

# The Connectivity of Royal Politics and Democracy

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## Abstract

The relationship between Confucianism and democratic politics has always been an issue of concern and debate in the ideological circles. The focus of attention and debate is on the question of whether Confucian culture and democratic politics are connected. There are different views on this. Some of them think that the two are not compatible. This is a wrong view and is inconsistent with Confucianism. Royal politics is the concentrated expression of Confucian political thought, and has many similarities with democratic politics.

## Keywords

Kingly Politics, Democratic Politics, Commonality

## 1. Controversy in Modern Thought

At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, there were two paths in front of China at that time. One was the road that required complete Westernization, and the other was the road that required both keeping the “national origin” and conforming to the times. The decadence and backwardness of the late Qing Dynasty led to domestic and foreign aggression in China. Once a world power in the East, it was bullied by Western powers. The suffering of fate has awakened a large number of people with lofty ideals, trying to change the backwardness and decay of the country. In this way, the ancient China had to connect with the modern Western world, and met in the way of a young man who was given a new life and beat an old man with his fists. China’s politics and culture, like society and economy, were pushed to the front of people, and whether to “behead” or “heal” or “retain” them became a debated

issue in the ideological circles at that time. But there is one thing that is relatively consistent, that is, they all recognize their own shortcomings, some think it is advanced science and technology without “foreign guns and foreign cannons”, and some think it is the backwardness of culture and system. Therefore, Mr. De and Mr. Sai sent from the Western world, some people choose to completely abandon the original “feudal and backward” culture and system, and embrace them with open arms, while others choose “Chinese body and Western use”, learning advanced Western science and technology, Stick to traditional culture and original system.

With the rise and development of the New Culture Movement, a large number of intellectuals criticized and opposed the traditional Chinese culture with Confucian culture as the main body under the banner of “Down with Confucianism”, and believed that Confucian culture did not have the “democracy” that everyone wanted. With the “scientific” genes, it is no longer suitable for the establishment of democratic politics, nor for the development of China. Conservatives, represented by a group of old intellectuals, still adhere to the traditional Confucian culture and the original system, and also believe that democratic politics and Confucian culture are incompatible, but believe that the “law of the ancestors” is superior to Western democratic politics.

Confucianism and democratic politics in the ideological world has continued to this day. There are the genes of democratic politics, and they can “create” democratic politics. On the other hand, the Neo-Confucians represented by Jiang Qing believed that the political ideal of Confucianism, “kingdom politics”, was not the height that democratic politics could achieve. Therefore, they believed that an inclusive attitude towards democratic politics was nothing but a retreat from Xu Fuguan and Mou Zongsan. The second act of cowardice.

The focus of the confrontation was on the relationship between Confucian traditional culture and democratic politics. Some of them are relatively one-sided, and they do not have a deep enough understanding of Confucianism. Confucian traditional culture and modern democratic politics are not contradictory, nor are they irrelevant. They are fundamentally connected, and there are many manifestations of the same spirit.

## 2. Confucian Political Ideals: Kingly Politics

Kingship politics is the highest political ideal of Confucianism. In short, “kingdom” is “benevolent government”, ruling the world with benevolence and righteousness. The core of Confucian political thought is to govern the world and educate the people in a way that conforms to the principle of “benevolence and righteousness” (Zhu, 1983). It was criticized and opposed by Confucianism. “Kingdom” is praised by Confucianism as a universal principle for the sage king to govern the world, and the most direct source of this principle is Yao, Shun and the “Three Dynasties”, so “Kingdom” is also understood as “the way of the first kings”, the law Yaoshun and the “Three Dynasties”. It’s the way of “king”.

“Do not use Shun to serve Yao and treat the monarch, and not respect his monarch. Do not use Yao to govern the people and rule the people, and it would be a thief for the people.” (Confucius, 1983a) From this, it can be seen that Yao, Shun and the “Three Dynasties” have an extremely high status in Confucianism, and are the most direct, and the most worthy of the “law” of the holy king.

