

The Nature of Ritual-Based Governance in the Philosophical thought of Confucius

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study is to clarify the concept, nature and role of Rites in the philosophical system of Confucius, thereby determining its position and meaning in Confucianism. This study is based on the hypothesis that Rites is not only a system of ethical norms but also has a profound philosophical nature in maintaining social order. To achieve the set goals and hypotheses, the article focuses on analyzing the role of Rites in social organization and management, maintaining social order; Rites in personality training, guiding people to a harmonious and stable society. To achieve the set goals, the study uses basic methods such as analysis and synthesis, history - logic, comparison, and approach to political and social philosophy. This study not only contributes to clarifying Confucius's political and social thoughts but also provides a scientific perspective on the method of organizing and managing society based on the foundation of ethics and rituals.

KEYWORDS: Li 禮 (ritual); philosophy; Confucius.

1. INTRODUCTION

Li 禮 (ritual) is one of the core principles of Confucian thought. It plays an important role in building and maintaining social order. Not only a system of rules of conduct, Li 禮 also has a profound philosophical nature, expressing Confucius's views on ethics, politics and social organization. Since ancient times, this thought has had a profound influence on Eastern political and social philosophy, especially in feudal regimes in China and Asian countries, including Vietnam. Studying Li 禮 not only helps us better understand the ideological foundation of Confucius but also provides insight into how to organize and govern society in history. In addition, clarifying the nature of Li 禮 will help systematically explain Confucius's philosophical thoughts, especially the relationship between ethics and politics. Li 禮 is not simply the observance of rituals, but also a method of social management based on human morality and self-awareness. Confucius believed that an ideal society must be governed by morality instead of coercion by law and that leaders must be exemplary models of virtue to influence the people. Therefore, studying the nature of Rites is a way to gain a deeper understanding of the political philosophical foundation of Confucianism in general and Confucius in particular. In the modern context, although society has changed a lot, the rule of law has increasingly asserted its role, but the ideology of Rites still has certain values. The principles of Rites, especially the promotion of morality in state governance and human personality education, can still be referred to in policy making, education and social management. Therefore, studying this issue not only has theoretical significance in systematizing Confucian philosophy but also has practical value when considering the possibility of applying Confucian ideology to modern society.

This study aims to clarify the concept and nature of Rites in Confucius's philosophical thought, thereby determining its position and meaning in the Confucian philosophical system. Rites are not simply a set of rules of conduct but also reflect Confucius's views on how to organize and operate society based on ethics and ritual standards. Clearly defining the content of Rites will help us understand more deeply the foundation of Confucius's political and social ideology as well as the method of managing people by ethics instead of coercive laws. In addition, the study will focus on analyzing the role of Rites in social organization and political governance according to Confucius's thought. Rites are not only a tool to maintain order but also a means to train personality, guiding people towards a harmonious and stable society. Analyzing the relationship between Rites and other factors such as Humanity and Law will help clarify the methods proposed by Confucius to maintain a stable and sustainable political system. In addition, the study also aims to evaluate the advantages and limitations of Rituals from a philosophical perspective. Historically, Rituals have contributed significantly to the formation of an orderly and ethical society, however, it also revealed limitations such as conservatism, maintaining a rigid hierarchical system and lacking a clear legal mechanism. Objectively evaluating the positive and negative aspects of Rituals will help to propose a suitable approach to this ideology in the modern context.

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This study is based on the hypothesis that Rites is not simply a system of moral norms but also has a profound philosophical nature in maintaining social order. According to Confucius's thought, Rites is not only limited to rituals or rules of conduct but also represents a method of organizing and managing society based on a moral foundation. Through Rites, people are educated to live according to common standards, thereby creating a harmonious and stable society without the need for legal coercion. Thus, the nature of Rites is not only in form but also represents a philosophy of social governance that emphasizes individual self-awareness and moral cultivation. In addition, the study also assumes that although the Rites model may reveal limitations when applied in a modern context, it still has certain reference value. In traditional society, Rites is effective thanks to the emphasis on the role of individual morality and stable hierarchical relationships. However, in today's era, when society operates according to the principles of rule of law and equality, the rigid application of Rituals may no longer be appropriate. Nevertheless, the core principles of Rituals, especially the emphasis on ethics in social governance and human education, can still be inherited and applied in many fields such as state management, education, and corporate culture building.

