

"Governing the Country in a Good Way, Managing the Family with Good Methods"—Thinking Comprehensive Discussion of "The Yan's Family Rule: Managing the Family No.5"

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Abstract—"The Yan's Family Rule" is a classic work written by emperor's valet Yan Zhitui in Kingdom of Qi, who summed up his life experience, about conducting, managing, behaving, and learning. Among them, Volume One, "Managing the Family No.5" mainly talks about various matters concerning family management. It involves many things such as being the model, being modest and moderate, being frugal, careful marriage, love of books, and anti-superstition. It has an important guiding role in the construction of contemporary family style.

Keywords—*The Yan's Family Rule; manage the family; family tradition*

I. INTRODUCTION

For Confucianism, which has an orthodox position in the history of Chinese thought, "observing things, acquiring knowledge, being sincere, being righteous, improving oneself, managing the family, governing the country, pacifying the world" are the steps that the gentleman must experience. From the Analects of Confucius, "When his father is alive, he must observe his ambitions; after his father's death, he must examine his behaviors; if he does not change his reasonable part to his father for a long time, such a person can be said that he is filial enough"¹ and "I heard from the teacher, Meng Zhuangzi's filial piety, other people can make it too. But the fact that he does not replace his father's old minister and its political measures, and it is difficult for others to make it."² "From the beginning, family style education is closely related to the gentleman's conducting, behaving, and learning and other personality cultivation, and has become an extremely important aspect of the Confucian ideology.

Confucian intellectuals pay attention to family education. During the Three Kingdoms period, Zhuge Liang had the "A Book to Admonish Descendants". In the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Tao Yuanming and the Western Jin Dynasty Du Yu respectively had "Responsibility for the Children" and "Family Rules", but they may have limited influence on the content or for historical reasons, they have already been dissipated. Both of them have not been able to exert absolute influence on future generations in the fields of literature and family building. In the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the Chinese society was in great turmoil and great change. The frequent changes in the dynasty and the great migration of the nationalities led to the great transformation of intellectuals' humanistic thinking during this period. The emperor's valet Yan Zhitui in Kingdom of Qi, has been checkered and hard-working. Based on his personal experience, he summed up his experience of family development and wrote the book "The Yan's Family Rule". The book has a total of twenty sections in seven volumes. "It describes the methods of being settled and managing the family, and distinguishes the right and wrong of the times"³. It is regarded as the model of family education and family decency construction by the later generations. Chen Zhensun of the Song Dynasty called it "the ancient and modern family rule."⁴ Wang Yue of the Qing dynasty praised: "In the 20 sections of emperor's valet (official name) Yan Zhitui's "Family Rule", each of them has the therapeutic effect of medicine stone and every word is worth learning. Everyone who is a child of a family can collect a book at home and worship it as a family rule, not just in the Yan's family (worship)"⁵, which shows that the book has great influence.

³ (Song) Chao Gongwu ed. Four Series, Third Edited Version of History Classics, Reading Record of Mr. Zhao in County House [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Hanfen House Print, 1935: 201.

⁴ (Liang) Chen Zhensun ed. Explanations of Books in County House [M] Jinan: Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, 2004: 189.

⁵ (Qing) Wang Yue ed. Collections of Books, Remaining Books of Collectives of Four Kinds of Classics: History [M] Edition Committee of Remaining Books of Collectives of Four Kinds of Classics ed. Jinan: QiLu Press, 1996.

¹ Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Learning [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2458.

² Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Zi Zhang [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2532.

In history, a large number of descendants of Yan's family have outstanding performances in terms of talents, ethics, etc., such as Yan Zhenqing, Yan Gaoqing, Yan Shigu, etc., which further proves the great utility of raising children of "The Yan's Family Rule": "Reorganizing the atmosphere within the home to remind descendants to make progress."⁶

Yan Zhitui, descendant of one of Confucius's best students Yan Hui, was deeply infiltrated by traditional Confucianism after Confucius's fascination, and because of this, "The Yan's Family Rule" showed a strong Confucian color. Throughout the 20 articles of "The Yan's Family Rule", except for "Sequence No.1", which mainly explains the reason, purpose and aim of writing this book, each of the remaining 19 articles is mainly discussed with a specific problem. Among them, Volume One, "Managing the Family No.5" mainly talks about various issues concerning the management of the family. It involves being the model, being modest and moderate, being frugal, careful marriage, love of books, and anti-superstition