The symbol of “the beginning of the king’s way” is the change of social conditions, “to keep the people healthy and die without regret”, “the people will not be hungry or cold”, and the “king way” is based on the people’s “health and death” and “starvation”. Satisfying the cold and warmth is the top priority, which is the most important manifestation of the “kingdom”, that is, “people-oriented”, and all political actions aim at the social well-being of the people. The social situation at the time of the “Road to the Great Way” was the most ideal society in the minds of Confucians, that is, a Datong society where “the world is public”. In addition, Jiang Qing explained “the king’s way” from the viewpoint of the Gongyang family, “the king’s way leads to three, and the people who connect to heaven and earth are kings”. From this, the “triple legitimacy” of the kingly political regime is proposed, that is, the triple legitimacy of “heaven”, “earth” and “people”. “The legitimacy of ‘Tian’ refers to the legitimacy of transcending the divine, because ‘Tian’ in Chinese culture refers to the ‘Tian’ with a hidden personality that dominates the will and the ‘Tian’ with the natural meaning beyond the divine characteristics; the legitimacy of land refers to the legitimacy of history and culture, because history and culture produce a specific geographical space; the legitimacy of ‘people’ refers to the legitimacy of people’s will, because people’s back and public opinion directly determine whether people voluntarily obey political power. Or political authority.” He proposed the “three-chamber system of parliament”, and the three houses represent the triple legitimacy of “heaven, earth and man” respectively. He hoped to ensure the realization of the triple legitimacy through this institutional arrangement, thus transforming the Confucian ideal of kingship fall into reality.

### **3. The Connection between Kingly Politics and Democratic Politics**

#### **3.1. The Legitimacy of the Regime**

The legitimacy of the regime is related to the issue of political ethics. Jiang Qing believes that there is a problem of “missing legitimacy” in both the West and China. He hopes to solve it through Confucian kingly politics. He believes that the legitimacy of kingly politics is complete and creatively the legitimacy of royal politics is interpreted as triple legitimacy, which is believed to make the regime more stable and run more harmoniously. However, Jiang Qing’s so-called “triple legitimacy” is inconsistent with the Confucian kingly political thought. Although Confucianism discusses what it means to be the emperor, both “heaven’s will” and “public opinion” are regarded as the conditions for becoming the emperor, but the two are different. In terms of levels, “Tianzhi” eventually returned to “public opinion”,

but Jiang Qing placed them side by side and made them restrict each other. As for Jiang Qing's so-called "legality of history and culture", there is no clear statement in Confucianism, but it is also worth discussing. Democracy is based on the legitimacy of public opinion. By exploring the legitimacy of kingly politics, we can clearly see the legitimacy of kingly politics and democratic politics.

### 3.1.1. Mencius: The Relationship between "Heaven's Will" and "Public Opinion"

Wan Zhang said: 'Yao has the world and Shun, are there all?' Mencius said: 'No. The Son of Heaven cannot use the world to match people.' 'Then Shun has the world, who is it?' He said: 'Heaven matches it.' Mencius believed that whoever can take over the world and become the emperor is not a transfer of power between the ruler and his successor, but is determined by the "will of heaven", and the legitimacy of his regime must be appealed to heaven. But how is "Tianzhi" manifested and known to the world? "In the past, Yao recommended Shun to the sky and the sky accepted it, and he violently attacked the people and the people accepted it. Therefore, it is said that the sky does not say anything, but only shows it through deeds and things." Heaven cannot "speak", so it is indicated by "accomplished fact" whether to accept it as the Son of Heaven. "Yao died, and after three years of mourning, Shun avoided the son of Yao and went to the south of the Nanhe River. The princes of the world who entered the audience would not be the son of Yao, but would be Shun, those who litigated the prison would not be the son of Yao, but Shun, and those who sang praises would not praise the son of Yao. And he praised Shun, so it was called Heaven." After Yao's death, Shun did not immediately accept the throne of the emperor, but chose to avoid the south of the Nanhe River, but all the princes of the world went to worship him, and the case was also tried by him. They also sing praises to him, it is the fait accompli that the world's hearts return to show that "God accepts it". From this, it can be seen that "public opinion" is the most direct manifestation of "heaven's will", and the relationship between the two is a high-level and low-level relationship, not a parallel relationship.

"Heaven sees what the people see, and God listens to the people." Although Mencius believed that the ultimate source of the legitimacy of the regime is "heaven's will", the most direct source of the legitimacy of the regime is "public opinion", which is understandable. For "Tianzhi" is the source of legitimacy of "public opinion legitimacy". Those who win the opinion of the people have already won the approval of Heaven, and they can gain the world and become the Son of Heaven.

Therefore, the "legality beyond the sacred" in the "triple legitimacy" mentioned by Jiang Qing is ultimately a return to the legitimacy of public opinion in actual politics. The unity of the legitimacy of the people and the legitimacy of the will of the people. How can you win the hearts of the people without the way of heaven, and how can you win the world without the hearts of the people? The two are inseparable in themselves. "When Jie and Zhou lost the world, they lost their people; those who lost their people lost their hearts. If you gain the world,

there is a way: if you gain the people, you will gain the world. If you gain the people, you will have the way: if you gain your heart, you will gain the people. There is a way to get his heart: gather with him what he wants, and don't do what he hates." When talking about why Jie Zhou lost the world, Mencius also pointed out that it was because he lost the people's heart that he lost the world, and the people's will as the will of heaven. The specific performance of it directly determines who can be the emperor.

