chapter. First of all, in the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* ordinary people are like children and cannot live without a benevolent ruler. Second, a benevolent ruler is people's born-again parent and responsible for their economic and moral welfare. Third, the people should obey a benevolent ruler out of gratitude as they do to their loving parents.

To be sure, Taizu was one of the most notorious dictators in the history of China. To strengthen his control, he wrote the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements* and required each of his subjects to be familiar with its contents. As tyrannical as he was, the Emperor nevertheless did not expect absolute obedience from the subjects. Like Xuanzhong's *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety*, Taizu's interpretation of the Confucian political obligation was conditional and grounded in the principle of paternalistic gratitude. As we will see shortly, a paternalistic gratitude theory of political obligation also looms large in another case of Imperial Confucian political obligation: the *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict*.

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you; we have given you and all other citizens a share of all the good things we could." Plato, "Crito," 45.

4. The Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict

In 1724 C.E., Qing Emperor Yongzheng (雍正, r. 1722-1735 C.E.) issued the *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict* (聖諭廣訓, hereafter referred to as "*Amplified Instructions*") and ordered it to be promulgated all over the empire. ⁶² In 1729 C.E., Yongzheng issued another decree to streamline its promulgation:

Every village and local area with a dense population shall have a fixed place for delivering lecturing on the community compact...On the first and fifteenth day of each month, the elders, head of the local districts, and literati shall gather in this place and present a public lecture on the Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict. Their lecture shall be detailed and instructive. It must make all the ignorant commoners understand for the sake of moral encouragement.⁶³

According to the title of this book, the *Amplified Instructions* has two fundamental components. The first element is the *Sacred Edict*, which contains sixteen maxims written by Yongzheng's father, the Kangxi Emperor (康熙, r. 1661-1772 C.E.).⁶⁴ The second part is the

⁶⁴ The sixteen maxims are: Esteem most highly filial piety and brotherly submission, in order to give due importance to the social relations (敦孝弟以重人倫); Behave with generosity toward vour kindred, in order to illustrate harmony and benignity (篤宗族以昭雍睦); Cultivate peace and

⁶² Kun Gang [崑岡] et. al., Imperially Commissioned Institutes and Precedents of the Great Qing [欽定大清會典事例] (Taipei: Zhonghua Book Company in Taiwan, 1962), 10333.

⁶³ Ibid., 10348.

Amplified Instructions authored by Yongzheng, in which the Emperor elaborated on the sixteen maxims. Subsequently, the semi-monthly lecture on the Amplified Instructions became "an

concord in your neighborhoods, in order to prevent quarrels and litigations (和鄉黨以息爭訟); Give importance to agriculture and sericulture, in order to ensure a sufficiency of clothing and food (重農桑以足衣食); Show that you prize moderation and economy, in order to prevent the lavish waste of your means (尚節儉以惜財用); Foster colleges and schools, in order to give the training of scholars a proper start (隆學校以端士習); Do away with errant teachings, in order to exalt the correct doctrine (點異端以崇正學); Expound on the laws, in order to warn the ignorant and obstinate (講法律以儆愚頑); Explain ritual decorum and deference, in order to enrich manners and customs (明禮讓以厚風俗); Attend to proper callings, in order to stabilize people's sense of dedication to their work (務本業以定民志); Instruct sons and younger brothers, in order to prevent them from doing what is wrong (訓子弟以禁非為); Put a stop to false accusations, in order to protect the honest and good (息誣告以全善良); Warn against sheltering deserters, in order to avoid being involved in their punishment (誠逆逃以免株連); Promptly remit your taxes, in order to avoid being pressed for payment (完錢糧以省催科); Combine in collective security groups, in order to put an end to theft and robbery (聯保甲以弭盜賊); Eschew enmity and anger, in order to show the importance due to the person and life (解仇忿以重身命). See Kangxi [康熙], "The Sacred Edict," in Sources of Chinese Tradition, ed. William Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, trans. James Legge, vol. 2 (New York, 1999), 71-2. Modification has been made by the editors. For the original translation, see James Legge, "Imperial Confucianism," The China Review 6, no. 3 (1877), 150.

extension of imperial [ideological] control down to the lowest level" until the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1912 C.E.). 65

In a talk at Oxford University in 1877 C.E., James Legge (1815-1897 C.E.) identified the *Amplified Instructions* as *the* book of Imperial Confucianism.⁶⁶ According to him, the *Amplified Instructions* contains ideas "of what China morally, socially, and politically is, or at least of what it is the desire of its rulers that it should be."⁶⁷

What then is the Imperial Confucian political obligation in the *Amplified Instructions*? Does it continue the argument of paternalistic gratitude in the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Grand Pronouncements*? Alternatively, had the last empire in China, the Qing Dynasty, finally transformed Imperial Confucian political obligation into a conception of absolute obedience?

Major contemporary studies on the *Amplified Instructions* do not answer these questions well. Although some scholars have sensed that the *Amplified Instructions* contain important information about Imperial Confucian political obligation, they fall short of presenting a theory of obligation in this book. For example, Victor H. Mair is right to point out that the purpose of the

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⁶⁵ Kung-chuan Hsiao, "Rural Control in Nineteenth Century China," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1953), 178.

⁶⁶ James Legge is a renowned missionary to China. He is also one of the most important first-generation English sinologists,

⁶⁷ Legge, "Imperial Confucianism," 151.

Amplified Instructions is to educate the people to "be good and dutiful subjects." De Bary is also correct by arguing that in the semi-monthly lecture on this book "so pervasive is the assumption that what matters is only how well one's subjects may understand and obey the imperial dictate." Nevertheless, they do not further elaborate the theory of political obligation in the Amplified Instructions, i.e., the Emperor's answer to the question of why people should obey the state.

Moreover, some scholars have adopted the popular notion of absolute obedience in the study of *Amplified Instructions*. The problem is that few of them provide textual evidence. For example, Chang Chun-Li explains that "the whole tenor of the Sixteen Maxims [and the *Amplified Instructions*] stress obedience and submissiveness." Hsiao Kung-Chuan also argues that the purpose of the lectures on the *Amplified Instructions* was "to keep the various segments of the population generally submissive to the existing order." Surprisingly, they do not provide content analysis to support this claim.

⁶⁸ Victor H. Mair, "Language and Ideology in the Written Popularizations of the Sacred Edict," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Davide Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 356.

⁶⁹ William Theodore de Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 68.

⁷⁰ Chung-Li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society* (Seatle: University of Washington Press, 1955), 199.

⁷¹ Kung-chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seatle: University of Washington Press, 1960), 255.

It is simply wrong to argue that the *Amplified Instructions* promulgated the idea of absolute obedience. To my knowledge, the only scholar who presents an analysis of the political obligation of the *Amplified Instructions* is James Legge. As he clearly pointed out one and half centuries ago, the Imperial Confucian political obligation in the *Amplified Instructions* is a theory of gratitude. "The government thus multiplying its favours," writes Legge, "[and] the people should respond to it with a large and prompt gratitude."

Legge's observation is from Yongzheng Emperor's amplification on the fourteenth maxim: "promptly remit your taxes, in order to avoid being pressed for payment (完錢糧以省催料)." Indeed, even without knowledge about Legge's analysis, the message of paternalistic gratitude in this amplification is too obvious to be ignored by any serious reader. To persuade the commoners to pay taxes, the Emperor argued,

Try to think that the daily and nightly vexations and labours of the palace are all in the service of the people. When there is an inundation, dykes must be raised to keep it off. When the demon of drought appears, prayer must be offered for rain; when there are locusts, they must be destroyed. If fortunately the calamity be averted, you all enjoy the profits. When unfortunately it comes, your taxes are dispensed with, and alms liberally dealt out to you. If it be thus, and the people still can suffer themselves to evade the payment of the taxes, and hinder the supply of the wants of government; ask yourselves how it is possible for you to be easy? This may be compared to the conduct of an undutiful son: while with his parents he receives his share of the property, and ought afterwards to nourish them, and thus discharge his duty; the parents also manifest the utmost affection,

⁷² James Legge, "Imperial Confucianism (Lecture IV)," *The China Review* 6, no. 6 (1878), 367.

diligence, and anxiety, and leave none of their strength unexerted; yet the son appropriates their money to his own private use; diminishes their savoury food; and feeds them with reluctant and obstinate looks. Can such a person be called the child of a human being?⁷³

Clearly, consistent with the *Imperial Commentary on Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Imperial Grand Pronouncements*, the Confucian idea of the benevolent governance and the parent-state analogy, once again, emerged in the *Amplified Instructions*. Accordingly, all of these three texts of *Imperial Confucianism* compared emperors to the father and mother of the people. They also tried to persuade the latter that just as children owe an obligation of gratitude to the care of their parents, they would also owe a debt of gratitude to the benevolent ruler. The shared the hallmark of the political obligation of paternalistic gratitude.

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⁷³ Yongzheng [雍正], The Sacred Edict: Containing Sixteen Maxims of the Emperor Kang-He, Amplified by His Son, the Emperor Yoong-Ching; Together with a Paraphrase on the Whole by a Mandarin, trans. Rev. William Milne (London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 257-8. The original text is as follows: 「試思廟堂之上,所日夜憂勞者在於民事。水溢則為堤防,旱魃則為虔禱,蝗蝻則為撲滅,幸不成災則爾享共利,不幸成災則又為之蠲租,為之賑濟。如此而為民者,尚忍逋賦以誤國需,問之於心,亦何以自安?譬人子於父母,分產授業以後必服勞奉養,庶盡厥職,乃父母恩勤,顧復不遺余力。而為子者自私其財,缺甘旨而違色養,尚得謂之人子乎?」See Kun Gang [崑周] et. al., Imperially Commissioned Institutes and Precedents of the Great Qing [欽定大清會典事例], 10345-10346.

The appearance of the Chinese character 恩 (en) in the *Amplified Instructions* is another evidence of Emperor Yongzheng's endorsement of the paternalistic gratitude. 恩 (en) is usually translated as kindness. In the Chinese linguistic and social contexts, when one receives others' 恩 (en), gratitude is presupposed as the appropriate response. Yongzheng used 恩 (en) to label the court's care and kindness towards the people. For example, in describing his legal measures the Emperor argued,

The present government has formed its code of laws in the most perspicuous manner in order to warn and induce the military and the people to comply with the laws. This kindness [思] is truly great...Since I received the government, I have practiced the virtue to chrish the lives of commoners; shown them the kindness [思] of compassion and favor; and have often conferred pardons and minutely examined the decrees of the criminal tribunal, in hope that an universal renovation might prevent the necessity of recourse to punishment.."75

⁷⁴ For example, the Chinese idioms 恩將仇報 (en jiang chou bao, i.e., requite kindness [恩] with enmity) and 忘恩負義 (wang en fu yi, i.e., forget kindness [恩] and violate appropriateness) are used to criticize one's ungrateful behaviors. The phrase 知恩圖報 (zhi en tu bao, i.e., acknowledge other's kindness [恩] while plan to requite), on the contrary, denotes one's gratefulness.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 157. The original text is as follows: 「方今國家酌定律例, 委曲詳明, 昭示兵民俾各 凜成憲, 遠於罪戾, 恩甚厚也。...朕臨御以來, 體好生之德, 施欽恤之恩, 屢頒赦款, 詳

Similarly, to prevent the subjects from sheltering deserters, Yongzheng elaborated, "the Emperor annually issues kind [恩] decrees, conferring imperial pardon on all who had formerly been involved by deserters...He has no other views than that of wishing you...to revert to goodness and reform your errors."⁷⁶

Emperor Yongzheng's arguments in the *Amplified Instructions* is "the tone of benign paternalism with which the Emperor bestows his sympathy on the 'benighted' people"⁷⁷ On the one hand, he acknowledged his paternal duty to take care of the people. On the other, he urged the people to demonstrate their gratefulness to him as they do their parents. Moreover, to the Emperor, the appropriate demonstration of gratefulness was, of course, obeying his ruling. In short, the evidence strongly suggests that Imperial Confucian political obligation was not transformed into a doctrine of absolute obedience in the *Amplified Instruction*. The theory of political obligation in this book is an argument of paternalistic gratitude.