II. BEING THE MODEL: "THE THINGS ABOUT DECENCY IS FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF ITS SUPERIORS"

"Managing the Family No.5" said from the beginning: "The issue of educational probation is carried out from the top to the bottom, and it achieves its influence from the first to the last". It is believed that the educational influence must be carried out from the top to the bottom, to influence future generations by the ancestors. Because of this, decency construction is the first thing to be paid attention to in the process of managing the family, because its influence is not only reflected in the present, but also in later generations.

"Decency", "Explanations of the Words" explained: "The words of education and decency are related to 匕 and the 人⁸". It can be seen that the word "decency" naturally points to the education and probation of people Confucianism advocated Confucius's "monarchs and ministers, fathers and sons" and Mencius's "Five Morality" thoughts "father and son are close, the monarch and the minister are righteous, the couple are different, the old and the young are orderly, the friends have the faith". Based on this, a complete family ethics system was established. As the main embodiment, executor and maintainer of this ethical system, the role of father and son, couples, and brothers' morality and subtle influence is particularly obvious. "So it can be seen that if the father is not fatherly, the son will not be filial; if the elder brother is not friendly, the younger brother will be disrespectful; and if the husband is not righteous, the wife won't be obedient."⁹ This is the basis for building a good family relationship advocated by Yan Zhitui.

Then, whether there are good conduct from the older generations, the younger generations will definitely get infected by it to get rid of evil to be virtuous so that they can reach the situation of "children being filial", "brothers being respectful" and "wife being obedient". Yan Zhitui has his own opinion on this issue: "Although the father is loving and the child is rebellious, although the brother is fraternal and the younger brother wants to be arrogant, although the husband wants to be righteous, the wife wants to be cheating. These mean that it is a natural and wicked person who needs to be punished or killed to make him afraid instead of inducing him to change."¹⁰ "If the good decency of the ascendant does not play a positive guiding role, it is neither a problem of decency itself nor a problem of the ascendant, but a descendant is a natural murderer. In any case, there is no way to use the instructions and guidance so it can only make them feel feared by punishment. Therefore, in Yan Zhitui's view, if the descendants are not born to be unbelievable, then good decency will be able to be radiated from the ascendant, which will have a positive impact on the descendants and later generations, thus making them filial and obedient. This family adheres to the ethical norms and achieves the harmonious relationship of "the father and the son being loving without anyone be out of home and the brothers being peaceful without anyone dividing the family property"¹¹.

III. BEING MODEST AND MODERATE: "JUST LIKE GOVERNING THE COUNTRY, IT IS NECESSARY TO BE MODEST AND MODERATE WHEN MANAGING THE FAMILY"

The establishments of a family style must not only rely on being the model to let the descendants learn, but also use appropriate methods. In "Sequence No.1", Yan Zhitui said that when he was educated in his family's growth, he said: "Brother raising me is extremely hard, he is benevolent and less majestic, and guiding revelation is not so strict."¹² He thinks that the elder brother raises his own growth with hard work and love, but his brother lacks the majesty, so the supervision is not strict enough. It can be seen that what he admires is a modest and moderate family rule.

"Master Lv's Spring and Autumn Annals" has said: "If there is no reprimand and punishment in the family, then the situation of child servants and children who make mistakes will immediately breed."¹³ "Managing the Family No.5" is used to explain the appropriate punishment in the process of managing the family. The importance is that if the penalty is abolished, the child will soon be at fault, just as if the penalty is not applied properly when the country is governed, then the people will be "doing nothing". Therefore, in the principle of managing the family and governing the country, the principle of tempering justice and strictness is the same.

⁶ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 1.

⁷ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 26.

⁸ (Han) Xu Shen, (Song) Xu Xuan ed, Explanations of the Words [M] Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2013: 166.

⁹ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 26.

¹⁰ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 26.