### **3.1.2. Comment on the Legitimacy of Jiang Qing's History and Culture**

Jiang Qing believes: "In the process of establishing democratic politics in modern non-Western countries", "the legitimacy of public opinion is the most important" and excludes "the legitimacy of history and culture", cutting off the inheritance of politics and the historical and cultural traditions of the nation in terms of the origin of governance. It is not recognized by the historical and cultural traditions of the nation. Although democratic politics can be recognized by the people of the country in terms of public opinion, it has no origin in the historical and cultural traditions of the nation, so it is still not completely legal. "The legitimacy of public opinion" is only a the public opinion of the people of the country at this time and place, and the "legality of history and culture" is the identity of the public opinion of countless people in history for thousands of years. The country is an organism, and politics is also an organism. Politics cannot be separated from tradition, otherwise the country's Life will be destroyed, and there will be political historical nihilism. The country is the country of the past, the country of the present, and the country of the future. The state is not the result of the rational choice and public opinion of the people, but the result of the continuation and inheritance of history. The organic nature of the state determines that when the state solves the problem of legitimacy, the political authority must obtain the recognition of history and culture, and must continue the life of the country in the past can be legal.

The "historical culture" mentioned by Jiang Qing is dominated by Confucian culture, which is nothing but formed around "benevolence and righteousness" and "propriety". Among them, "li" refers to social behavioral norms and related systems, and is the concrete carrier of "benevolence" and "righteousness". The purpose is to restrain people's behavior. "Zi Zhang asked: 'Is it possible to know the ten generations?' The Master said: 'Yin due to the Xia ritual, the profit and loss is known; Also.'" (Jiang, 2004) Yin Li developed on the basis of Xia Li, and Zhou Li developed on the basis of Yin Li. As for the rituals of later generations, changes will also occur. Since rituals will gain and loss due to revolution, then our inheritance of rites will never be an unaltered "complete inheritance". "Although there are hundreds of generations, it can be known", which means that although ritual has profit and loss, it can be predicted because it will not change at all, that is, "benevolence and righteousness". "Benevolence" is realized by virtue of people's moral consciousness, while "righteousness" remains unchanged due to the persistence of the ethical order of "respect, seniority, and distinction

between men and women". Therefore, as long as benevolence and righteousness are promoted, propriety will not decline. In the history and culture, the focus we should inherit is "benevolence and righteousness", and benevolence and righteousness are in the hearts of the people. At the same time, we should also allow the development and profit and loss of etiquette, because once etiquette leaves "benevolence and righteousness", there is no such thing as "profit and loss". Rigidized and turned into "the etiquette of cannibalism". "If people are not benevolent, how about propriety! If people are not benevolent, how can they be happy!" There is a "propriety" in human nature. Whether the authority can be recognized by history and culture, it is better to say whether the authority has "benevolence and righteousness" and whether it can win popular opinion.

In the same way, although the most direct source of the kingly way is the "Three Dynasties" and Yao and Shun, there is a specific space and a specific time, but it does not mean that its value is not universal. "Everyone has a heart that can't bear people. The ancient kings have a heart that can't bear people, and now he has a government that can't bear people. With a heart that can't bear people, practice government that can't bear people, and govern the world with the palm of your hand." The theory of goodness of nature that everyone has a heart that can't bear people is used as the moral basis for kingly politics. From this, we can know that the king's way is the result of the expansion of the sage king's "unbearable heart", and moral consciousness is the fundamental source of kingship. "Everyone has a heart that can't bear others", the kingly way can be recognized by the world and future generations, and the kingly way can be practiced all over the world and passed on to the world.

The inheritance and development of traditional Confucian culture relies on people's conscious identity, and ultimately returns to public opinion, rather than just a lifeless object that is only written on paper, carried on the tongue or stipulated in the law. However, Jiang Qing proposed the so-called "legality of history and culture" and strongly rejected foreign cultures. As Lu Xun said: "Although the Han and Tang Dynasties also had frontier problems, their courage was so powerful that the people had the self-confidence that they would not become slaves of foreign races, or they never thought that when they used foreign things, it was like taking them prisoner. Driven by freedom, never mind. When it comes to the decline of Lingyi, the nerves are weakened and allergy. Every time I encounter foreign things, I feel as if they are coming to capture me. Think of a reason to cover it up, and the quintessence of the country has become the treasure of the king and the slave." (Confucius, 1983b) Although modern China has suffered tremendous hardships and national self-confidence has been frustrated, compared with China's five thousand years of splendid civilization, this is extremely short-lived and peaceful. Not worth mentioning. Chinese culture can last for thousands of years, even if several foreign invasions have only added new colors to it. The reason is that Chinese culture has been recognized by people of all ethnic groups and consciously inherited by future generations. In addition,

the integration of ethnic groups has continuously injected freshness into it. Blood, this is not only the result of the aspirations of the people, but also the embodiment of the confidence and broad-mindedness of the Chinese nation.