審爰書, 庶幾大化翔洽, 刑期無刑。」See Kun Gang [崑岡] et. al., Imperially Commissioned Institutes and Precedents of the Great Qing [欽定大清會典事例], 10340.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 245. The original text is as follows: 「又屢年恩詔,將逃人事件概行赦免。國家施法外之仁,寬督捕之罰,無非欲爾兵民革薄從忠,遷善改過。」See Kun Gang [崑岡] et. al., *Imperially Commissioned Institutes and Precedents of the Great Qing* [欽定大清會典事例], 10344.

⁷⁷ de Bary, Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective, 69.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I address the question of whether Imperial Confucian political obligation is a doctrine supporting commoners' absolute obedience. By defining Imperial Confucianism as what the emperors said it was to ordinary people, I select and study three critical cases to solve this puzzle. The evidence runs counter to the popular notion that views Imperial Confucianism as calling on subjects' political submissiveness. In the *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety, Imperial Grand Pronouncements* and the *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict*, Imperial Confucian political obligation is consistently conditional and consistently a theory of paternalistic gratitude.

The result poses a challenge to survey researchers who have probed the impact of Confucian political obligation on Chinese people today. Since the second half of the 20th century, the popular notion that Imperial Confucianism calls on subjects' absolute obedience had been baptized with a "scientific" grace by the eminent political scientist and sinologist, Lucian Pye. According to Pye, the Confucian ideas about the ruler-subject relationship "have been retained in Chinese culture not just by the power of written texts but also by living practice of authority and obedience in family situations." The practices are presented in the process of Confucian primary socialization, which helps children internalize the idea of submission to fatherly figures. Politically, the practices further ensure that "automatic reactions of conformity and deference to superiors have generally been well established before the Chinese child leaves home." To Pye, the submission of subjects is politics as usual in the Confucian world.

⁷⁸ Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre*, 139.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 139.

Despite his schematic references to Confucian texts and his lack of rigorous evidence, ⁸⁰ Pye's "scientific" reproduction of the wrong-headed notion of the "Imperial Confucian absolute obedience" has been uncritically inherited and operationalized by many survey researchers as a variable to probe political obligations among ordinary Chinese people. A common survey item in this regard is that "government leaders are like the head of a family. We should all follow their decisions" The first part of this statement is not controversial; it expresses the paternalistic feature of Confucian political obligation and coincides with our findings in the above discussion. However, the second part of the statement is disputable; it implies that Imperial Confucian political obligation is a doctrine of unconditional obedience. That said, because these scholars have found that, over time, the majority of Chinese interviewees agree with this statement, they have thus argued that the idea of unconditional obedience remains a powerful explanation of political obligation in contemporary China. My finding on Imperial Confucian political obligation, i.e., the argument of paternalistic gratitude, has posed a challenge to the commonplace survey position.

In the next two chapters, I will present my interview study on political obligations in a Chinese city, Qufu (曲阜). First, I will investigate if a vast majority of Chinese citizens, as many

⁸⁰ This line of critique can also be seen in Elizabeth J. Perry, "Introduction: Chinese Political Culture Revisited," in *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 2.

⁸¹ See, for example, Hsin-Chi Kuan and Siu-Kai Lau, "Traditional Orientations and Political Participation in Three Chinese Societies," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 31 (2002). Shi, "Cultural Values and Democracy in the People's Republic of China." Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia*.

survey researchers suggest, endorse the idea of their absolute obedience to the state. Second, based on our findings in the chapter 2 and chapter 3, I will explore the empirical relevance of Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude to my interviewees in Qufu.

The exploration of this empirical relevance has a great political implication. As Michael Wallace suggests, the idea of paternalistic gratitude may "have psychological consequences for subordinate groups. The symbolic structure might generate of guilt and anxiety about confronting 'parental' power." To participate equally in politics and to hold the government responsible are the ideal characteristic of a democratic citizen. Therefore, if Confucian paternalism still exerts its considerable influence on Chinese people in term of political obligations, this influence might constitute an obstacle to China's democratic transformation. To what extent are Chinese nationals feeling guilty and anxiety about confronting the state? I will answer this question shortly.

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⁸² Mike Wallace, "Paternalism and Violence," in *Violence and Aggression in the History of Ideas*, ed. Phillip P. Wiener and John Fisher (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 216-7.

Chapter Four: A Methodological Critique of the Survey Research

In Chapters 2 and 3, I demonstrate that, both in its theory and historical development, Confucian political obligation is consistently an argument of paternalistic gratitude. To Confucians, first of all, ordinary people are like children and not qualified to govern themselves. Second, the ruler is compared to commoners' parents and responsible for the latter's welfare. Third, Confucians argue that people should obey a benevolent ruler out of gratitude as they do to their loving parents. Fourth, Confucians believe that although ordinary people are ignorant, they nevertheless can judge the impact of political decisions on their personal economic welfare. Should the ruler deprive the satisfaction of their basic needs, the people would be morally right to disobey the state. In short, the previous two chapters demonstrate that Confucianism does not require subjects' absolute obedience. Confucian political obligation is conditional and contingent upon the idea of paternalistic gratitude both in classical and Imperial Confucianism.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I challenge the last fortress of the conventional wisdom about the Confucian absolute obedience; namely, a fortress held by some survey researchers. These survey researchers have equated Confucianism with absolute obedience and operationalized it as *the* variable to probe the empirical relevance of "Confucian political obligation" to Chinese people today. Surprisingly, results from various surveys constantly show that a vast majority of Chinese respondents endorse the political idea of absolute obedience.

In what follows, I present a methodological critique of this survey finding and demonstrate the necessity to conduct an alternative empirical study to reassess political obligations in China. In Section 1, I introduce the survey literature on Confucian Political Obligation. In Section 2, I offer a methodological critique of the survey research on "Confucian political obligation". Section

3 presents the research design of my in-depth interview study. This chapter is then concluded in Section 4.

1. Survey Research on "Confucian Political Obligation"

Today, many political scientists rely on a particular survey question to probe Confucian political obligation in China. The question asks respondents whether "government leaders are like the head of a big family; we should all follow their decisions (from now on referred to as 'head-of-family' question) [政府領導人是這個大家庭的家長,他們關於國家事務的決定,人民都應該服從]." The assumption underlying this question design, as Hsin-Chi Kuan and Siu-Kai Lau summarize, is that "Confucian tradition…tends to nurture paternalistic, authoritarian government, because of its emphasis on the centrality of hierarchy and an imperative of conformity." ¹

Accordingly, survey researchers have consistently found a high percentage of endorsement to the head-of-family question. For example, 73.3% of respondents agree with this question in a 1993-1994 survey, 52.8% in 2002 and 68.7% in another nationwide survey of 2008.² Table 4.1 presents the time series data of respondents' answers to the head-of-family question.

¹ Kuan and Lau, "Traditional Orientations and Political Participation in Three Chinese Societies," 299.

² Based on the 1993-1994 and 2002 survey results from the head-of-family question, Zhengxu Wang optimistically argues that the drop in the level of agreement indicates the declining of authoritarian orientation and growing of pro-democratic orientation among Chinese people, particularly among the post-reform generation. Wang thus predicts, "we can expect newer generations will be more pro-democratic than the older ones…By 2020 or so, the majority of

Table 4.1: Survey Results from Head-of-Family Question

	Agree			Disagree			Don't Know		
	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural
1993-4*	73.3%	-	-	18.2%	-	-	8.5%	-	-
2002**	52.8%	46.7%	60%	35.6%	44.7%	24.4%	11.6%	8.6%	15.2%
2008**	68.7%	66.9%	69%	13.8%	14.7%	13.4%	17.5%	18.4%	17%

^{*} Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Values and Democracy in the People's Republic of China," The China Quarterly 162 (2000).

Based on the 1993-1994 data, Tianjian Shih thus reports that contemporary Chinese, like their imperial counterparts, still perceive their relationship to the state as hierarchical, instead of reciprocal.³ The high percentage of agreement in the 2008 survey also makes another survey researcher claim that the majority of Chinese people today still endorse the "Confucian" principle of governance "which emphasizes the *unconditional subordination* of ordinary people to their political leaders."⁴

Chinese...will be much more pro-democratic than today." See Zhengxu Wang, "Public Support for Democracy in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 53 (2007), 577-8. However, the re-rise of the acceptance level to the head-of-family question in 2008 poses question to this prediction. It is worth noting that I haven't seen any survey researcher who ever explains the interesting fluctuation in the time-series data.

^{**} Asian Barometer China Survey, available at http://www.jdsurvey.net/eab/Analize.jsp

³ Shi, "Cultural Values and Democracy in the People's Republic of China."

⁴ Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East* Asia, 125. Italics mine.

2. A Methodological Critique of the Survey Research on "Confucian Political Obligation"

However, we must be cautious about the survey finding from the head-of-family question. Indeed, severe methodological problems exist in the survey question that "top government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all their decisions." The first problem is the close-ended format of this question. By design, respondents are required to choose the options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," and the researchers presume the explanation for interviewees' answers. Specifically, respondents' agreement with the head-of-family question can only *mean* the belief in absolute obedience.

The close-ended setting may be beneficial for statistical analysis, but it is detrimental to our understanding of the meanings of respondents' answers. For example, a respondent may agree with the statement that "government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions." However, if he were allowed to elaborate his answer, he would further describe the ideal type of the government leader. Based on this standard, he would also express his unwillingness to obey a leader who behaves in a non-ideal way. Put simply, while his "agree" means conditional obedience to himself, it means absolute obedience to the survey researchers. The uncertainty over meanings resulting from the close-ended question format may skew our understanding about political obligations in China.

Second, the head-of-family item is also a problematic double-barreled question. A double-barreled question asks two constructs in a single survey item. For example, the above head-of-family item actually contains two questions. The first question is that "government leaders are like the head of a family." The second question is that "we should all follow their decisions." Problems arise when a survey participant agrees that the government leaders are like the head of a family, but nevertheless disagrees that he should follow all of their decisions. It also may be the case that

a respondent feels that she should obey decisions of the government leaders without agreeing with the paternalist construct. Analytic problems arise if the survey researchers do not know which construct leads to respondents' responses to the head-of-family question. "As a general rule," warns Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., "having respondents deal with two dimensions at a time is a mistake." 5

Third, the head-of-family question also fails to adhere to another principle of question design. In principle, "the words in questions should be chosen so that all respondents understand their meaning and all respondents have the same sense of what the meaning is." However, one phrase in this question, i.e., "the head of a family," has multiple meanings. In the Chinese questionnaire, "the head of a family" is written as "da jia ting de jia zhang (大家庭的家長)". In this phrase, da jia ting (大家庭) is literally "a big family". De (的) is equivalent to "of". Jia zhang (家長) means "the head of a family". Most Chinese respondents may acknowledge the word da jia ting (大家庭; literally, a big family) as a state-family metaphor. However, they may have different interpretations of the word jia zhang (家長; head of a family). Indeed, jia zhang can denote either "parents," or "guardian," or "patriarch."

⁵ Floyd J. Fowler, *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1995), 52.

⁶ Ibid, 85.

⁷ Patriarchy is translated to Mandarin as *jia zhang zhi* (家長制). The Chinese word 制 (zhi) means system or institution. For the multiple meanings of the Chinese phrase *jia zhang* (家長, i.e., head of family) see, for example, Shizhen Dan, *A Modern Chinese-English Dictionrary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 419. Division of Dictionary Compilation In the Institute of Linguistics of

Therefore, when a respondent nods his agreement with the head-of-family survey question, there are several interpretive possibilities. The participant may believe that the government leaders are "patriarchs" and he must obey their decisions. If he responds in this way, the interviewee probably expresses the belief in absolute obedience. However, the respondent's agreement can have other meanings. For example, he may interpret the term *jia zhang* (家長; head of a family) as parents that connote love and care. He might also feel that the government leaders in reality do treat him kindly so he should *reciprocally* comply with their orders. In this way, the respondent's agreement did not mean absolute obedience. In a nutshell, when the meanings of the term *jia zhang* (家長; head of a family) are different from respondent to respondent, the head-of-family question cannot measure the intended construct across samples. Methodologically, the measurement loses its validity and renders the results difficult to analyze.

The fourth problem of the head-of-family question is political. The head-of-family question is politically sensitive because it is not only administered in an authoritarian China but also asks respondents whether they should follow the decision of the authoritarian government. In an authoritarian regime where political right is fragile and free speech risky, it is perhaps not surprising that a lot of Chinese respondents would agree with this question for the avoidance of political troubles.