¹¹ (Qing) Zhou Xitao ed, Yang Genqiao, Shen Yuechun comment. Classic Articles from Ancient Times to Current [M] Hefei: Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House, 2010: 3.

¹² Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 2.

¹³ Ji Yun, Master Lv's Spring and Autumn Annals [M] Beijing: Thread-Binding Books Publishing House, 2007: 131.

In order to illustrate the importance of moderation and strictness, Yan Zhitui listed several examples of excessively harsh and excessively loose. When the time Xiaoyuan emperor of Liang State was in power, there was a person of the imperial edict drafter (official name) who ruled the family too harshly. In the end, his wives "wounded up" and jointly bought the assassin and assassinated him when he was drunk. In Qi State there was an official department assistant minister called Fang Wenlie, who was too lenient with his family. He was never angry with his family. The prostitute fled with the money to buy food without being convicted when being caught. The slaves took the house apart as the firewood, he only wrinkled his face after hearing without a word, and he did not even punish them. In addition, Yan Zhitui also mentioned that some famous scholars pay attention to generosity and kindness, and finally make the wife control all the home affairs, which even lead to the things of fooling the villager and insulting the guests. When women are in power, no matter whether they are in the country or in family, they are indispensable in Yan Zhitui's opinion. In "Manage the Family No.5", Yan's thoughts of discriminating against women are reflected. He believes that the role of women in the family should be under the man. The women are only responsible for food and clothing, and it must not allow them to host domestic affairs and participate in communication, "If (women) are intelligent and capable of accessing the past and the present, they should assist their husbands to make up for his shortcomings, so that there is no such thing as a woman screaming like a hen screaming and causing trouble.¹⁴" It is a great disaster for scholars to lose their lives, to lose money, and even to turn the women's hands to the management of the family because they cannot reasonably control the lenientness of the family.

This remark about the lenient and strictness of the rule of the family is of obviously positive significance, although it contains the unreasonable remarks of male's superiority and female's lowliness. Everything will be not enough when there is too much, the way of civil and military, tense and lose, and the construction of family decency is the same.

IV. BEING FRUGAL: "LET'S BE GOOD BUT NOT EXTRAVAGANT, DILIGENT AND ECONOMICAL BUT NOT MEAN"

"The Analects of Confucius" has said: "The extravagance will be over-behavior, and the frugal will be shabby. It is rather shabby than being over-behavior."¹⁵ It is also said: "(A monarch in the upper ranks), even if he has such a good talent as Mr. Zhou, if he is arrogant and mean, then other aspects are not worth seeing."¹⁶ There is a thinking that being frugal makes people obedient, but excessively frugal will turn to mean, thus affecting the overall moral cultivation of

this person. Yan Zhitui inherited this view and advocated "can be frugal but not mean". The frugal meaning is to be saving, which is in line with the requirements of Confucian ethics; and the blasphemy is manifested in the unconcernedness of those who are destitute, which is contrary to the requirements of Confucian benevolence. But charity and extravagance, thrift and jealousy seem to be accompanied by each other and cannot be completely divided.

From the perspective of "the basis of the people," Yan Zhitui argued that thrift is an important guarantee for the survival of the people. Fruits, vegetables, food, meat and other ingredients and mulberry, firewood, candles, utensils and other daily necessities are all labor income, which should be cherished. In the customs and actions of modeling thrift, the Southern River area is far less than the northern area. In the extent of extravagance, Yan Zhitui advocates "being generous but not being extravagant, being frugal but not being mean," and believes that this is the best state of being frugal. In order to support this point of view, he also cited the example of "being too generous will conduct to being extravagant, being too frugal will conduct to being mean". In the Southern Dynasties, there was a Liang State person named Pei Yezi, who was known for his filial piety. His family was originally poor, but he was willing to adopt and support the old relatives who were poor and hungry and unable to save themselves. There was a general who was extremely greedy in Yexia and madly pillaged money. When he was ransacked, he was found to have countless treasures at home. There was a wealthy person who was very mean/ As a result, his sons were misbehaving. After his death, several sons have no choice but to fight for their family property. The elder brother had even killed his own younger brother.

