

House of Lim

Confucianism, Kinship and
Gender

Key to House of Lim

- Rules of Kinship and Descent
- Traditional Chinese Concepts of Gender and Gender Roles
- Confucian Ethics

Traditional Chinese Family

- Confucian prescription for correct behavior guided by principles of kinship that shape social behavior of family members
- Patrilineal Descent—extended family
- Sons stay and Daughters leave
- Daughter-in-law not full member of family until she bears a son.
- Ancestor worship



Merging of Kinship Roles and Social Roles

- Patrilineal family is an entity that takes precedence over its individual members
- Individuals are not part of family—sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, wife (s) are members of a family
- Relationship between members of a family is not horizontal—based on mutual love—but vertical—characterized by the attributes of obedience and authority

Kinship

- Patrilineal, Patrilocal and Patriarchy
- Husband/Father has power and authority in Family
- Obedience owed Father/Husband
- Lim Han-ci Patriarch
- Importance placed on male relationships and descent traced through a male line

Descriptive Kin Terms

- Specific descriptive kin terms according to their age, sex, generation, and other factors such as marriage
- If one's father has three elder brothers and two younger brothers, then he calls them first *bo fu*, second *bo fu*, third *bo fu*, and first *shu fu*, and second *shu fu*.
- Two relatives address each other from their position as indicated by the kin terms

Terms of Respect and Obedience

- Kinship terms such as grandparents, parents, husband or elder brother represent authority and superiority
- Kinship terms such as wife, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter or even younger brother and younger sister suggest inferiority and obedience
- Inferior is not allowed to call superior by name

Patriarchic Family

- Power over others and resources
- Family is hierarchical patriarchic pyramid
- kin family roles are embedded with established norms governing how people should act and behave in relation to people in other kin roles
- There is a proper “right relationship” way one should act toward one’s father, one’s grandfather, one’s uncles, one’s mother and sister

Confucianism

- Philosophy--How to Live The Good Life
- Basis of Core Chinese Values: Honor, Respect and Obedience to Father and Aged Relative, Importance of Family as Corporate Group and Honor to Ancestors
- “Right Relationship”—guiding principles for thought and action



Confucian Thought

- One of Confucius's disciples asked about the superior man: "He acts before he speaks and then speaks according to his action."
- "He who learns but does not think is lost; he who thinks but does not learn is in danger"
- "When walking in a party of three, I always have three teachers. I can select the good qualities of one for imitation and the bad ones of the other and correct them in myself"

Confucian Ethics

- A guide to the way human beings ought to feel about themselves and others and to the way that feelings and actions should be related
- All humans essentially alike by nature and that the important differences in human beings are determined by environment and education
- Right Relationships: Social and Gender roles and functions of each within the Family
- Wise Family Structure: Hierarchical and Patriarchical

Confucianism and Kinship

- Father: authority who is obeyed, honored and deferred to at all times and in all matters
- Confucian ethics states that there are duties and obligations owed those to whom you speak to and to whom you are related
- Must Act in Right Relationship: inferior defers to superior

Confucian Filial Piety

- Correct behavior towards parents and other elderly family members
- Devotion to Aged Parents—(Father remains head of family with full authority no matter what his age or age of his sons)
- If father dies, eldest son becomes head of household and cares for obedient mother
- Devotion to Dead Parents and Ancestors

Confucian Ethics of Behavior

- Required Etiquette System
- Doctrine of the Mean—one should aim for proper expression of behavior or thought, neither arrogant nor humble
- Belief that people should be reasonable, not merely reasoning beings
- Idea of appropriate restraint in thought, speech and behavior

Confucian Three Observances

- Within the Family- the Father/Husband is like the ruler/
- Obedience to father/husband assures harmony in the family
- Harmony is maintained and sustained through filial piety

Ancestor Worship

- As seen in film “ care for ancestors and ancestors care for you”
- All male ancestors
- Ancestor tablets in homes
- Rituals associated with ancestor worship
- Son existed not only to continue his present family but the extended family that came before

5 Hierarchical Relationships

- Ruler/subject
- Husband/wife
- Father/son
- Brother/brother
- Friend—the only relationship between equals
- Husband/wife is same as Ruler/ruled

Family in Confucian Ethic

- Family is primary institution—an microcosm of society
- Family takes no account of individual but places all emphasis on the right relationship between and among family members
- Hierarchical and Patriarchy
- Eldest male is head of family and is the source of authority for all members of the family
- Organization of Chinese Family persisted for 2,000 years in large measure to Confucian ethics

Women in Traditional Chinese Society

- Given little thought and less power
- Seen as Reproducers of male line and aid in home/farm labor
- Only small amounts of power and responsibility
- Patriarchy demands that a wife's only connection with her husband's family be through the husband himself

Wives

- Practice 5 Virtues
- Womanly work, womanly deportment, obedience, womanly speech and filial treatment of husband's parents
- “A wife considers her husband to be heaven”

Wife's Place

- Her future is caught up with husband's and her sons only
- She is expected "to see her husband's interests as paramount in importance."
- Wife only accepted in husband's family when she bears her husband sons.
- Bear a son not only for continuity of descent but also for her own well being and position in her own family

Why is it important to give birth to a Son?

- Surnames were passed down through male lines
- Surnames integral to creating kinship system which placed heavy emphasis on male superiority
- Hereditary surnames were also the primary form of hierarchical family organization and needed to practice ancestor worship

Husband /Wife Relationship

- Hierarchal: resembles the relationship between ruler and subject
- Ideal wife sacrifices herself completely to serve her husband and family
- “Home perishes when the hen crows”
- Women required to obey her father, her husband, and then her son
- All husbands are considered righteous

Daughters in Law

- Occupies the lowest position in the household
- Mothers in Law/Wife of Older Brother have higher status
- Slightest error all patrilineal relatives including small male children will reprimand
- Not related by blood—will always be an outsider

Daughters

- Considered unimportant
- Do not take care of elderly parents and do not worship ancestors unless ancestors of husband
- Never really belong to family—marry out enter husband's family
- Expensive: must have dowry to marry
- Practice female infanticide

Adopted Daughters

- Practice to adopt daughters from other families as future spouses of sons
- Rationale: A daughter that grows up within the family knows the family dynamic and personalities of family members
- Sons grow up with “sisters” who turn out to be “wives

Sisters-in-law

- Wife of Eldest Son is senior to wife of younger brothers
- Conflict between sisters-in-law source of disharmony in household
- Wives of younger sons urge breaking up of extended households upon death of father-in-law

Peihotien Village

- Constitutes a large family
- Share one family name and have same ancestors
- Hall of Ancestors in which all memorial tablets (pieces of wood written with names of the dead symbolizing the souls of them) of the ancestors are placed and worshipped