Indeed, scholars who do their fieldwork in China have kept reminding us that the establishment of trust between a researcher and participants is a necessary condition to conduct politically sensitive research in China. If the issue of trust is left unattended, researchers run the

the Chinese Academy of Social Science [中國社會科學院語言研究所詞典編輯室], Contemporary Chinese Dictionary [現代漢語辭典] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2012), 622.

risk of gathering a set of inaccurate data.⁸ As Johnny Blair and his colleagues report, "there is considerable evidence that the accuracy of survey reports about sensitive topics is reduced because many respondents knowingly respond incorrectly." Since in nowhere do the survey researchers above acknowledge the sensitive character of the head-of-family question and explain how they address the issue, we must be very cautious about their interpretations. The high percentage of agreement with the head-of-family survey question and the alarming high frequency of "Don't know" responses might be a sign of inaccuracy instead of a verification of respondents' belief in absolute obedience.¹⁰

Last but not least, though the head-of-family question is designed to measure the construct of "Confucian political obligation", its theoretical assumption and wording are not entirely

⁸ See, for example, Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Frank N. Pieke, *The Ordinary and the Extraordinary: An Anthropological Study of Chinese Reform and the 1989 People's Movement in Beijing* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996). Dorothy J. Solinger, "Interviewing Chinese People: From High-Level Officials to the Unemployed," in *Doing Fieldwork in China*, ed. Maria Heimer and Stig Thøgersen (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006). Lily L. Tsai, "Quantitative Research and Issues of Political Sensitivity in Rural China," in *Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*, ed. Allen Carlson et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁹ Johnny Blair et. al., *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2013), 176.

¹⁰ See table 4.1 above.

Confucian. Certainly, the first part of this statement, "government leaders are like the head of a family," is designed to probe the paternalistic character of Confucian political obligation. Nevertheless, it is unclear why designers of this survey question choose the word *jia zhang* (家長; head of a family) instead of the word fu mu (父母; parents or father and mother). On the one hand, the term "father and mother" is less ambiguous than the word "head of family." On the other, "father and mother" is also *the* standard word, as we have seen in previous chapters, used in Confucian discourses to describe the role of government leaders. It is, therefore, adequate to use "father and mother (父母)," instead of "head of a family (家長)." Most importantly, the second part of the statement, "we should all follow their decisions," is completely un-Confucian for it implies that Confucianism is a doctrine of unconditional obedience.

In sum, due to the historical and methodological problems listed above, the survey results based on the head-of-family question are highly questionable. The lack of persuasiveness makes it meaningful to conduct a new empirical study on the issue of why Chinese people believe that they should obey the state.

3. Design for the Interview Study

My empirical study of political obligations in China has two main purposes. First, I would like to observe how my interviewees respond to the idea of absolute obedience. Will a large number of them believe that they should discharge political obligation unconditionally as many survey researchers show us? Second, based on the philosophical and historical study presented in

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¹¹ As discussed above, the Chinese word *jia zhang* (head of family) can denote either "parents," or "guardian," or "patriarch."

the previous chapters, I will also investigate how my informants respond to the concept of paternalistic gratitude in Confucian political obligation. Will they endorse the idea that government should treat citizens as parents to their children? Will they also believe that ordinary people are too politically immature to participate in policy-making processes?

The empirical study has four distinctive characteristics in terms of the question design, interview format, case selection and trust establishment. I discuss each characteristic in turn. First, I opt for the in-depth interview as the method of this study. The goal of this empirical study is to study the conceptions of political obligations among Chinese people today. In other words, I am interested in their moral *reasoning* about why they should obey the state. The brief answers, such as agree and disagree, resulting from a close-ended interview format cannot help us achieve this goal. To capture respondents' moral arguments about political obligations, we have to invite them to answer interview questions in an open-ended manner. This consideration makes the in-depth interview an adequate approach to conducting this empirical study. As an interviewer, my role is to listen carefully to an interviewee's narrative and to probe and follow up his answers to clarify his arguments about political obligations.

Second, I select three core interview questions for this in-depth interview study. I ask my informants whether they agree that:

- (1) "We should all follow the decisions of government leaders (政府領導人關於國家事務的 決定我們都應該服從)"
- (2) "The relationship between the government and the people should be like that between parents and children (政府和人民的關係就應該像是父母和子女的關係一樣),"
- (3) "Policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate (政策的制定是政府官員的事,老百姓不應該過問)."

I derive Question (1) from the head-of-family question above. As already mentioned, the question is not an adequate construct to measure Confucian political obligation since it implies that Confucianism demands absolute obedience from ordinary people. Nevertheless, by asking respondents this question, it allows me to see whether findings from my study agrees with the survey results that a large portion of Chinese people today endorse the idea of absolute political obedience.

Question (2) is first adopted in the 2008 Asian Barometer China Survey. Table 4.2 presents the survey result. Survey researchers design this item to probe the impact of Confucian benevolent governance on Chinese politics today. For instance, Yun-Han Chu argues that the high percentage of agreement on this question among Chinese people partly explains the high level of regime support in contemporary China. Because many Chinese believe that the state should "look after the people, much as parents look after their children," they are willing to support the current government which seems to be able to respond to people's material needs. ¹² In my study, I will further probe whether the endorsement of parent-state analogy reflects people's political obligation of gratitude.

It is worth noting that I derive the above two questions from the questionnaire of Asian Barometer China Survey.¹³ Using similar interview questions, I suggest, would encourage dialog

¹² Yun-han Chu, "Sources of Regime Legitimacy and the Debate over the Chinese Model," *The China Review* 13, no. 1 (2013), 7.

¹³ The ABS contains data from 13 East Asian political systems (Japan, Mongolia, South Koreas, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Indonesia,

among researchers from different disciplines and hence contribute to knowledge accumulation in terms of Confucian political obligation.

Table 4.2: Survey Results from Parent-State Question

	Agree			Disagree			Don't Know		
	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural
2008	78.6%	77.8%	78.9%	9.3%	10.1%	8.9%	12.1%	12.1%	12.2%

Source: Asian Barometer China Survey, available at http://www.jdsurvey.net/eab/Analize.jsp

Moreover, I design question (3) to investigate whether my interviewees accept the Confucian argument that ordinary people are not qualified to political participation. In short, while the core question (1) is used to test the belief in absolute obedience, the core questions (2) and (3) are designed to study the impact of Confucian paternalistic gratitude on potential interviewees.

Thirdly, I select the Chinese city, Qufu (曲阜), as the case for the study. One of the reasons to conduct the interview study in a city is a practical one. China is experiencing a tremendous floating population in recent years. Today about 221 million people work in places other than their registered residence and the dominant population flow is from rural areas to cities. ¹⁴ One

and Malaysia), and 5 South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal). See its website: http://www.asianbaromete r.org/

¹⁴ Wenmeng Feng, "The Silver and White Economy: The Chinese Demographic Challenge," in *Fostering Resilient Economies: Demographic Transition in Local Labour Markets* (Paris: OECD Publishing), 4. (forthcoming)

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phenomenon resulting from this massive migration is what Chinese intellectuals call "Empty Nest Village (空巢村)," in which the healthy and capable become migrant workers in the cities, and the elders and children are left behind in the countryside. Having interviews in Chinese villages might, therefore, incur the problem of over-representation of certain demographic groups among my potential informants.

Briefly, Qufu is a city located in the cradle of Chinese civilization (i.e., the Central Plain, 中原), and it is also the hometown of Confucius. To be sure, the Red Guards marched into Qufu at the end of 1966 and wreaked havoc the Temple and Cemetery of Confucius. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, Qufu has reasserted its cultural importance since the death of Chairman Mao. For example, the Temple of Confucius was restored and reopened to the public in 1982. Since then, it has become an important place of veneration and pilgrimage as it had always been during China's imperial period. ¹⁷

Qufu is also the intellectual center of Confucian studies in contemporary China. For example, in 1984, the Chinese government established the China Confucius Foundation (中國孔

¹⁵ See, for example, Dale Jiajun Wen, "China's Rural Reform: Crisis and Ongoing Debate," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, 2008, 86–96.

¹⁶ A detail history of this tragic event can be found in Wang Liang, "The Confucius Temple Tragedy of the Cultural Revolution," in *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002).

¹⁷ See, for example, Julia K. Murray, "The Sage's New Clothes," in *The Sage Returns: Confucian Revival in Contemporary China*, ed. Kenneth J. Hammond and Jeffrey L. Richey (NY: Albany: Suny Press, 2015), 158–64.

子基金會) in Qufu. In 1994, the government again approved the establishment of Confucius Research Institute in this city. Moreover, in 2014, scholars and members of important Confucian organizations gathered in this city and issued the "Qufu Consensus (曲阜共識)." Accordingly, the cosignatories vowed "to promote Confucian culture not only within the academic world but also to each social strata and every individual."

Further, the Qufu municipal government is also active in educating residents about Confucian ethics. For instance, in 2007, the municipal government launched the campaign of "Study Analects and Read Classics (讀論語, 誦經典)" at primary and secondary schools. The goal of the campaign was to "promote traditional culture and carry on Chinese civilization" among children and teenagers in Qufu. 19 By 2012, the government proposed to establish Qufu as a "City of Morality and Courteousness (彬彬有禮道德城市)." This time the government installed more than 600 education units to help residents in Qufu's urban districts learn benevolence, filial piety, and other Confucian ethics. 20 Since 2014, the Confucian education campaign, under the new name

¹⁸ Cosignatories, "Qufu Consensus: The Mission of Confucian Associations in Our Time [曲阜共識: 儒學社團的時代擔當]," *Confucius Studies [孔子研究]*, no. 6 (2014), 4.

¹⁹ Zhaojun Zhang [張昭軍], "Hang out with Classics: An Observation of the 'Study Confucius and Read Classics' Campaign in Qufu," *Net Time [網絡科技時代]*, no. 23 (2007), 52.

²⁰ Chinchin Ming [閔勤勤] and Liang Zhang [張亮], "Reconstruct the New Moral Plateau in Confucius's Hometown [孔子故里再造道德新高地]," *Report on Current Issues [時事報告]*, no. 11 (2012): 40–43.

of "Confucianism for Ordinary People (百姓儒學)", has been further expanded to Qufu's village districts.²¹

In sum, based on its unique historical legacy and intense Confucian activities, Qufu has offered some of the necessary conditions to cultivate and reinforce Confucian ideas among its residents. These are conditions being difficult to be matched by other cities in China. In this sense, Qufu exemplifies the "most likely case" in the study on the impact of Confucianism on Chinese people today. It may be a case "most likely" to offer significant numbers of residents endorsing the idea of Confucian political obligation. If the endorsement is low among residents of Qufu, it suggests that the endorsement may be even lower in many other Chinese cities that are less Confucian comparing to Qufu.²²

The final important ingredient in the research design is its trust-building approach to recruiting potential interviewees. Many scholars have discovered in the fields that trust between a researcher and participants is the necessary condition to have the latter disclose sensitive information. They have also recommended that to satisfy this condition researchers should use

²¹ Editors of Openings, "The Confucius Class Enters the Rural Life [孔子學堂走進鄉村生活]," *Openings* [走向世界], no. 45 (2014): 10.

²² For the discussion of the generalization characteristic of critical cases, see Bent Flyvbjerg, Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again, trans. Steven Sampson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78-79.

recruitment strategies other than random sampling.²³ Picking respondents at random is just like to interview strangers by chance. It is designed to obtain representativeness but not to maximize trust.

Since we are going to ask sensitive questions in the authoritarian China, I decide to use snowball sampling to secure trust and to have my informants feel comfortable and safe to discuss politically relevant issues. In the snowball side of this sampling strategy, respondents are recruited based on the recommendation of earlier interviewees. The recommendation serves the function to inform the trustworthiness of the researcher to the referrals. Moreover, I also develop additional snowball seeds, i.e., the initial interviewees, to avoid the perils of relying too heavily on information obtained from one snowball chain where participants in the same social network may share very similar perspectives. The multiple snowball chains will help us maximize the diversity of interview results.²⁴

As for the purposive sampling side, interviewees' referrals are selected carefully to cover as completely as possible the diversity of the population divided by age, gender, and levels of education. It is designed to "ensure that our sample includes instances displaying significant

²³ See, for example, Raymond M. Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1993), 103. Tsai, "Quantitative Research and Issues of Political Sensitivity in Rural China," 255. Akan Malici and Elizabeth S. Smith, eds., "Interviews: What Are the Pathways to Human Rights Activism?," in *Political Science Research in Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 60.