Improper frugal can cause adverse consequences and even lead to family tragedies, which is in contrast to the harmonious family advocated by Confucianism and the gentlemanly personality of "Benevolence, Righteousness, Courtesy, Wisdom and Faithfulness." Therefore, "being generous but not being extravagant, being frugal but not being mean" is the most moderate state that should be strongly advocated in the development of family style.

V. CAREFUL MARRIAGE: "TO FIND POOR PEOPLE IN MARRIAGE, THIS IS THE OLD RULE OF THE ANCESTOR MARQUIS JING"

On the issue of marriage, Yan Zhitui esteemed the mate selection criteria of "the right pair" and pointed out that this is the family rule of his ancestor Marquis Jing.

"素" means poor, and "素对" refers to the poor family's spouse. Yan Zhitui's view is based on the unhealthy trend of the society's marriage to the daughter-in-law who requires too much about the other's family's property. Many people marry their daughters in exchange for money, buy bridesmaids with bride price, and measure their children's marriages as merchant transactions. The final result is "either to attract the wretched son-in-law, or the arrogant wife in charge of the family, eagerly seeking fame and fortune, but

¹⁴ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 32.

¹⁵ Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Discussion [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2484.

¹⁶ Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Tai Bo [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2487.

bringing shame.¹⁷" For Confucianism, which has always paid attention to personality cultivation and women's morality, "wretched son-in-law" and "arrogant daughter-in-law" is not the best lover to choose.

"The Analects of Confucius" has said: "the wealth gained by improper means, is like a cloud to me"¹⁸, and also said "rich and dignitary is what everyone wants, but without proper methods to get it, they will not enjoy it. Poverty and lowness are what everyone disgusts, but they can't get rid of it without proper means to get rid of it. If a gentleman leaves kindheartedness, how can he be called a gentleman? Even in the time of meal, a gentleman doesn't depart from kindheartedness, that is, he must act in accordance with kindheartedness at the most urgent moments, which also means, when he is displaced, he will certainly do things according to kindheartedness."¹⁹ It can be seen that Confucianism does not fully believe that "money is like dung", but instead thinks that it is human nature to pursue wealth. However, "the gentleman loves money, and he has a good way to get it." The money obtained through improper means is considered to be cheeky. Only when the way of obtaining money is in accordance with the requirements of ceremonies, is it acceptable. It is obviously "being unrighteous to be rich" to seek money through the marriage of children.

Yan Zhitui opposes this form of marriage, which is "no different from the market," and advocates that the choice of spouse is not based on the level of the other party's power status and the amount of bride price. This view is not only a whipping of the unfair marriage customs at the time, but also an important reference and guidance of current cultivation of excellent marriage decency.

VI. LOVE OF BOOKS: "FOR THE BOOK OF THE SAGE, THEY NEED TO BE TREATED WITH A RESPECTFUL ATTITUDE"

The third section of "The Yan's Family Rule", "Encouraging Learning No.8" discusses the importance of learning. It is considered to be "inheriting the way of governing the country of the former king, inheriting the family business"²⁰, but also to improve their moral cultivation. The way of learning is that not only "there are sages can be taken as the model in the people of the farmers, workers, businessmen, servants, slaves, fishers, butchers, and shepherders"²¹, but more importantly, "it is important to know the "Six Classics", and to read hundred kinds of

books."²² As for the importance of loving books, it is also discussed in "Managing the Family No.5".

For books borrowed from other places, more love will be needed to pay, even if it was already damaged before borrowing, it will be necessary to "make up for it", which is one of the good conduct that the scholar-officigy deserves. Yan Zhiteng especially listed Jiang Lu in Jiyang as a good example. He said that "when Jiang Lu did not finish reading the book, even if there is an urgent matter, he must wait until the book is settled before he gets up, so the book won't be damaged."²³ Because his good conduct of loving books, "others will not blame him for being slow."²⁴ In contrast, there is another kind of person who does not care for books. "Some people have a mess on their desks, where books are scattered or lost"²⁵, so "most books are scribbled and destroyed by children, slaves, wind, rain, moth and mice"²⁶. This kind of behavior "is really detrimental to morality."