## **3.2. Confucian People-Oriented Spirit**

### **3.2.1. The Government Is in the Support of the People**

One of the core spirits of kingly politics is “people-oriented”, and “the people are the most valuable, followed by the ruler, and the ruler is light” is the most direct expression of it. “Virtue is good governance, and governance is about nourishing the people.” The best embodiment of moral governance is “nurturing the people.” There are many manifestations of “government in the maintenance of the people”, such as “controlling the property of the people”, “teaching the people”, “having fun with the people”, etc. The previous article also mentioned the social situation of “the beginning of the king’s way”, that is, “making the people” Health care and death without regret and “Li people will not be hungry or cold”, the purpose of politics or the object of service is the people, and governing the world actually refers to governing the people of the world. All political activities are centered on the social well-being of the people, which is the core embodiment of the people’s foundation. This is consistent with the inherent requirement of democratic politics to take people as the goal and to pursue the people’s social well-being.

### **3.2.2. The World Is Public**

The issue of legitimacy is also an important manifestation of “people-oriented”. As mentioned above, Yao ceded to Shun, and ceded is not a transfer of power between the incumbent and his successor, but must be based on public opinion. “On the way of the Dao, the world is for the public, and the talents and talents are selected” (Dai, 2009). Mr. Mou Zongsan believes that this is the embodiment of Confucianism in politics. Confucianism believes that “giving up” is more in line with “walking on the Dao”.

In addition, for rulers who have lost public opinion, Mencius proposed “revolution”, and Mencius believed that “only benevolent people should be in high positions; if they are not benevolent in high positions, they will spread their evil to the public”. An inhumane ruler is absolutely necessary. The king must take the people as the fundamental starting point, not only for his own enjoyment, but only in line with the requirements and standards of the king in terms of morality, before he can be in the throne, and those unkind kings, the people can kill him. “King Yi of Qi asked: ‘Tang Fang Jie, King Wu attacked Zhou, are there all?’ Mencius replied: ‘Yu Chuan has it.’ He said: ‘The giant kills its ruler, how can it be?’ He said: ‘The thief is called it? A thief, a thief of righteousness is called crippling, and a thief who is a thief is called a husband. I have heard of killing a husband, but I have never heard of killing a lord.’” Mencius’s theory of revolution raised the status of the people in politics to a very high position, the right to choose the ruler is also in the hands of the people.

But “people-oriented” and “democracy” are not the same thing. “People-oriented”



is a requirement for the monarchy's political practice, as a moral code rather than a system design. The difference is because "democracy" emphasizes the design of the institutional framework under ethics, while "people-oriented" emphasizes morality and its practice. According to Mr. Mou Zongsan's point of view, then "people-oriented" is "the application of reason" inspired by the personality of the sage, and it is the governance of Confucian morality, while "democracy" is "the framework of rationality" and the embodiment of governance. The reason why Mou Zongsan believes that China only has governance and no governance is precisely because of the lack of "the frame of rationality" in China. Although there is an inherent contradiction between "the application of rationality" and "the expression of rationality", Mr. Mou Zongsan believes that "the expression of rationality" can be transformed into "the expression of rationality" through "self-trapping" (Mou, 2006). The spirit embodied in democratic politics is similar to the Confucian people-oriented spirit, so the Confucian people-oriented spirit can create democratic politics through objectification.

#### 4. Conclusion

The connection between kingly politics and democratic politics is based on the conclusion drawn from a deep exploration of Confucianism. In particular, both recognize the dominant position of the people and regard the people as the foundation of politics. The focus of royal politics and democratic politics is on the people rather than the rulers. Democracy is also produced by the people in the struggle against tyrants. The fatigue of the monarchy is an important reason for the emergence of democratic politics. While kingly politics does not oppose the monarchy, it is conditional, that is, "benevolence". The monarchy is also exhausted in China. For the current reality, if the kingly politics is to fall into reality, the abandonment of the monarchy is inevitable and necessary, and it is an inherent requirement of self-reform. The mutual reference and integration of democratic politics and kingly politics will create a new political road.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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