²⁴ Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen, "How to Report Interview Data," in *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 87.

variations."²⁵ In a nutshell, the snowball-purposive sampling strategy helps me to gain a broad range of interviewees with varied perspectives.

4. Conclusion

This chapter problematizes the head-of-family survey item designed to probe the empirical relevance of "Confucian political obligation" to Chinese people today. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, my suspicion about the survey finding that a vast majority of Chinese people endorse "Confucian political obligation" results from my knowledge of the anti-Confucian legacy in the 20th century China. In this chapter, the suspicion is further justified by the methodological review of the survey item.

The head-of-family survey question asks respondents if they agree that "top government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions." I demonstrate that this question is double-barreled, and its wording is abstract. Its close-ended interview format, moreover, obscure the multiple meanings of interviewees' responses. Methodologically, the head-of-family question loses its validity and renders the results difficult to analyze. Most importantly, while the survey item is designed to probe public opinions in terms of Confucian political obligation, its assumption that Confucianism supports commoners' absolute obedience to the government is not Confucian at all.

The problems existed in the survey research call on an empirical reinvestigation into the impact of Confucian political obligation on citizens of contemporary China. To respond to this

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(New York: The Free Press, 1994), 23.

²⁵ Robert S. Weiss, Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies

calling, I conduct an interview study in Qufu, China. The most crucial goal in the interview study is to understand the moral reasoning of Chinese people in terms of political obligations. I use several strategies to achieve it. First, to understand Chinese people's moral reasoning about political obligations, I use the method of the in-depth view. To have my interviewees feel comfortable and safe to discuss sensitive political issues, I use the snowball sampling approach to ensure the relationship of trust. Third, I develop several snowball chains during the study to record a rich and broad perspectives on political obligations. Fourth, I prepare three questions to investigate how my interviewees will respond to the idea of absolute political obedience and the Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude. The next chapter is the report and discussion of my findings of political obligations in Qufu, China.

Chapter Five: Confucian Political Obligation in Contemporary China

I conducted the Qufu interview study between May 10 and August 15, 2014. In addition to a previously known local contact, I became acquainted with three additional local residents of different socioeconomic backgrounds after my arrival. As a result, I established four snowball groups and recruited a total of 31 interviewees during my stay. Table 5.1 is the demographic breakdown of the participants.

Table 5.1: Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees in Qufu

	Chain A	Chain B	Chain C	Chain D	Total
		0	10	-	2.1
N	8	8	10	5	31
Gender					
Female	4	2	5	4	15
Male	4	6	5	1	16
Education					
Tertiary	7	-	-	-	7
Secondary	1	6	6	3	16
Primary	_	2	4	2	8
Age					
60-69	_	2	-	-	2
50-59	_	1	5	2	8
40-49	1	3	1	3	8
30-39	1	2	1	-	4
20-29	6	-	3	-	9

Interviews were conducted in Mandarin. With the consent of respondents, all interviews were recorded. The average length of interviews was about 45 minutes. All respondents answered the three core questions designed for this study. Accordingly, I asked my informants whether they agree that:

- (1) "We should all follow the decisions of government leaders" (政府領導人關於國家事務的決定我們都應該服從)
- (2) "The relationship between the government and the people should be like the relationship between parents and children" (政府和人民的關係就應該像是父母和子女的關係一樣)
- (3) "Policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate" (政策的制定是政府官員的事,老百姓不應該過問)

Accordingly, the interview study is designed to observe how residents in this city would respond to the idea of absolute obedience as well as the conception of Confucian paternalistic gratitude. Throughout Sections 1 to 3, I report and discuss respondents' answers to the three core questions designed for this study. As we will see, first, while survey researchers find that a vast majority of Chinese people endorse the idea of absolute obedience, the majority of my interviewees reject this idea of absolute obedience. Second, by drawing evidence both from my interview study and other empirical scholarship, I suggest that Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude is losing its impact on Chinese people today.

1. Interviewees' Response to the Core Question (1)

Interviewees' responses to the core question—"Would you agree that we should all follow the decisions of government leaders?"—runs contrary to the report from the aforementioned survey researchers. While the latter conclude that most ordinary Chinese endorse the idea of absolute obedience, *none* of my respondents agrees that they should follow government decisions unconditionally. Table 5.2 is the quantitative report of interviewees' responses to the core question (1).

Table 5.2: "We should all follow the decisions of government leaders."

	Disagree Outright	Disagree Follow-up	Agree Unwillingly	Agree Absolutely	Total
N	22	8	1	0	31
Gender					
Female	10	4	1	-	15
Male	12	4	-	-	16
Education				-	
Tertiary	6	1	-	-	7
Secondary	11	4	1	-	16
Primary	5	3	-	-	8
Age				-	
60-69	2	-	-	-	2
50-59	5	3	-	-	8
40-49	4	4	-	-	8
30-39	3	1	1	-	4
20-29	8	1	-	-	9

To begin with, the majority of the interviewees (22 out of 31) reject the idea of absolute obedience immediately after I introduce the core question (1) to them. Most respondents in this "disagree outright" category state that they will only follow decisions that are reasonable. When I follow up on their responses, it becomes clear that, for these respondents, reasonable decisions mean policies that advance the interests of the people. Take Interviewee D03 for example:

Author: Would you agree that we should all follow the decisions of government leaders?

D03: No. It is not possible that we should obey everything they said. When a decision is not reasonable, we must raise our objections. So I think it depends on the reasonableness of the decision in question.¹

Also, to the core question (1), Interviewee D04 directly claims that she will not blindly obey government leaders. She answers, "I feel that people cannot blindly obey. If a decision is not beneficial to the people, who is going to obey? What is the point of this obedience?"²

Another interviewee gives a democratic interpretation of the core question (1). He argues, "I disagree with this question. China is a democratic country. In a democracy, the notion of governing by the people is crucial. Therefore, it is not correct that the people should obey any one-sided decision made by government leaders. A democratic country should follow the majority rule."³

The category of "disagree upon follow-up" includes 8 out of 31 interviewees. Some agree that they should all follow government decisions in the first place, but they change their position upon being asked, "Do you mean that you will follow all decisions regardless of the content?" Consider the following example.

¹ Interview on July 26, 2014. D03 is a male farmer and is almost 60 years old. D03 does not have

formal education.

² Interview on July 13, 2014. D04 is in her 50s and works in a factory. She completed junior high school.

³ Interview on July 5, 2014. A06 is a young college student. He is also a member of the Communist Party.

Author: Would you agree that we should all follow the decisions of government leaders?

D02: Yes, I agree.

Author: Do you mean that you will follow all decisions regardless of the content?

D02: This is not what I am talking about. When a policy is not reasonable, the masses will certainly argue against it. Right? Government leaders cannot force us to do something that is apparently wrong.⁴

Moreover, some interviewees in the category of "disagree upon follow-up" agree with the statement because they assume that government decisions are in general beneficial to public interests. For example interviewee A05 argues:

A05: I feel this statement is correct. The government exists for the interests of the people. They are not likely to make very unreasonable decisions against the interests of the people. So I think I should obey.

Author: What if policies are contrary to people's interests?

A05: Then we should not support them. Government leaders must serve the interests of the people.⁵

⁴ Interview on June 29, 2014. D02 is in her 50s and currently works in a hotel. She completed junior high school.

⁵ Interview on July 1, 2014. A05 is a female college student.

Lastly, three interviewees in the category of "disagree upon follow-up" change their position after I supply them with concrete examples. The response of B08 is typical:

B08: Yes. We should follow government decisions.

Author: Will you obey if the state decides to conscript you for military service?

B08: Sure. When the state needs our service in a war, everyone should go to the battlefield. If you do not obey, you are not a citizen of this country.

Author: What if the government decides to build a large dump site near your home?

B08: Will they relocate me?

Author: They will not relocate you. Moreover, they will build it next to your backyard.

B08: It is very unpleasant. I refuse.

Author: But you say that you will obey every decision of the government.

B08: I obey reasonable decisions and resist unreasonable ones.⁶

On the whole, in the category of "disagree upon follow-up," the response is similar to that in the category of "disagree outright." Political obedience to these respondents is not content-free. It depends on the reasonableness of the government decisions.

⁶ Interview on July 28, 2014. B08 is a small business owner in his 40s. He completed junior high

school.

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One respondent belongs to the category of "agree unwillingly." "Of course," replies interviewee C04, "we must follow the decisions even if we are unwilling. Can you do otherwise?"

As discussed above, many political scientists have relied on a survey question to study the empirical relevance of Confucian political obligation to contemporary China. The question reads, "Government leaders are like the head of a big family; we should all follow their decisions." Because a vast majority of Chinese respondents have been found to agree with this statement in each major nationwide survey in China, many researchers conclude that unconditional obedience is a widespread political attitude among Chinese people today. We have argued that the head-of-family question is a problematic survey item due to its political sensitivity, ambiguous wording, close-ended format and double-barreled question design. As a result, the head-of-family question loses its validity.

To further investigate the issue of absolute obedience among Chinese people, I adopt the following methodological measures. First, I employ the method of in-depth interview to gather detailed information about respondents' reasoning in terms of political obligations. Second, I use snowball sampling to address the problem of political sensitivity and maximize interviewees' trust. Finally, I redesign the question to avoid the problem of double-barreledness. Instead of asking respondents two constructs (i.e., paternalism and absolute obedience) in a single question, I directly introduce the core question (1): "Would you agree that we should all follow the decisions of government leaders?"

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⁷ Interview on June 25, 2014. C04 is a restaurant custodian in her 30s. She completed elementary school.

Findings from my in-depth interview study in Qufu suggest that interviewees' agreements have *multiple* meanings. Since my interviewees come from non-nationwide and nonrandom sampling, I do not claim that no Chinese people endorse the idea of unconditional obedience. Perhaps there are true believers in absolute obedience among residents of Qufu and in other places of China. My study admits this possibility.

However, it is safe to say that the different types of responses observed among my Qufu interviewees will also be encountered elsewhere in China.⁸ If the study were replicated in other Chinese cities, we would also find a number of fake assenters. Some would initially agree that they should all follow government decisions but insert conditions upon follow-up. Some would also agree with unconditional obedience but express their unwillingness due to the sense of political disempowerment in an authoritarian regime.⁹ The lesson is clear: survey researchers are not

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⁸ According to Robert S. Weiss, "one argument for generalizing to a larger population from a sample chosen to maximize range [e.g., snowball-purposive sampling in the present study] depends on being able to claim that the sample include the full variety of instances that would be encountered anywhere...We will not be able to say anything about the proportion of instances of different types in a large population, since the proportion in our sample might be very different from the proportion elsewhere. But we can say what the various type like, no matter where they appear." Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, 24.

⁹ Indeed, my pilot study in Xiamen (廈門) vindicates the multiple meanings of agreement. The Xiamen pilot study was conducted between August 01, 2013 and October 01, 2013. I recruited 30 interviewees based on four snowball chains. Accordingly, 24 interviewees disagree with the possibility of unconditional obedience outright. Five interviewees disagree upon follow-up. One

entitled to claim that a vast majority of Chinese people endorse absolute obedience based on a problematic question and a simple affirmation of agreement. To draw such a conclusion is to over-interpret the survey data and to misrepresent the political beliefs of the Chinese people.

At the very least, many of my interviewees react negatively to the idea of unconditional obedience. When asked why one should not obey government leaders unconditionally, one of my informants responds, "I have my own thoughts, right? I have a brain, don't I? [He pointed to his head] How can I obey anyone blindly?" To claim that a majority of Chinese people obey unconditionally is tantamount to saying that a majority of them are incapable of independent thought. It is an outrageous offense.

2. Interviewees' Response to the Core Question (2)

Confucian political obligation is an argument of paternalistic gratitude. To Confucians, if a ruler would take care of the people as if they were his children; the latter would respect and obey him out of gratitude. In this sense, citizens' acceptance of the parent-state analogy is the first indicator of a belief in Confucian political obligation. Another important element in Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude is the assumption that ordinary people are

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respondent belongs to the category of "agree unwillingly." Again, none of my interviewees in Xiamen hold the idea of absolute obedience. The research design of the Xiamen pilot study is similar to the Qufu project except that it does not include the core question (2), "Policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate."