In "Sequence No.1", Yan Zhitui affirmed the role of the book of the sages in educating people. He believed that "the books of the sages should teach people to be loyal and filial, to be cautious in their speeches, to behave in a deliberate manner, and to broadcast their names for their achievements."²⁷ As a supporter of the sages, the author naturally loves the book of the sages. "Every time I read a book written by a saint, I never tread it with contempt. On the waste papers, if there are the texts of the "Five Classics" and the names of the people of the sage, they won't be in filth."²⁸ Yan Zhitui's attitude towards books can be said to be the first to set a good example for the future generations of Yan's family.

Learning is the only way to improve personal accomplishment, and books are an important tool in the process of learning. Therefore, it can be said that books are the ladder to realize the personality of Confucian gentlemen. The remarks on the love of books in "Managing the Family No.5" are actually another way to achieve good family decency.

VII. ANTI-SUPERSTITION: "THE REMARKS CONCERNING THE PRAYERS AND THE WITCHES ARE FORBIDDEN TO BE MENTIONED"

Confucius said: "I have the same goal with the prayers and witches (the ancient priests who serve ghosts and gods)"²⁹.

¹⁷ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 37.

¹⁸ Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Discussion [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2482

¹⁹ Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Internal Kindheartedness [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2471.

²⁰ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 109.

²¹ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 92.

²² Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 88.

²³ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 37.

²⁴ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 37.

²⁵ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 37.

²⁶ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 37.

²⁷ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 1.

²⁸ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 37.

²⁹ Silk Manuscripts, Yi: Yao.

He thinks that the difference between me and those who specialize in communicating ghosts and gods is that "I just want to focus on the moral aspect". After a rigorous argumentation, Li Zehou believed that "witches and gentleman being as one" constitutes a basic category of Chinese traditional culture with a rationalized witch history tradition. The sorcerer's affairs have been widely influenced since ancient times. In "Xun Zi", there is "if you are involved in going out, you must ask the sorcerer to preside over it."³⁰ However, Yan Zhitui regards the sorcerer's affairs as "the enchanting thing". In his family, it is clearly banned. He bluntly said, "Our family does not ask the sorcerer to come to practice prayers, nor to write prayers with full runes. This is what you have seen."³¹ The witches, the sorcerers and the Taoist scriptures are all excluded. He thinks that they all have superstitious colors, which is not conducive to the establishment of a good family decency.

Anti-superstition seems to be an aspect that is not very important, but it is equally important to establish a good family decency. "There is no singularity and gods"³², Confucianism treats ghosts and gods as respect with distance, and opposes abandoning their own righteous thoughts to worship ghosts and gods to be controlled by ghosts and gods eventually. Therefore, adhering to righteous thoughts and opposing superstitions is consistent with the requirements of a harmonious society advocated by Confucianism.

VIII. CONCLUSION

"The Yan's Family Rule" is a family-rule book with comprehensive content and detailed system. The author Yan Zhitui has experienced four generations of dynasty replacements and has suffered all his life. He did not have the massive political talents to shine through the ages, but he was so popular because of "The Yan's Family Rule". The style of this work is "simple and clear, detailed and concise, plain and without unreasonable debate." The content "discusses all aspects of writing, painting, music, and teaching, and examines and corrects all kinds of allusions, appraisal of literature and art"³³. It has both the education function as a family rule and the aesthetic role of literature. The extensive family management approach involved in "Managing the Family No.5" has an important guiding role in the construction of a good contemporary family style. "Poetry etiquette and family rules can last for a long time". It is important to carry forward the traditional virtues, cultivate a good family decency and pass it on from generation to generation to make the family decency help the national decency, and then help the world decency. Achieving all these, the Chinese nation can stand in the forest of the world nation forever.

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³⁰ (the Warring States) Xun Zi; Sun Anbang, Ma Yinhua trans. Xun Zi [M] Taiyuan: Three Jin Publishing House, 2003: 223.

³¹ Yu Zhengping, Liang Ming, trans. ed. The Yan's Family Rule [M] Guangzhou: Guangzhou Press, 2001: 28.

³² Explanations of Thirteen Classics: Explanations of the Analects of Confucius: Discussion [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1997: 2483.

³³ Abstract of Collectives of Four Kinds of Classics: the Eclectics.