



## Confucianism and Wartime State-Building in China: The Case of Filial Piety

Meeting of the Reading Group of the Advanced Certificate in Political Thought



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**Abstract:** This chapter discusses the fate of Chinese Confucianism in the state-building process during, and slightly beyond, the war period between 1931 and 1945 by focusing on the concept of filial piety. While Japanese Confucians developed the notion of “the unity of loyalty and filial piety” (chūkō ippon), which used the value of filial piety for statist and militaristic purposes, Chinese intellectuals, including the New Confucians, failed to develop a similar ideology serving China’s state-building project. I argue that this disparity can be attributed, in part, to the divergent social structures in China and Japan. Filial piety in China was deeply intertwined with the kinship-based clan system, a societal framework that state-builders sought to dismantle. As a result, Chinese intellectuals who recognized the urgent necessity to build a modern state, the New Confucians included, found little appeal in filial piety as a foundational element for constructing a nationalist ideology.

**BIO:** Dongxian Jiang is Assistant Professor of Chinese Studies in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Fordham University, Lincoln Center. As a political theorist and intellectual historian, his research and teaching interests encompass comparative political theory, the history of Chinese and Asian political thought, and contemporary normative political theory. His focus includes issues of political legitimacy, human rights, democratic institutions, and authoritarianism within the context of global and regional dynamics. His current work intervenes in the “China Model” debate since the 1980s and explores its implications for liberal democratic theories. Dongxian has also contributed to the understanding of the history and contemporary relevance of Confucianism, the reception of Western political thought in East Asian contexts, and the representation of non-Western societies in Western political thought. He has published articles in academic journals such as *Political Theory*, *Comparative Political Theory*, *Journal of Confucian Philosophy and Culture*, and *Global Intellectual History*.

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