¹⁰ Interview on June 16, 2014. B01 is an employee of a state-owned enterprise in his 40s. He completed senior high school.

incompetent and not entitled to politics. They need an intelligent ruling class that administers public affairs on their behalf. In other words, the fact that ordinary people refrain from political participation is the second indicator of an identification with Confucian political obligation. Based on these two indicators, I select the core questions (2) and (3) to investigate the impact of Confucianism on interviewees' conceptions of political obligations.

Table 5.3: "The relationship between the government and the people should be like the relationship between parents and children."

	Government	Government	Government	
	as	as	as	
	Parent	Superior	Servant	Total
N	21	1	9	31
Gender				
Female	9	1	5	15
Male	12	-	4	16
Education				
Tertiary	3	-	4	7
Secondary	10	1	5	16
Primary	8	-	-	8
Age				
60-69	2	-	-	2
50-59	8	-	-	8
40-49	6	1	1	8
30-39	2	-	2	4
20-29	3	-	6	9

As noted above, the core question (2), "The relationship between the government and the people should be like that between parents and children," was originally used in the 2008 Asian Barometer China Survey. Although survey researchers find a large portion of respondents agreeing with the parent-state analogy, the core question (2) is not specifically designed by them to answer the question of political obligation. By appropriating this survey question and asking it in an in-

depth manner, I investigate whether my interviewees connect the parent-state analogy with the political obligation of gratitude. Also, the in-depth interview helps me bring to light an alternative understanding of state-individual relations among interviewees who disagree with this question. Table 5.3 above is the quantitative report of participants' responses to the core question (2).

Similar to the result from 2008 Asian Barometer China Survey, the majority of my respondents also endorse the parent-state analogy embedded in the core question (2). 11 Even though some of them complain that they do not receive parental love and care from the current government, supporters of the parent-state analogy maintain that they should be grateful and support a benevolent government. Considering the following dialog between interviewee B04 and me:

Author: Would you agree that the relationship between the government and the people should be like that between parents and children?

C03: Yes, I agree. It is similar. The current policies are better than before. We should be satisfied. In the past, peasants must pay agricultural and other taxes. Now, they are abolished. Moreover, if you pass the age of 60, you get an additional subsidy from the government.

interviewees compare government officials to trustees.

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¹¹ In the Xiamen pilot study, 14 out of 30 interviewees endorse the parent-state analogy. In addition, 13 respondents draw an analogy between government leaders and servants. Three

Author: Do you need to feel grateful for those good policies?¹²

C03: Sure.

Author: How would you express your gratefulness to the government?

C03: I feel that you should contribute to the state. It does not matter how much you contribute. At least, you should not sabotage the government, commit treason, violate the law or do things that cause chaos. ¹³

Some interviewees also illuminate further the parent-state analogy. For example, interviewee B07 argues, "Yes, I agree that the relationship between the government and the people should be like the relationship between parents and children. You see, the government is like a big family and my family is a small family. Every decision of the big family is based on the needs of numerous small families. So I completely agree with this question." 14

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¹² I ask all interviewees this question. There is a pattern in their responses. For respondents who acknowledge the parent-state analogy, they are more likely to agree that they should feel grateful to a benevolent policy. However, interviewees are more likely to disagree with the requirement of gratefulness if they reject the parent-state analogy contained in the core question (2).

¹³ Interviewee on June 24, 2014. C03 is a kitchen assistant in his late 20s. He completed middle school and comes from a peasant family.

¹⁴ Interview on July 28, 2014. B07 completed junior high school. He is in his 50s and is currently a pedicab driver.

Consider also the dialogue between interviewee B06 and me,

B06: I agree with this question.

Author: Why?

B06: Government leaders should be like the parents of the people. Put differently, they

are people's walking sticks. When we have difficulties, they are always there to help us.

They should act like our parents and help us right away. 15

It is also interesting to note that interviewee B05 consciously makes a connection between

the core question (2) and core question (1). He argues, "You know what? This question [i.e., the

core question (2)] has a very close relation to the prior question [i.e., the core question (1)]. They

cannot be separated from each other. Everyone will obey the government if it really treats us like

its children and takes care of us."16

Survey researchers argue that Chinese respondents' agreements with the core question (2)

represent their belief in Confucianism. ¹⁷ However, one of my interviewees indicate an alternative

explanation. Interviewee C08 argues, "The relationship between the government and the people

¹⁵ Interview on July 24, 2014. B06 is a doorman. He is in his 60s and does have formal education.

¹⁶ Interview on July 14, 2014. Interviewee B05 is in his late 60s and working as a pedicab driver.

He received three years education in elementary school.

¹⁷ Shin, Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia, chapter 5; Chu, "Sources of Regime

Legitimacy and the Debate over the Chinese Model," 18.

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should be like the relationship between parents and children. This statement is very correct. During the time of Mao Zedong, there was a saying: 'the Party is mother.'"18

The alternative source of the parent-state analogy is the Communist Party of China. The idea that "the party is mother" was, for example, disseminated in the campaign of "Learn from Comrade Lei Feng" in the 1960s. According to the official story, the socialist hero, Lei Feng, was born in pre-liberation China. His family suffered greatly; each of its members, except Lei Feng, died before the success of Communist Revolution. Thanks to the generosity of the party, Lei Feng survived the familial tragedy. He received education and finally joined the People's Liberation Army. To express his gratitude to the party, Lei Feng wholeheartedly dedicated himself to serving the state until his accidental death in 1962.

During the campaign of "Learn from Comrade Lei Feng," the selection of Le Feng's diary was edited and printed for public consumption. It was designed to reinforce people's memory of the oppressive old days, to remind them of the benevolence of the party state, and to elicit their gratitude toward it. ¹⁹ To Lei Feng, the Communist Party is his mother and Chairman Mao is his father. One entry in the diary fully expresses the political obligation of paternalistic gratitude.

Oh, how great is the Party! You are my kind mother. It is you who saves me from suffering and raises me afterward. It is you who teaches me the theory of the proletariat, gives me direction and helps me move forward. It is you who gives me everything. Oh,

¹⁸ Interview on July 17, 2014. C08 is a factory owner in his late 50s. He completed his primary education during the Cultural Revolution.

¹⁹ Gay Garland Reed, "Moral/Political Education in the People's Republic of China: Learning through Role Models," *Journal of Moral Education* 24, no. 2 (1995).

how great is the Party! You are my kind mother. I can express my gratefulness with nothing but real actions. I am determined to comply with and follow the Party to the end of my life. I will study hard and work diligently and actively to carry out your orders. I will also be loyal to the party and people and fight for the cause of Communism all my life.²⁰

Thanks to the propagation organs of the party, the *Diary of Lei Feng* reaches a mass circulation. Today more than 200 different versions have been published, and a hundred million copies have been sold since 1964.²¹ Lei Feng's diary is but one carrier to propagate the idea of the political obligation of paternalistic gratitude. It has also been integrated into songs and other official pamphlets to construct and reinforce the paternalistic idea among Chinese citizens.²²

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²⁰ Lei Feng [雷鋒], *The Diary of Lei Feng [雷鋒日記]* (Beijing: People's liberation Army literature and Art Press, 1964), 68-69.

²¹ Shi Qiu [秋石],"Let the Spirit of Lei Feng Live Forever in China [讓雷鋒精神永駐神州大地],"*Qiushi Journal [求是]* 6 (2012), 15.

²² In 2009, the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China selected 100 patriotic songs and launched the campaign of "Everyone Sings Patriotic Songs." There are at least seven songs that contain the idea of paternalistic gratitude. They are "Sing a Folk Song to Party [唱支山歌給黨聽]", "I Love You China [我愛你中國]", "Oh, Party, My Dear Mother [黨啊!親愛的媽媽]", "My County, You are My Kind Mother [祖國,慈祥的母親]", "Today is Your Birthday [今天是你的生日]", "My Motherland and Me [我和我的祖國]" and "the Song of Seven Sons—Macau [

Now we have identified two possible sources of paternalistic gratitude in contemporary China: Confucianism and the propaganda of Communist Party of China. Are we still able to claim, as survey researchers do, that Chinese people's agreement with the core question (2) represents their Confucian mindset? Some scholars will give this question a positive answer. For instance, Lucian Pye argues,

Chinese's cultural tradition...seems to be engulfing its Communist tormentors...Chinese culture has...cracked the universalistic claims of scientific Marxism and forced its abstract, general categories to give way to parochial realities...China's commitment to Marxism...has not obliterated Chinese culture, but rather it has produced the distinctive culture of Confucian Leninism.²³

七子之歌: 澳門]". See Editors of Xinhuanet,"Announcement of 100 Patriotic Songs [一百首爱 國歌曲名單公布],"Xinhuanet [新華網], May 25, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2009-05/25/content_11434058.htm. I have also found the idea of paternalistic gratitude being used to encourage tax compliance. See, for example, LizhenZhang [張麗珍] and YiHuang [黃毅],"Repay the Gratitude to the Party by Obeying the Law and Paying the Tax [守法納稅報黨恩],"Chinese Tax Affairs [中國稅務], no. 3 (1996), 35; Guorui Li [李國瑞],"The Rich Old Chentou Does Not Forget to Repay Debt Gratitude to the Party [老陳頭致富不忘報黨恩],"Taxation [稅務], no. 3 (2001): 30.

²³ Pve, *The Mandarin and the Cadre*, IX-X.

If Pye is correct, then it might be the case that the Communist Party of China simply inherits and reproduces the Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude in Contemporary China. The campaign of "learn from Lei Feng" and the message of "party is mother" are *Confucian* in nature.

However, this interpretation might make us blind to the universalistic character of this genre of political obligation. Indeed, the political obligation of paternalistic gratitude seems to infuse political rhetoric in places where political inequality is the norm. "Thus," as Michael Wallace demonstrates, "black, yellow, and red people have been transmuted by whites into children; colonized peoples have been called children by imperial powers; and many a monarch ruled over children-subjects." ²⁴ In this sense, Chinese respondents' agreement with the core question (2) may, in effect, be *universal* and *authoritarian* in nature. By constraining the response of paternalistic gratitude in the parochial Confucian box, survey researchers of Chinese politics might miss a chance to test further a hypothesis in the realm of politics; namely, authoritarianism begets the political obligation of paternalistic gratitude.

In sum, similar to the results of survey research, my in-depth interview study also finds a large portion of interviewees endorse the parent-state analogy. Nevertheless, unlike survey researchers, I argue that the endorsement does not necessarily reflect the influence of Confucianism. The above discussion suggests that some Chinese may accept the parent-state analogy out of their Confucian mindset. However, there are also others who might internalize this analogy from the non-Confucian Communist propaganda. To claim that each endorsement of the parent-state analogy is Confucian in nature amounts to an interpretive oversimplification.

²⁴ Wallace, "Paternalism and Violence," 203.

In addition to the parent-state analogy, another important message of Communist

propaganda, i.e., serve the people (為人民服務), is also reflected in some of my interviewees'

responses to the core question (2). Nine out of 31 respondents in the Qufu study compare

government officials to the servants of the people.²⁵ For instance, interviewee B01 argues, "the

government is not like parents. The duty of government is to serve the people. It is our servant. I

do not agree with this analogy."²⁶ Interviewee C02 also concurs: "How can the government be our

parents? The responsibility of government is to serve the people. If the government serves us well,

everyone will obey it."²⁷ Consider further the conversation between interviewee B02 and me:

Author: Would you agree that the relationship between the government and the people

should be like the relationship between parents and children?

B02: This analogy is not appropriate. In the past, people call government officials "father-

mother officials [父母官]." However, government officials say that they should serve the

people today.

Author: Will you feel grateful to government officials if they serve the people?

²⁵ In the Xiamen pilot study, 13 out of 30 respondents compare government leaders to servants.

²⁶ Interview on June 16, 2014. B01 is an employee of a state-owned enterprise in his 40s. He

completed senior high school. Italics mine.

²⁷ Interview on June 23, 2013. C02 is a small business owner in her 20s. She is a senior high school

graduate.