2. RESEARCH METHOD AND THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1. Research methods

To clarify the nature of Rites in Confucius's philosophical thought, we use the following main research methods:

Analytical and synthetic methods. The purpose of using the analytical and synthetic methods in the study of the nature of Rites in Confucius's philosophical thought is to clarify the connotation, role, and meaning of this concept in the Confucian philosophical system.

Historical-logical method. The purpose of the study is to study the formation and development of the ideology of Rites in the historical context of the Spring and Autumn period, when Confucius built his philosophical system. Analyze the relationship between Rites and other elements in Confucian thought, such as Humanity, Correct Name, Virtue, to clarify the logic and system of this doctrine.

The comparative method is used to compare Rites with other models of social governance such as Law and Humanity to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and applicability of Rites. Compare Confucius's views on Rites with the approaches of later Confucian philosophers such as Mencius and Xun Zi to clarify the continuity and differences.

The approach to political and social philosophy aims to study Rites not only in the scope of moral philosophy but also in the context of political philosophy and social management, thereby drawing out theoretical and practical implications. Assessing the impact of Rites on the traditional Eastern political and social system and its applicability in the modern context. The combination of the above main research methods will help us approach the problem in a comprehensive, scientific and systematic way, thereby drawing conclusions of theoretical value and practical application.

2.2. Theoretical basis

To study an issue, it is necessary to rely on a solid theoretical foundation system and assessments of previous researchers. In the work on the theme of the nature of Rituals in Confucius' philosophical thought, we rely on the following theoretical foundations:

Studies on Confucian doctrine and Confucian philosophy through issues such as: Confucian thoughts on "Rituals" and its role in regulating social relationships (Wang, Y., et al. 2020; Yang, Y. 2022; Sigurðsson, G. 2012). Confucian thoughts on Li 禮 (ritual). is one of the core contents of Confucian philosophy (Kosec, M. M. 2023; Nam, K. H. 2015; Nam, K. H. 2014; Wang, X. 2021; Li, J. 2021). Studies on Confucian thought on "Ritual" all agree that this is an important system of ethical and social norms in Confucianism, playing a role in regulating relationships in the family and society. However, we believe that there are different views on how to understand and evaluate the role of "Ritual". Some studies emphasize its positive value in maintaining order and cultivating personality, while other studies point out the limitations of Ritual when applied in practice, especially in the context of modern society. This article will focus on clarifying the nature of Ritual in Confucian thought. To do that, it is necessary to approach it objectively, both recognizing its philosophical and ethical value and assessing the challenges when applying it in practice.

Confucius's thoughts on "rectification of names" (Yong, I. 2025; Liu, Y. 2024; Rozi, F. 2022; Defoort, C. 2021), benevolent governance (Yanhua, W. E. I. 2023; Yao, X., & Wang, S. 2024; Van Dung, V. 2022a) and "virtuous governance" (Van Dung, V. 2022; Yuan, L., Chia, R., & Gosling, J. 2023; Lan, L., Zhu, Q., & Liu, Y. 2021; Lee, J. 2022) are important contents in his political and social philosophy, closely related to "Ritual governance". Studies on these factors have had many different approaches, from the perspective of philosophy and political science to the history of thought. The evaluation Studies on this topic help clarify how Confucius built a social governance system based on morality and rites, as well as the value and limitations of this system in practice (Van Dung, V. 2023b). Studies have shown that these ideas are closely related to each other and together form Confucius' political philosophy system. Scholars all agree that this is a social governance system based on morality and order, which helps maintain stability in feudal society. However, there are still differences in assessment. Studies supporting the idea that this model creates a harmonious society that values morality and respects rites (VAN VO, D., & XUAN CAO, L. 2022). Critical studies have shown that this system can lead to conservatism, lack of flexibility and transparent monitoring mechanisms, which can be easily exploited to maintain the power of the ruling class (Vo Van, D. 2023b). In the modern context, many scholars suggest that Confucianism can

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still be applied to a certain extent, such as in moral education, corporate governance and organizational culture building. However, in order to adapt to modern society, it is necessary to combine it with elements of the rule of law and democracy to ensure fairness and transparency in social management.

Studies on Confucius's ideas on Rites have had a profound influence on later Confucian thinkers (Van Dung, V., Hoa, L. M., & Van Quyet, L. 2023), especially Mencius and Xun Zi. However, although they both inherited the spirit of Confucius, Mencius and Xun Zi (Van Dung, V. 2024a) had different views on the role of Rites in social governance (Vo Van, D. 2023). Studies on this topic focus on comparing the understanding and application of Rites between the three thinkers to clarify the development and transformation of Confucian thought (Dinh, D. Q., & Van Dung, V. 2024). We believe that Confucius emphasized the combination of Rites and Ren, considering Rites as a means of maintaining order based on morality. Mencius valued Ren more than Rites, emphasizing the benevolence of the ruler to maintain society. Xun Zi placed Rites in the highest position, considering them as mandatory tools for training people and maintaining social order. All three ideas are valuable in social governance, especially in building morality and educating people.

Confucius's Rites not only had a profound influence on Confucian philosophy but also became a governance model applied through many feudal dynasties in China and Vietnam (Van Dung, V., Tung, D. T., & Na, P. T. A. 2024). Studies on this topic focus on analyzing how Rites were institutionalized in the political, legal and social life systems of the dynasties, and evaluating its advantages and limitations in specific historical contexts (Van Dung, V. 2023). Studies have shown that Rites are an effective governance model in maintaining social order, especially in traditional agricultural societies. However, the rigidity of Rites also leads to many limitations, especially in modern times when the requirements for flexibility and economic and scientific development become more important. We believe that Vietnam adopted Rites from China but adjusted them to suit social realities.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To conduct research on the topic of the nature of Rites in Confucius's philosophical thought, we pose the following questions:

How is Rites understood in Confucius's philosophical thought?

What role do Rites play in maintaining social order and stability?

Is Rites still suitable for modern society?

4. RESEARCH CONTENT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research content

The Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC) was a turbulent period in Chinese history, marking the decline of the central authority of the Zhou Dynasty and the rise of the vassal states. The Zhou Dynasty, which had maintained social order through the system of rituals and music and imperial order, gradually lost its real power as the vassal states grew stronger and began to compete for power. This decline created an unstable political environment where wars between states were frequent, social order was disrupted, and traditional moral values were eroded. The social landscape of the Spring and Autumn Period also saw dramatic changes in economic and class structures. The development of agriculture, handicrafts, and commerce led to the emergence of the scholar class—a class of educated intellectuals, not bound by aristocratic lineage, who could participate in state administration through talent and education. This created the premise for the development of philosophical ideas to seek a model of social organization suitable for the new reality. It was in this context that Confucius appeared with the idea of restoring social order through the promotion of Rites. He believed that the decline of morality and rules was the cause of social chaos. Therefore, he advocated restoring and perfecting the Rites system - a set of moral norms and standards of conduct to maintain social stability. For Confucius, Rites were not just superficial rituals but also a manifestation of an ideal social order, in which each individual had a clear position and responsibility. It can be seen that Confucius's ideas did not originate from pure theory but from the practical need to stabilize society during the Spring and Autumn period. He sought a way to bring society back to harmony and order by promoting Rites, considering it the foundation for building a disciplined, ethical and fair society.

Confucius' philosophy revolves around five basic elements (benevolence, propriety, righteousness, wisdom, and trustworthiness). These are not only moral values but also principles of social organization, contributing to building a stable and harmonious order. These principles are closely related to each other, forming a complete system of thought, reflecting Confucius's concept of human conduct and social governance. Benevolence is the most important principle in Confucius's thought, expressing love between people. According to Confucius, a person with Benevolence is someone who knows how to put himself in the position of others, treating everyone with tolerance, compassion, and goodwill. He emphasized that Benevolence is not only limited to the family but must also extend to society, becoming the basic moral principle to build a harmonious society. Rites in Confucius's thought are not simply religious rituals or social etiquette but also a system of ethical norms that help maintain social order. He believed that Rites help each individual realize their position and responsibility in the family, community and country. Rites, according to Confucius, are an effective method of governance, helping to maintain discipline without the need for criminal coercion. Righteousness is the principle that guides people to act according to morality and justice. Confucius emphasized that a gentleman must put Righteousness above personal interests, act honestly, and not seek unjust personal gain. In social governance, Righteousness is the foundation for building