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B02: Why should I? It is their responsibility, isn't it? I will not support them if they do not *serve the people*.²⁸

"Serve the people" is one of the most memorable slogans in the history of the Communist Party of China. It originates from a title of a speech by Mao Zedong, delivered on September 8, 1944, in praise of the death of a Communist cadre, Zhang Side (張思德). "Our Communist Party," Mao argued, "works entirely in the people's interest…We serve the people." Comrade Zhang's death is, therefore, honorable to Mao because Zhang sacrificed himself rightly for this cause. ²⁹ In another article, Mao further explains the relationship between the Party and people implied by this slogan. He says, "All our work cadres, regardless of their high or low positions, are the people's *orderlies*, and everything we do is to serve the people."³⁰

Indeed, "serve the people" has been written into the Articles 22, 27, 29 and 76 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. ³¹ In the preamble of the Constitution of Communist Party of China, the Party vows to fulfill four essential requirements. One of them is to

²⁸ Interview on July 02, 2014. Interviewee B02 is a waitress in her 30s. She completed high school education. Italics mine.

²⁹ Mao Zedong, "Serve the People," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 177. Italics mine

³⁰ Mao Zedong, "Tasks of 1945," in *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)*. (U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, 1978), 186; italics mine.

³¹ National People's Congress, "The Constitution of the People's Republic of China," *People's Daily Online*, 1982, http://en.people.cn/constitution/constitution.html.

"preserve in serving the people wholeheartedly...At all times, the Party...does not allow any member to...place himself or herself above them." Today, a plate engraved with the slogan "serve the people" is displayed in government buildings all across China.

The power relationship implied in the slogan of "serve the people" is completely different from the parent-state analogy. On the one hand, the parent-state analogy envisions a powerful state vis-à-vis helpless subjects. As Phillip J. Ivanhoe argues, underlying the parent-state analogy "is an explicit recognition of the helplessness of the child and the power of the parents." "One must keep in mind," Ivanhoe continues, "the vast difference in power that separates infants and young children from their parents in order to appreciate the special sense of ...gratitude." On the other hand, the slogan of "serve the people," as Mao's analogy of "orderlies" suggests, visualizes a relationship between the powerful citizenry and a dutiful government. Moreover, these two state-citizenry paradigms are radically different because "the paternalistic model...does not, as the servant model does, allow for replacement at any moment the servant fails to deliver whatever service has been asked for by the people." In this sense, the slogan of "serve the people" implies a contractual understanding of the relationship between government and citizenry.

Similar to survey findings, I also find that the majority of my interviewees endorse the parent-state analogy. Nevertheless, I suggest that the unavoidable process of generation replacement may gradually see this endorsement decline among Chinese people. Chinese youth

³² National Congress of Communist Party of China, "Constitution of Communist Party of China," *Xinhuanet*, 2012, http://english.cpc.people.com.cn/206972/206981/8188065.html.

³³ Ivanhoe, "Filial Piety as a Virtue," 2004, 195.

³⁴ Nicholas Fotion, "Paternalism," Ethics 89, no. 2 (1979): 193.

today are increasingly exposed to and embrace non-paternalistic ideas. For example, Thomas Kwan-Choi Tse reports that the image of "good citizen" in schools' political textbooks is moving from the "old collectivist-paternalistic model" to the "free, autonomous citizen model."³⁵

Indeed, the consequence of curriculum development seems to be reflected in my interviewees. While other age groups in my sample greatly support the parent-state analogy, the majority in the age range of 20 to 29 assert their political rights and describe government officials as the servants of people.³⁶

Another public opinion study also captures this cohort difference. Based on a 2008 nationwide survey in China, Robert Harmel and his associate report that the youngest cohort (respondents born after 1980) are more assertive in politics, more likely to defy the state, and more open to political change than the older generations. "Generational replacement," the authors suggest, "could well result in greater aggregate willingness to criticize the status quo and to consider changes." Other things being equal, I suggest that Chinese citizens' belief in parent-state analogy and its associated perception of political helplessness would fade out as time goes by.

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³⁵ Thomas Kwanchoi Tse, "Creating Good Citizens in China: Comparing Grade 7–9 School Textbooks, 1997–2005," *Journal of Moral Education* 40, no. 2 (June 12, 2011).

³⁶ See table 5.3 above.

³⁷ Robert Harmel and Yao-Yuan Yeh, "China's Age Cohorts: Differences in Political Attitudes and Behavior," *Social Science Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (2015): 232.

3. Interviewees' Response to the Core Question (3)

The idea of Confucian political obligation is also incompatible with the sense of political empowerment among, at least, many of my interviewees in Qufu. As mentioned above, underlying the Confucian parent-state analogy is the assumption that commoners are too ignorant to participate in politics and, therefore, need benevolent leaders to rule on behalf of them. Thus, I design the core question (3)—"Policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate"—to investigate the impact of this non-participatory ingredient on citizens of China. Table 5.4 is the quantitative report of interviewees' responses to the core question (3).

Table 5.4: "Policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate."

	Political Outsider	Political Participant	Total
N	2	29	31
Gender	_	- -	
Female	1	14	15
Male	1	13	16
Education			
Tertiary	-	7	7
Secondary	1	15	16
Primary	1	7	8
Age			
60-69	-	2	2
50-59	1	7	8
40-49	1	7	8
30-39	-	4	4
20-29	-	9	9

I divide respondents' answers into two categories. The first category is "political outsider." Interviewees in this category believe that they are not entitled to political participation. To the core

question (3), for example, interviewee C05 answers, "I agree. I am not very educated and haven't

gotten a glimpse of the outside world. What capacity do I have to participate in politics?"³⁸

However, most of my interviewees belong to the second category, i.e., "political

participant." People who belong to this category maintain that their political voices should be

included in the process of policy-making. When I ask my oldest interviewee whether he agrees

that ordinary people should not participate in politics, he maintains his entitlement to political

participation when the policies in question concern his interests. To the core question (3), he

replies,

B05: Government needs to consult the people in certain cases.

Author: Can you give me an example?

B05: Let me put it this way. [Interviewee then points to his tea cup.] If government

officials use their money to buy this tea cup, it is not the people's business. However, if

they use our money to buy this tea cup, then it is our business. They must consult us. To

give another example: You are an official and I am a citizen. Even so, you cannot go to

my home and eat my dinner without asking me, right?³⁹

³⁸ Interview on July 5, 2014. Interviewee C05 is in her late 50s. She was a peasant and has retired

now.

³⁹ Interview on July 14, 2014. Interviewee B05 is in his late 60s and works as a pedicab driver. He

received three years education in elementary school.

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Another interviewee lampooned the absurdity of the core question (3), "Are government officials' brains more sophisticated than others? The masses are wise. It is dumb to trust government officials too much." Moreover, many respondents use the language of rights to support their entitlement to politics.

Against the authoritarian settings of China, is it possible to find a group of idiosyncratic Chinese who naively believe in their entitlement to political participation? In the following discussion, I will use the method of triangulation to evaluate whether my interview results are consistent with other studies of political participation in contemporary China. As we will see, Confucianism is losing its impact on Chinese people in terms of political participation.

The degree of civic participation is one of the many differences between Confucian Chinese Empire and the People's Republic of China. In 1889, a leading scholar-official in late imperial China, Viceroy Zhang Zhidong (張之洞), publishes an essay to refute reformers' demand for democratization. He argues,

There is not a particle of good to be derived from democracy. On the contrary, such a system is fraught with a hundred evils...The first thing necessary in a republic is a Parliament, and it is said that China ought to establish a House. Against such a proceeding, we say that many Chinese intellectuals and people are obstructive and stupid. They understand nothing about the affairs of the world at the present time and are utterly

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⁴⁰ Interview on August 2, 2014. Interviewee A08 is about 50 and has a college degree. Interestingly, he is a former government official.

ignorant of the details and intricacies of civil government...If the democracy is inaugurated, only the ignorant and foolish will rejoice.⁴¹

Zhang's position is a typical Confucian argument against commoners' political participation. For thousand years in China's history, ordinary people were excluded from the imperial politics.

However, Chinese people have been frequently included in the political process of the People's Republic of China. During Mao's time, they were drawn into various campaigns to voice their loyalty to the regime and to criticize class enemies. ⁴² Today, to strengthen its legitimacy, the party-state is also "develop[ing] a series of input institutions...that allow Chinese to believe that they have some influence on policy decisions and personnel choice at the local level." ⁴³

Two state-initiated political participations in the Reform Era—the Village Committee Elections and the Neighborhood Committee Elections—are widely discussed by observers of China. In 1998, after ten years of trial, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted the Organic Law of Villagers' Committees (村民委員會組織法). While Classical and Imperial Confucianism exclude commoners from politics, the Organic Law emphasizes on the principle of self-government. Article two of the law states,

⁴¹ Zhang Zhidong, *China's Only Hope [勸學篇]*, trans. Samuel I. Woodbridge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), 55-8. I have made some changes to the original translation.

⁴² Elizabeth J. Perry, "Studying Chinese Politics: Farewell to Revolution?," *The China Journal*, no. 57 (2007).

⁴³ Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003), 14.

The Villagers' Committee is the primary mass organization of self-government, in which the villagers manage their own affairs, educate themselves and serve their own needs and in which election is conducted, decision adopted, administration maintained and supervision exercised by democratic means.⁴⁴

Specifically, the law stipulates the personnel in the committee, serving for three-year terms, shall be directly elected by villagers, and that the villagers' assembly should be convened to discuss important village affairs and make decisions based upon a simple majority vote. Similarly, the Organic Law of the Urban Residents' Committees (城市居民委員會組織法), implemented nationally in 1990, also asserts the principle of self-government which grants urbanities the legal right to manage the collective affairs in their neighborhoods.⁴⁵

Also, scholars of Chinese politics have recently focused on another government-initiated form of participation, i.e., the so-called "authoritarian deliberation." Baogang He and Mark E.

http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/12/content_1383916.htm.

⁴⁴ Standing Committee of Ninth National People's Congress [第九屆全國人民代表大會常務委員會], "The Organic Law of Villagers' Committees of the People's Republic of China [中華人民共和國村民委員會組織法]," 1998, http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/207279.htm.

⁴⁵ Standing Committee of the Seventh National People's Congress [第七屆全國人民代表大會常務委員會], "Organic Law of the Urban Residents' Committees of the People's Republic of China [中華人民共和國城市居民委員會組織法]," 1989,

Warren have observed "a high density of venues in which deliberation seems to exert influence." "In 2004," according to the authors, "the total number of meetings with deliberative elements at village level was estimated to be 453,000... Observations from... other urban areas suggest that such deliberative practices are becoming more widespread, with more than a hundred public hearing per year being held in each district." "47

Surely, there are reasons to question the democratic nature of these forms of government-initiated participation. Particularly, the local self-government operates in the shadow of the Communist Party. Both of the two Organic Laws mentioned above assert the Party's leadership in guiding and assisting villagers and urbanites to carry out self-government. The Party's intervention is justified if its leadership is threatened by local self-government. The grassroots deliberative meetings are also held "within the context of government-defined agendas and formal government control of outcomes." From the perspective of the Party, the constrained participation seems to have more to do with its concern for legitimacy than the pursuit of real democratic reform.

However, there are also reasons to be optimistic about the democratic potential unlocked by these government-initiated actions. Indeed, evidence from empirical studies suggests that optimism is warranted. In his survey research in a Chinese county, for example, Li Lianjiang identifies the *empowering effect* of village elections. Li shows that when a village election is held in a relatively free and fair manner, it significantly enhances villagers' political efficacy. As a

⁴⁶ Baogang He and Mark E. Warren, "Authoritarian Deliberation: The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political Development," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 2 (2011), 279.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 277.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 279.

result, villagers may become more active in local politics and "feel empowered because they know that they can retract their consent through impeachment or at the next election." ⁴⁹

In another study based on a 2005-2008 nationwide survey in China, Xin Sun buttress Li's thesis of empowerment. Sun finds that village elections can produce a *democratic learning effect* on participants. He reports that villagers who participate in a freer and fairer election than those who do not are "demonstrating a greater demand for the extension of competitive elections to higher level of government." Village elections, he suggests, may teach Chinese citizens to embrace democratic politics and contribute to a liberal culture in China.

Village elections aside, the empowerment effect embedded in the elections of Urban Residents' Committees is also illustrated by quantitative and qualitative studies. For example, based on a 2000 Beijing survey, Jie Chen and his associate show that the middle-class Chinese are "more likely to expect grassroots self-government to be formed in a democratic way, [and] more likely to be critical of the currently implemented self-government system (since it was not organized as democratically as they expected)." ⁵¹ The middle-class individuals, suggest the

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⁴⁹ Lianjiang Li, "The Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 4 (2003), 660.