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an honest government that knows how to put the interests of the people first. Wisdom in Confucius's thought is not only innate intelligence but also profound understanding, the ability to distinguish right from wrong and knowing how to behave appropriately. A person with Wisdom is someone who knows how to learn, knows how to correct mistakes and has dialectical thinking. Confucius especially emphasized learning and training oneself to develop intelligence, considering it an important factor to help people perfect themselves and contribute to building a better society. Trust is the principle of keeping one's word, living honestly and being trustworthy. According to Confucius, a person without Trust is unlikely to build trust in society. In state administration, a government that does not keep its word with the people will lose support and lead to decline. Therefore, Trust is not only a personal quality but also the foundation for building a sustainable and stable society. These five elements form a coherent system of thought in Confucian philosophy. They not only guide individual ethics but also have important significance in social administration. Confucius believed that if each individual cultivates according to these principles, society will operate in a harmonious, stable and sustainable order. These values are not only meaningful in feudal society but also have important reference value in today's era, especially in the fields of ethics, education and state administration.

In the Confucian system of thought, Rites do not exist independently but have a close relationship with other philosophical principles. These principles combine to form a comprehensive ideological foundation, not only aiming at the perfection of individual morality but also proposing a method of organizing a stable and harmonious society. Rites, as a model of social governance based on moral norms and ritual order, play a central role in coordinating social relationships and maintaining political stability. In Confucian thought, Ren is the highest moral principle, expressing human love, tolerance and responsibility towards society. Rites cannot be implemented in a formal or rigid manner but must originate from Ren. Confucius emphasized that Rites must be practiced with sincerity and goodwill, otherwise, it will become empty and lose its true meaning. If Ren helps guide the attitude of practicing Rites, then Yi is the criterion to determine the correctness of Rites. Confucius emphasized that practicing Rites is not simply following social norms but must also be in accordance with morality, without losing fairness and integrity. If an individual or a government only uses Rites as a tool to maintain power without Yi, then society will fall into a state of hypocrisy and injustice. Rites are not a rigid system, but require a deep understanding of human nature and society to apply flexibly. Wisdom in Confucius's thought is intelligence, the ability to perceive right and wrong and behave appropriately. A leader who practices Rites needs to have Wisdom to adjust rituals and rules of conduct to suit actual circumstances. If Rites are only followed mechanically without clear thinking, Rites can become an obstacle instead of a tool for regulating society. Trust represents sincerity and keeping one's word in social relationships. A society that practices Rites but lacks Trust will easily fall into a false form, where rituals are only symbolic and have no real value. For a leader, if he practices Rites but does not keep his word with the people, even if he maintains order, the society will still fall into instability due to the loss of trust from the masses. Rites in Confucian thought do not exist independently but are closely linked to Humanity, Righteousness, Wisdom and Trust. Humanity creates the moral motivation to practice Rites, Righteousness helps to adjust Rites according to morality, Wisdom ensures that Rites are applied flexibly and in accordance with reality, and Trust is the foundation for Rites to maintain long-term stability. The combination of these principles forms a complete system of thought, not only guiding the way people behave in society but also the foundation for a model of political governance based on morality and order.

The concept of Rites in Confucian thought has its roots in the cultural and religious life of ancient Chinese society. Initially, the word Rites was written as 豐, which was associated with the rituals of worshiping heaven, earth, gods and ancestors. This is a form of cultural activity with strong religious colors, expressing respect for supernatural beings as well as praying for blessings for the community. However, over time, the scope of meaning of Rites is no longer limited to the field of beliefs but gradually expanded, reflecting the development of political and moral thought in society. The change in the way the word Rites is written also reflects this process. When the radical 示 (示) is added to the word 豐, Rites is no longer just a religious ritual but becomes a system of rituals, rules of conduct and ethical standards, regulating human behavior in social relationships. In Confucian thought, Rites are a core element to maintain social order, from family to nation. It includes rituals, customs, rules of conduct, and regulations on the position and responsibility of each individual in the community. Rites are not simply a form of ritual but also a principle of social organization, reflecting the concept of order, discipline and morality in Confucianism. It is thanks to the combination of traditional rituals with ethical norms that Rites become an important tool in regulating social relationships, contributing to maintaining the stability and development of the community according to Confucius's point of view.

Rites, as a social institution, originated in the primitive communal period and underwent a long development process associated with the transformation of ancient Chinese society. Since the time of Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun, sacrificial rituals have appeared, expressed through the forms of "loai" (sacrificing to the Supreme Being), "nhan" (sacrificing to the gods of the four seasons, the sun god, the moon god, etc.), and "vong" (sacrificing to the mountain god, river god and hundreds of gods). These rituals not only reflect the primitive religious beliefs of humans but also lay the foundation for the later ritual system. In ancient times, the rituals continued to be systematized and expanded into "ngu le", including: Cat le (celebration, blessing); Hung le (funeral, memorial); Quan le (ritual related to military, war); Tan le (reception, diplomacy); Gia le (wedding, family). In addition, there are also important "three rituals" including: sacrificing to heaven, sacrificing to earth and hundreds of gods, demonstrating the connection between humans and supernatural forces, reflecting the idea of destiny in ancient society.

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Entering the Shang Dynasty, along with the class differentiation in society, the concept of God gradually became the center of the belief system. Worshipping God and ancestors not only had religious significance but were also considered rituals that played a decisive role in maintaining social order. In this context, Rites were no longer simply rituals of worshipping gods, but gradually developed into an institution with the function of regulating social relations according to the hierarchy. In particular, this period marked the unification of divine and secular power, when the political power of the king was legitimized through the concept of the mandate of heaven. The king was considered the "son of heaven" - the one who ruled the world on behalf of heaven, and the Rites system played an important role in consolidating the authority of the ruling class. Through solemn and strict sacrificial rituals, Rites became a tool to control the thoughts and behaviors of the people, ensuring the stability of the social system in the direction of obeying the hierarchy.

By the Zhou Dynasty, the Rites system was not only inherited from the Shang Dynasty but also perfected and expanded in content and scope of application. The Zhou Dynasty advocated the combination of virtue and ritual, emphasizing the idea of "respecting heaven" associated with "caring for the people". This was an important development, marking the transformation of Rites from a tool to maintain class power into a principle of social regulation based on both politics and morality. If under the Shang Dynasty, Rites mainly served the ruling class by consolidating the unity between the divine and secular power, then under the Zhou Dynasty, Rites were adjusted to be moral norms, aiming at building a more stable and harmonious social order. It was this change that laid the foundation for the later Confucian ideology, in which Rites were not only a manifestation of political power but also an ethical principle governing all social relationships.

The Spring and Autumn period was a turbulent period in history, marking the decline of the Zhou Dynasty's patriarchal system and the initial formation of the feudal system. The traditional social order was shaken when the authority of the Zhou Dynasty weakened, leading to a rift in the political and moral structure. Along with that, the resistance of the working class and the criticism of progressive thinkers against the views of Heaven's mandate and ritual rule made the old system of social norms no longer stable. The state of "deterioration of ritual and music" reflected the crisis of the ritual rule system when the authority of Heaven's mandate was challenged and traditional moral rules lost their binding force. In that context, a trend appeared to promote the virtue of Humanity - emphasizing the role of inner cultivation so that each individual could form the virtue of Humanity, a quality that encompasses all good human virtues. In the Confucian ideology, Humanity is not opposed to Rites but is the inner basis for practicing Rites correctly and truly. This is clearly shown in the view of "self-restraint to return to Rites is Humanity". Accordingly, Confucius not only advocated the restoration of the Zhou Dynasty's rituals, but also emphasized the transformation and perfection on the basis of Humanity, making Rites not only a formal norm but also a manifestation of personal morality and ideal social order.