⁵⁰ Xin Sun, "Autocrats' Dilemma: The Dual Impacts of Village Elections on Public Opinion in China," *China Journal*, no. 71 (2014): 120.

⁵¹ Jie Chen and Chunlong Lu, "Does China's Middle Class Think and Act Democratically? Attitudinal and Behavioral Orientations toward Urban Self-Government," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 11, no. 2 (2006), 14-15. In Chen and Lu's study, the middle class includes private entrepreneurs of small/medium business, managerial personnel, and white-collar professions.

authors, would, therefore, constitute a major force in the future to promote China's democratic reform.

Drawing upon interviews in several Chinese cities, Thomas Heberer also reports the empowerment effect of urban elections. He finds that, for those urbanites who regularly participate in urban elections and residents' assemblies, "participation could be comprehended as a learning process and as a crucial element in political socialization."52 Indeed, the participatory experience has encouraged many of Heberer's interviewees to speak up and demand more participation in local political settings.

Similarly, the government-initiated local deliberative practices seem to help ordinary Chinese develop participatory consciousness. For example, in a Chinese city, Wenling (溫嶺), where deliberative policy-making processes are frequently held by the local government, the city's party secretary reports to researchers that he "regularly receives complaints from peasants when local officials make decisions without first holding deliberative meetings."53

The participatory idea is also expressed by my interviewees in Qufu. To the core question (3), for example, interviewee C09 responds, "This statement is incorrect. Citizens should be included in policy discussions. For example, nowadays when the government is trying to increase

⁵² Thomas Heberer, "Institutional Change and Legitimacy via Urban Elections?," in Regime

Legitimacy in Contemporary China: Institutional Change and Stability, ed. Thomas Heberer and

Gunter Schubert (New York: Routledge, 2008), 99.

⁵³ He and Warren, "Authoritarian Deliberation: The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political

Development," 283.

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the water rate, it will hold public hearings for sure. Ordinary people should participate." ⁵⁴ Interviewee B03's response is similar, "The government should listen to citizens' opinions, and it does consult the people today. For example, when the government planned to expand a road in my neighborhood several years ago, it came to us and negotiated with us." ⁵⁵

Like their responses to the core question (2), generational difference also appears in participants' answers to the core question (3): Would you agree that policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate? Specifically, interviewees belong to the youngest generation (20- to 29-year-old) in my sample are more likely to use the language of rights to justify their entitlement to political participation than the older generations. For instance, to the core question (3) interviewee A02 declares loudly, "No! I do not agree. As a citizen of China, everyone has the right to political participation." ⁵⁶

Interviewee C01 further expresses his democratic hope for China's political future: "I disagree. If the government actually protects my rights, I would certainly participate in politics. My hope is that ten years from now I could finally cast my ballot to choose the government leaders I truly support." Another interviewee offers a commonsensical lecture on democracy,

⁵⁴ Interview on July 20, 2014. Interviewee C09 is a village cadre in his 50s. He completed high school.

⁵⁵ Interview on July 7, 2014. Interviewee B03 is a small business owner in his 30s. He has a high school education.

⁵⁶ Interview on June 18, 2014. Interviewee A02 is a female college student.

⁵⁷ Interview on June 23, 2014. Interviewee C01 is a small business owner in his 20s. He completed high school.

Author: Would you agree that policy making is the business of government officials, and

that ordinary people should not participate?

A06: I disagree. If government leaders say so, they ignore the fundamental rights of

citizens such as their rights to know and to decide public affairs.

Author: What if government leaders argue that they know your interests better than you

do?

A06: They probably will argue that they know the real interests of the people. However,

I think it is very difficult for them to do this.

Author: What do you mean?

A06: I mean that if they do not allow me to express my real needs, government leaders

can only consider my interests from their perspective. No one is perfect. No matter how

smart they are, they cannot know everything.⁵⁸

Clearly, interviewee A06 not only doubts the wisdom of Confucian paternalism, but also roughly

coincides with Robert Dahl's defense of "the principle of strong equality." In *Democracy and Its*

Critics, Dahl argues,

If the good or interests of everyone should be weighed equally, and if each adult person

is in general the best judge of his or her good or interests, then every adult member of an

⁵⁸ Interview on July 5, 2014. Interviewee A06 is currently a male college student. He is also a

member of the Communist Party.

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association is sufficiently well qualified, taken all around, to participate in making binding collective decisions that affect his or her good or interests, that is, to be a full citizen of the demos...Moreover, no adult members are so definitely better qualified than the others that they should be entrusted with making binding collective decisions.⁵⁹

In sum, government-initiated participation is a double-edged sword for the Communist Party of China. On the one hand, it encourages Chinese citizens to believe that they have gained some control over local politics; therefore, to a certain extent it strengthens the authoritarian regime's legitimacy. On the other hand, it helps to trigger a process of democratic consciousness-raising among Chinese people and increase their expectation for further political participation. It remains to be seen whether the rising democratic expectation among Chinese citizens will undermine the legitimacy of the Communist Party. However, one thing is certain: the Confucian idea that ordinary people are not entitled to political participation is outdated, not only for most of my interviewees, but for many other Chinese citizens today.

4. Conclusion

This chapter presents my interview study on political obligations in the Chinese city, Qufu. During the study, I develop four snowball chains and recruit 31 local residents. I ask interviewees three core questions: Would you agree that (1) we should all follow the decisions of government leaders; (2) the relationship between the government and the people should be like the relationship

⁵⁹ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 105.

between parents and children; and (3) policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate?

There are two important findings from the interview study. First, I demonstrate that researchers' claim that a vast majority of Chinese people endorse the idea of absolute obedience is an over-interpretation. This survey finding is controversial because it is in effect based on an extremely problematic interview question: "government leaders are like the head of a big family; we should all follow their decisions." This survey is double-barreled, and the wording is abstract. Its close-ended interview format, moreover, also obscures the multiple meanings of interviewees' responses.

I, therefore, correct the original survey question and instead ask my interviewees the core question (1) in an in-depth manner. I discover that while interviewees agree that "we should all follow the decisions of government leaders," it does not necessarily mean that they believe in absolute obedience. Upon follow-up, I show that many of my interviewees agree with the core question (1) because they assume the government decisions in questions are beneficial and reasonable. In other words, their agreement with the core question (1) implies conditional obedience. The result thus verifies my suspicions about the validity and reliability of the original survey question.

Considering also the scholarly evidence that demonstrates the growing political assertiveness among Chinese people today, we must doubt the survey finding that 78.6% of Chinese people today endorse the idea of absolute obedience.⁶⁰ The survey finding of Chinese people's absolute obedience is likely overstated if not invalid altogether.

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⁶⁰ See table 5.2 above.

Secondly, my study also suggests that Confucian political obligation is losing its impact on Chinese people today. I design the core questions (2) and (3) to probe two main elements in the Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude; namely, the components of the parent-state analogy and commoners' political incompetence. Taking together my participants' responses to these two questions, I divide them into three groups. Table 5.5 is the quantitative report.

 Table 5.5: Total, Partial and Non-Supporters of Confucian Political Obligation

	total supporters	partial supporters	non- supporters	total interviewees
N	2	19	10	31
Gender				
Female	1	8	6	15
Male	1	11	4	16
Education				
Tertiary	-	3	4	7
Secondary	1	9	6	16
Primary	1	7	-	8
Age				
60-69	-	2	-	2
50-59	1	7	-	8
40-49	1	5	2	8
30-39	-	2	2	4
20-29	-	3	6	9

Accordingly, the first group, *total supporters*, includes interviewees who fully identify with the spirit of Confucian political obligation. Respondents in this category agree with the core question (2) as well as the core question (3). In other words, the *total supporters* not only endorse the parent-state analogy but also express their incompetence in terms of political participation. Only two of my respondents in Qufu belong to this category. Second, *partial supporters* are people

who partly identified with the spirit of Confucian obligation of paternalistic gratitude. The majority of my interviewees (19 out of 31) belong to this category. *Partial supporters* accept the parent-state analogy but reject their exclusion from political participation. Finally, the third group does not show signs of Confucian political obligation. To these *non-supporters* of the Confucian obligation of paternalistic gratitude, they not only reject the parent-state analogy but also assert their political rights. The overall pattern in table 5.5 above clearly shows that Confucian political obligation is losing its impact among my interviewees in Qufu.

We have reason to believe that Confucian political obligation is also a spent force in China as a whole. In the above analysis, we offer evidence to demonstrate that in general Chinese people's belief in the parent-state analogy and commoners' political incompetence is fading away. Since the two important elements of Confucian paternalistic gratitude are outdated to many citizens of China, it is not implausible to say that, all things being equal, the Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude is losing its impact across China.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The conclusions of this dissertation are philosophical, historical and empirical. I am also interested in discussing how the findings of this work can help us to solve a puzzle in the literature regarding gratitude-based political obligations. I divide the conclusions into two sections. Section 1 discusses the social construction of gratitude-based political obligations. Section 2 is the summary of the dissertation's findings.

1. The Social Construction of the Argument from Gratitude

In Chapter 2, we point out that the *specificity requirement* of gratitude-based political obligations is counterintuitive. Normally, we assume that how to demonstrate our gratefulness is a personal choice. If our benefactors demand us to pay the debt of gratitude in a particular way, we may not regard the requirement as a legitimate one. Therefore, in terms of politics, "the difficulty of political obligations based on gratitude is that a theory of political obligation demands a specific response; the recipient is not under a general obligation to express his gratitude to the state in some appropriate way but has a specific obligation to obey the law." The puzzle generated by this specificity requirement revolves around two related question: Why must an individual demonstrate his gratefulness by obeying the law? Why can't he express his gratitude by giving the state, say, a flower?

In that same chapter, I also argue that like other gratitude-based theory, Confucian political obligation also cannot solve this puzzle. Indeed, I suggest that the specificity requirement is the

¹ Klosko, "Four Arguments Against Political Obligations from Gratitude," 34.

inherent weakness of every gratitude-based theory of political obligations. A specific demand on grateful citizens' compliance with the law is just going against our moral intuition regarding the ethic of gratitude.

Nevertheless, after my study of Confucian political obligation both in theory and reality, I believe I can solve this puzzle now. To begin with, at a philosophical level, every intellectual discussion of political obligations is a Socratic dialogue where the ideal form can never be seen. Philosophically, as Simmons' *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* suggests, there are grave problems in each theory of political obligations.² In fact, the specificity requirement is the Achilles heel of a gratitude-based theory of political obligations. However, if we put a gratitude-based argument into a historical context, we find that, in reality, the specificity requirement has more to do with *social constructions* than theoretical justifications.

As we have seen, in Chinese history, political obligations of paternalistic gratitude are not merely theoretical. They are political ideologies serving to indoctrinate the masses. Indeed, many political leaders in Chinese history have advanced the political idea of paternalistic gratitude. From Xuanzong's *Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety* to the *Diary of Lei Fong*, they have attempted to make ordinary people believe that commoners should *specifically* demonstrate their gratefulness by obeying the law.

Put differently, in the context of China, the specificity requirement of a gratitude-based obligation is put forward as a goal of political indoctrinations. Its success does not rely on philosophical persuasions but on social constructions. As theorists of social construction argue, individuals' choices are shaped by the context in which they live. Social contexts, such as daily

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² Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*.

encounters with public discourses and social norms, delimit the meaning and boundaries they use to live in the real world. It constitutes how individuals "are able to think and conceive of themselves, what they can and should desire, what their preferences are, their epistemology and language." That is, when a citizen is successfully made to internalize the specificity requirement in the political propaganda, the idea that political gratitude requires compliance with the law becomes his political desire and preference. In other words, "why can't I give the government a flower?" is not a question for him.

As a matter of fact, though not being discussed, the idea of social construction has already appeared in the existing literature on gratitude-based obligations. Some theorists of gratitude maintain that it is not enough for us to feel grateful for our benefactors only. Gratefulness also requires us to demonstrate our gratitude to the benefactors through *appropriate* behaviors. Fred. R. Berger's arguments are illuminating. He states,

An adequate demonstration of our appreciation and concern for our parents could never be a mere handshake. A kiss on the cheek might suffice for a particular birthday present, but it is not an adequate demonstration of appreciation for years of care, inconvenience, and, perhaps, sacrifice...It is very hard to say just what is appropriate, and it may be that there can be no answer in the abstract.⁵

³ Nancy J. Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 11.

⁴ See, for example, Berger, "Gratitude." And Dudley Knowles, "Gratitude and Good Government," *Res Publica* 8, no. 1 (2002).