From a young age, Confucius showed a deep passion for Rites, demonstrated through games simulating sacrificial rituals. When he grew up, he traveled throughout the vassal states to study rituals and social rules, from which he summarized important views on Rites. In the process of teaching and spreading his thoughts, Confucius always emphasized the role of Rites in both self-cultivation, governing the country and building human morality. According to Confucius, social disorder stems from people not performing their duties according to their status: the king does not act according to the king's way, the father does not follow the father's way, the son does not fulfill the son's way... leading to a state of "immorality", the society loses order and stability. Therefore, it is necessary to use Rites to restore social order, re-establish moral standards, help people return to "the way", achieve human virtue and perform "right name" - that is, to do the right duty according to their position in society. In Confucius's thought, Rites have a very wide scope, not only limited to sacrificial rituals or customs, but also include rules of conduct in the family, society and politics. Rites govern all relationships from king - subject, father - son, husband - wife, elder brother - younger brother, friends, becoming ethical standards and rules to maintain social stability. For Confucius, Rites are not only an external form but also a manifestation of inner morality, especially for gentlemen and those in power. In the *Analects*, he asserted that: "If one does not learn Rites, there is no way one can stand firm." This shows that Rites are not only a means of educating personality but also the foundation for an individual to become a gentleman and maintain his position in society.

Rites, first of all, are a system of rituals and customs that govern all aspects of social life. In feudal Chinese society, from small things like sprinkling water before sweeping the house, sweeping, walking, and responding to important events like *quan* (the ceremony of putting on a hat when a boy reaches the age of twenty), marriage, funeral, and sacrifice, all follow strict rules of Rites. Rites are not only social rules but also tools to maintain class order. Rites related to funerals, ancestor worship, and sacrifice to gods are clearly defined for each class: the Son of Heaven, vassals, officials, scholars, and commoners. These rules not only show differences in status but also play a role in maintaining the hierarchical system in society. A person of lower class using the rites of a higher class is considered usurping the rites – not only is it disrespectful but also has the meaning of challenging the social order, shaking the political and moral foundations. Confucius strongly opposed the act of usurping the rites, considering it a manifestation of ambition for power and moral degradation. He especially condemned *Gui Jiangzi* – a high-ranking official of the state of Lu, for using "bat y" (eight rows, each row of eight dancers) in ancestral worship. According to the rules, only the Son of Heaven has the right to use the "bat y" rite, the feudal kings can only use *luc y* (six rows), and high-ranking officials like *Gui Jiangzi* can only use *tu y* (four rows). This act of usurping the rites is not only an act of overstepping authority but also implies the ambition to usurp the throne. Confucius severely criticized: "He dares to use the "bat y" rite to dance in his own temple, if a cruel person can do that, what

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other person cannot be cruel?" (Analects, Bat Yi, 1). In Confucius's view, Rites are not only rules of conduct but also tools to protect social order and human morality. Any violation or abuse of rites leads to the risk of disorder, causing loss of social stability. Rites in Confucius can also be understood as the rules and regulations, the legal institutions that regulate the social order of an era. According to him, the rules and regulations of later generations are based on the premises left by previous generations and modified to suit the new society. Therefore, it is possible to base on the previous generations to infer the future generations, "The Yin Dynasty followed the rituals of the Xia Dynasty, adding or removing anything, it can be known. The Zhou Dynasty followed the rituals of the Yin Dynasty, adding or removing anything, it can be known. Later, any dynasty that succeeds the Zhou Dynasty will also follow the rituals of the Zhou Dynasty, even if it is a hundred generations later, it can be known" (Analects, Vi Chinh). Accordingly, Confucius respected and advocated the restoration of the Zhou Dynasty's rituals, saying, "The Zhou Dynasty examined the past two dynasties and established rituals. Thanks to that, the Zhou Dynasty's culture was so brilliant! So I follow the Zhou Dynasty" (Analects, Bat Yi) or when Gongshan Fuxiao rebelled against the Gui family, he sent an envoy to invite Confucius to help, Confucius wanted to go but his student Zi Lu was strangely unwilling to let him go, Confucius said: "You invited me, did you intend to use me? If you use me, wouldn't I make the Eastern Zhou Dynasty prosperous?" (Analects, Duong Hoa). Rites are also rules, standards, and order to control and maintain behavior, not to let behavior go beyond ethical standards, including: eating, dressing, walking, sitting, lying down; sleeping; to gestures and attitudes at home, when communicating with friends, neighbors, when entering the court to meet officials and pay respect to the king, when helping the king receive guests, when going on a diplomatic mission to another country,... Confucius once said: "Wearing a thorny crown is an ancient ritual, now people use silk hats to save money, so I follow the majority. When a subject pays respect to the king, standing on the lower step and bowing is according to the ancient ritual, now the officials all go up to the steps to bow, that is arrogant. Although contrary to the majority, I still bow below the steps" (Analects, Zi Han). These patterns were mentioned by Confucius in a meticulous manner, somewhat cumbersome and annoying, but for Confucius, etiquette had to be like that.

The reason why Confucius advised people to "discipline themselves and obey the rituals" is because rituals are closely related to "benevolence" - the most basic moral principle of human beings. In that relationship, benevolence is the content, and rituals are the form. "Overcoming one's own selfish desires and delusions and following the rituals, that is benevolence" and "Do not look at colors that are not in accordance with the rituals, do not listen to sounds that are not in accordance with the rituals, do not speak words that are not in accordance with the rituals, do not do things that are not in accordance with the rituals. These four things are the principles of benevolence" (Analects, Yan Yuan). A gentleman must know how to take morality as the foundation, practice etiquette, show it with modesty and complete work with integrity (Analects, Wei Ling Gong). In Confucius's view, rituals have great political and social significance, and he considered them an effective means to govern the country. In governing the country, Confucius advocated that humane governance and ritual governance are superior to legal governance: "The rulers use laws and prohibitions to guide the people; they use punishments to govern the people, so the people are afraid and do not commit crimes, but they do not know shame. To guide the people, the rulers must use virtue; to govern the people, they must use rituals, making the people feel ashamed (when doing evil) and follow the right path" (Analects, Weizheng). Using rituals to govern the country will be more effective than using laws. Rituals have the effect of prohibiting things that have not happened yet, while laws are only used to govern things that have already happened. Therefore, a wise ruler must know how to favor rituals over punishments.

Confucius also advised the rulers to use rituals to govern the country. When there are rituals, people will achieve humaneness, society will prosper, the king will be wise, the subjects will be loyal; the father will be kind, the son will be filial; the husband will be affectionate, the wife will be obedient; brothers and sisters, all things "right name and position", he said: "If the ruler knows how to use rites and concessions in governing the country, then how difficult is it to govern? But if he does not know how to use rites and concessions in governing, then what can he use rites for?" (Analects, Li Ren). To establish a society that operates according to the rites and regulations, it is necessary to implement them in a systematic step-by-step manner to ensure stability and order. This process includes three basic stages: (1) widely disseminate ethical standards and codes of conduct among the people. This helps to moderate behavior, maintain social order, and avoid people acting arbitrarily, going beyond the ethical framework. The core goal is to implement "right name and position", meaning that each individual must be clearly aware of their position and role in society. When people can distinguish between superior and inferior, right and wrong, right and wrong, they will act according to their duties, thereby contributing to maintaining general harmony and stability; (2) Educate people about the legal system and social institutions. A society that wants to operate sustainably needs clear regulations on the political duties and obligations of each individual. However, in Confucius's view, the law is not a coercive tool, but mainly has an explanatory and deterrent nature, helping people understand what should be done and what should be avoided. Confucius believed that human nature is the same at birth, but due to the environment, habits and occupations, there are differences: (Human nature is initially the same, but due to habits, it becomes different) (Analects, Yang Hua); (3) promote the role of the individual in building society. Rites are not simply a system of rules, but also the core principles that shape personal morality. Each person must constantly cultivate and train himself in the spirit of "self-discipline and obedience to rituals" - restraining personal desires to return to rituals and correct standards. Only when everyone behaves according to the Rites can society achieve true peace and prosperity.

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Rites, in a broad sense, include worship rituals, customs, and regulations - this is the foundation of an organized society, maintaining order and hierarchy. If considered in terms of self-cultivation and behavior, Rites are moral rules that help people practice virtue, prevent wrong thoughts and behaviors. Rites are the policy of promoting the role of Rites in social management, placing Rites above punishment, using Rites to educate the people. When placed in the historical context of the time - a period of social chaos, "rituals and music are corrupted", the world is "immoral" - it can be seen that Rites is the solution proposed by Confucius to restore order and re-establish social discipline. Confucius emphasized that all classes in society, from the Son of Heaven, the gentleman to the common people, must "control themselves to obey the Rites", that is, restrain themselves to follow the standards of Rites. He believed that Rites were not limited to customs or rituals, but also included social rules and legal institutions, regulating all aspects of life, from birth, death, mourning, marriage, sacrifices, court ceremonies to laws and punishments.