⁵⁵ Berger, "Gratitude," 303.

Berger argues that the answer to the *appropriate demonstration* of filial gratitude depends on the relationship within a particular family. I agree with it. But I would like to suggest that the answer also depends on the social norms surrounding that particular family. Children learn the appropriate demonstration of filial gratitude from their society. For instance, while it may be appropriate in the West to send parents to a nursing home, it might be considered a violation of filial piety among many Chinese people.

As it stands, how to appropriately demonstrate one's gratefulness to the state is also not merely a personal choice. It is partly a matter of social construction. For example, in my Qufu interview study, when I ask the interviewee C03 how he should demonstrate his gratefulness to the state, he immediately replies, "I feel that you should contribute to the state. It does not matter how much you contribute. At least, you should not sabotage the government, commit treason, violate the law or do things that cause chaos." This response echoes Communist propaganda. Similarly, as Michael Wallace also demonstrates, the idea of paternalistic gratitude was accepted by many colonists in the pre-revolutionary period in America as "a major component of the ideology that tied the empire together and kept the colonies in subjection for so long a period of time."

In his reading of gratitude-based political obligations, Klosko is puzzled by the issue that "the recipient is not under a general obligation to express his gratitude to the state in some

⁶ Interviewee on June 24, 2014. C03 is a kitchen assistant in his late 20s. He completed middle school and comes from a peasant family.

⁷ Wallace, "Paternalism and Violence," 206.

appropriate way but has a specific obligation to obey the law." It becomes clear now that, according to the idea of social construction, the *specific* obligation to obey the law is just the *appropriate* way to express one's gratefulness to the state.

I am not saying that the social construction of gratitude-based obligations can brainwash every citizen. What I am arguing is that to the extent a citizen is made to internalize the political propaganda about a gratitude-based political obligation, it becomes inappropriate for him to give the government a flower. Feeling grateful for benefits received may be a moral intuition. However, in reality, obeying the law out of gratitude might be better understood as a product of social construction. The specificity requirement may not pass philosophical scrutiny, but it does provide an empirical grounding in human history.

2. Summary of the Findings

The central theoretical finding of the dissertation is, of course, that the Confucian answers to the question of why people should obey the state is an argument of paternalistic gratitude. In Chapter 2, I have attempted to unearth the moral assumption of Confucian political obligation in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. While some scholars have demonstrated a reciprocal obligation in Classical Confucianism, they fall short of specifying the moral principle underlying Confucian reciprocity. Worse still, I have found that, in their study of Classical Confucianism, many of them have mistaken the elite's political duty for a theory of political obligation. To further understand Classical Confucian political obligation, I thus argue that we should focus on passages in the classics that specifically address the political role of ordinary people.

⁸ Klosko, "Four Arguments Against Political Obligations from Gratitude," 34. Italics mine.

By changing the focus from elite to commoners, I find a passage in the *Analects* containing Confucius' message of a theory of political obligation. In this passage, Duke Ai asked Confucius, "What must I do to gain the obedience of the common people?" Confucius replied, "Raise up the straight and place them over the crooked and the common people will obey; raise up the crooked and place them over the straight, and the common people will disobey." Following Confucius's arguments in the *Analects* and referring to the *Mencius* as the most authoritative commentary on them, I decipher the conversation between Duke Ai of Lu and Confucius as follows:

A ruler is like commoners' parent who is responsible to take care of them. If he could promote virtuous men to help him practice benevolent governance, the people would feel grateful for the benefits received from his leadership. If the common people feel grateful to his governance, they would also demonstrate their gratefulness by obeying the ruler as they do their loving parents. Conversely, if a ruler turns to be malevolent, the people are morally right to disobey.

Based on the exegetical evidence presented in Chapter 2, I, therefore, specify the Confucian reciprocal political obligation as an argument of paternalistic gratitude. Accordingly, Confucians believe that

- (1) ordinary people are like children and not qualified to govern themselves;
- (2) the ruler is compared to commoners' parents and responsible for the latter's welfare;
- (3) people should feel grateful to benefits received from a benevolent government;

⁹ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 2.19.

- (4) people should demonstrate their gratefulness by obeying the benevolent state as they do their loving parents; and
- (5) although ordinary people are ignorant, they nevertheless are able to judge the impact of political decisions on their personal economic welfare. If the ruler deprives them of their basic needs, the people are morally right to disobey the state.

Chapter 3 challenges the common wisdom about the historical development of Confucian political obligation. Many scholars have argued that Confucian political obligation was transformed into a doctrine of absolute obedience during China's imperial period. As Zhengyuan Fu argues, "The officially reconstructed version of Confucianism had...ensured the indoctrination of the populace, transforming the people into docile subjects during the Imperial era." I find the idea of absolute obedience counterintuitive. I doubt the relevance of an argument of absolute obedience to normal human beings. If Confucianism can make people absolutely obey, I suggest that it is not only a political philosophy but also a political sorcery.

My doubt is justified after reviewing the literature on Imperial Confucian political obligation. I find that most scholars do not offer convincing evidence to demonstrate that Imperial Confucianism is a doctrine of absolute obedience. Briefly, many of them use scholar-officials' political memorandums and personal correspondences to prove that Imperial Confucianism is an oppressive ideology. However, if the texts they quote were not endorsed by the courts and had not been consumed by the commoners, how could those quotations help Chinese emperors transform ordinary people into docile subjects? As a matter of fact, we cannot assume that every text found

¹⁰ Fu, Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics, 66.

in Imperial China belongs to the category of Imperial Confucianism. To be included in this category, the text in question should be a part of the official propaganda. In short, Imperial Confucianism should be viewed as what the Chinese emperors said it was to the ordinary people.

Based on this criteria, I select three critical cases of Imperial Confucianism. They are the Imperial Commentary on the Classic of Filial Piety (海注孝經), the Imperial Grand Pronouncements (御制大誥), and the Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict (聖諭廣訓). My reading shows that political obligation in Imperial Confucianism does not demand subjects' absolute obedience. Authors of these three texts maintain that, first of all, commoners are like children and cannot live without a benevolent ruler. Second, a benevolent ruler is compared to people's parents. He is responsible for their economic and moral welfare. Third, the people should obey a benevolent ruler out of gratitude as they would obey their loving parents. Moreover, since the emperors' interpretation of political obligation is based on an argument of paternalistic gratitude, it implies that if the ruler ceased to take care of his subjects, he would not earn political obligation from the people. In short, as it is in Classical Confucianism, the political obligation in Imperial Confucianism is conditional. It remains a theory of paternalistic gratitude.

The finding that Confucian political obligation consistently remains an argument of paternalistic gratitude poses a significant challenge to the survey research on Confucian political obligation in China. Today, many survey researchers have equated Confucianism with absolute obedience and operationalized it as *the* variable to study the relevance of "Confucian submissiveness" to Chinese people today. My philosophical and historical study of Confucian political has demonstrated that their survey question regarding Confucian political obligation is apparently not Confucian at all.

Further, Chapter 4 also presents a methodological critique of this survey question. First, I argue that the close-ended interview format of the survey research may obscure the multiple meanings of interviewees' responses regarding political obligations. Second, I show that the question—government leaders are like the head of a big family; we should all follow their decisions—is tainted with the problem of double-barreledness and abstract language. Third, I point out that the survey research does not adequately deal with the issue of political sensitivity. As a result, respondents may nod in agreement with the head-of-family question to avoid political troubles. All in all, methodologically, the head-of-family question loses its validity and renders the results difficult to analyze, to say the least.

The problems in the survey research call for an empirical reinvestigation into the impact of Confucian political obligation on citizens of contemporary China. My interview study in Qufu answers to this call. As discussed in the research design section of Chapter 4, I adopt several strategies to capture the moral reasoning of Chinese people in terms of political obligations. First, to prevent myself from imposing a pet theory on interviewees' answers, I use the method of indepth interview. Unlike the close-ended interview format, participants in my study are invited to narrate and define their ideas of political attitudes in an open-ended fashion. Second, to make sure my interviewees feel comfortable discussing sensitive political issues, I use the snowball sampling approach to ensure the relationship of trust. Third, I develop several snowball chains during the study to record rich and broad perspectives on political obligations. Fourth, to avoid the problem of double-barreledness and abstract wording, I carefully select interview questions to investigate how my interviewees will respond to the idea of absolute political obedience and the conception of Confucian paternalistic gratitude. I prepare three questions for my interview study in Qufu:

- (1) "We should all follow the decisions of government leaders."
- (2) "The relationship between the government and the people should be like the relationship between parents and children."
- (3) "Policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate."

In Chapter 5, I report and discuss the finding of the Qufu interview study. Interviewees' responses to the core question (1) offer a stark contrast to the report from the survey research. While the latter concludes that a vast majority of ordinary Chinese endorse the idea of absolute obedience, none of my respondents wholeheartedly agrees that they should follow government decision unconditionally. Even when a few of them initially agreed with the core question (1), their positions turned to disagreement after I allow them to clarify their ideas about political obligations. If the same question were also applied in the close-ended survey interview, it would be very likely that interviewees' initial agreement will be immediately interpreted as a belief in absolute obedience. Because survey researchers have not documented the process of moral reasoning as I endeavor to do in my Qufu study, I suggest that their finding about the dominance of absolute obedience among Chinese people amounts to an over-interpretation.

I then ask interviewees the core questions (2) and (3) to see how they respond to two basic constructs in Confucian political obligation of paternalistic gratitude. The core question (2) represents the Confucian parent-state analogy. To Confucians, if a ruler would take care of the people as if they were his own children, the latter would respect and obey him out of gratitude. In this sense, respondents' acceptance of the parent-state analogy is the first indicator of their belief in Confucian political obligation.

Similar to the results of the survey research, my in-depth interview study also finds a large portion of interviewees endorse the parent-state analogy. However, instead of interpreting the parent-state analogy as a Confucian mentality, I demonstrate its alternative Communist origin. If Chinese people's belief in the political paternalism has multiple sources, then to claim that each endorsement of the parent-state analogy as Confucian in nature is an interpretive oversimplification.

Most importantly, I suggest that Chinese respondents' agreement with the core question (2) may, in effect, be universal and authoritarian in nature. By constraining interviewees' acceptance of paternalistic gratitude within the Confucian paradigm, survey researchers of Chinese politics might miss a chance to test further a hypothesis in the political world; namely, authoritarianism begets political obligations of paternalistic gratitude.

My interviewees' responses to the question (2) also show a pattern of *generational* replacement. While the parent-state analogy is greatly supported by older generations among my interviewees, the majority in the age range of 20 to 29 disagree with it and describe government officials as the servants of people. Since this pattern is consistent with evidence drawing from other empirical studies, I suggest that Chinese citizens' belief in the parent-state analogy and its associated perception of political helplessness will likely fade as time goes by.

The core question (3)—policy making is the business of government officials; ordinary people should not participate—is designed to study respondents' belief in another fundamental element of Confucian paternalistic gratitude; namely, the assumption that ordinary people are not entitled to political participation. I assume that my interviewees' reluctance to engage in political participation is the second indicator of their identification with Confucian political obligation. I

report that the overwhelming majority of my interviewees disagree with the core question (3). Instead, they assert their rights to political participation.

I am aware of the un-representativeness of my samples. Therefore, I use the method of triangulation to evaluate how well my interview results parallel other studies of political participation in contemporary China. The result is encouraging. Indeed, I do not find a group of idiosyncratic Chinese who naively believe in their entitlement to political participation in the authoritarian China. The growing political assertiveness among Chinese people is well documented in other empirical studies of China. At least among my interviewees in Qufu, both their belief in the parent-state analogy and their reluctance to participate politically are fading away. The total believer in Confucian political obligation is an anomaly in this sample. Taking together my participants' responses to the core questions (2) and (3), and considering also the evidence drawing from other important empirical studies, I suggest that Confucian political obligation is losing its impact on Chinese people today.

What then is the future of political obligations in China? If, as the above evidence suggests, Chinese people today are more open to the idea of political equality and more assertive in terms of political participation than their ancestors, we may expect that consent-based political obligations will also gradually take root in their political mindset. After all, Chinese citizens' rising consciousness of political equality and participation speak to a contractual understanding of the relationship between the state and its citizens. If modern democracy is partly founded on the idea of individual consent, Chinese people today are laying a democratic foundation for their political future.

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