According to Confucius, the state of "immorality" in society stems from the king not following the king's way, the father not following the father's way, the son not following the son's way. To restore order, rules and social morality, it is necessary to use Rites to bring people back to the "way" and achieve "Correct Name". Correct Name is an important principle in Confucius's thought, emphasizing that each person must behave in accordance with his or her status and responsibility in society. In addition, Confucius also affirmed the close relationship between Rites and Humanity. Humanity is the essence, the core content of morality, and Rites is the form of expressing Humanity. He compared Rites and Humanity to "a fine white silk on which people paint beautiful pictures" (Analects, Ba Yi, 8). To attain Humanity, people must maintain moral standards through Rites, that is, "not seeing things that are against Rites, not hearing things that are against Rites, not speaking things that are against Rites, not doing things that are against Rites" (Analects, Yan Yuan, 1). At that time, social order is consolidated, the relationships between king and subject, father and son, elder brothers and younger brothers, husband and wife all become harmonious, reaching the ideal of "Correct name and determined fate".

4.2. DISCUSSION

There are many opinions that Rites are biased towards moral ideals and lack sanctions. Opinions emphasize that Rites are mainly based on moral principles and human self-awareness, without specific sanctions to ensure compliance. This leads to difficulty in controlling and maintaining social order effectively, especially in situations requiring strong and clear intervention. However, in this work, the author argues that Rites are not only a system of rules of conduct but also a method of social management based on morality and human self-awareness. In the modern context, applying the Rites to social management can help build a harmonious, stable and ethical living environment. In particular, in the field of education, Rites can be used to educate morality, train personality and develop good qualities for the younger generation.

Some opinions say that ritual is conservative and maintains a social order that is hierarchical and unequal. They emphasize that ritual often maintains rigid social rules and norms, reflecting a social order that is hierarchical and unequal. This can lead to conservatism, hindering social development and change, and maintaining discrimination between social classes. We believe that ritual is a very progressive view not only in the past but also today. In modern society, the rule of law plays a key role in maintaining social order and fairness. However, combining ritual and rule of law can bring greater efficiency in social management. Ritual, with its emphasis on morality and rituals, can complement rule of law by creating a social environment in which everyone voluntarily complies with moral rules and norms. This combination helps maintain social order in a sustainable and fair manner.

In the context of modern society, laws and legal regulations play an important role in maintaining social order and justice. Rites are not only a system of social rules but also a core principle that shapes personal morality. Learning and applying the principles of self-cultivation from Rites can help each individual cultivate good qualities, restrain personal desires and live according to correct moral standards. This not only contributes to building a harmonious society but also helps each person perfect themselves and achieve prosperity in life.

5. CONCLUSION

Rites are one of the core principles of Confucian thought, playing an important role in maintaining social order and stability. By promoting morality, etiquette and codes of conduct, Rites guide people to cultivate themselves, maintain order and behave in accordance with their status.

However, Rites are not a perfect system. Its biggest drawback is that it is biased towards moral ideals and lacks specific sanctions to ensure enforcement. This makes Rituals easy to exploit or ineffective in complex social contexts. Furthermore, the Rituals ideology is conservative in its emphasis on fixed hierarchy, which can hinder social development if applied rigidly. We cannot deny the value of Rituals in moral education and social management. In the modern context, the combination of Rituals and Legalism can create a more effective management system that both ensures discipline and upholds human morality and personality. The principles of Rituals, especially the promotion of rituals and virtues, are still important in cultivating personality, building a culture of standard behavior, and maintaining social harmony. Studying and applying the ideology of Rites and Governance not only helps to better understand the philosophical foundation of Confucius, but also provides an insight into the methods of organizing and

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governing society from the past to the present. Combining the positive values of Rites and Governance with modern management methods can contribute to building a sustainable, stable and equitable society.

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