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Lect. Dr. Hüseyin Selim KOCABIYIK
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3937-9527>
Yeditepe University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Translation Studies / TURKEY

CONFUCIANISM AND CHINESE NATIONALISM KONFÜÇYÜŞÇÜLÜK VE ÇİN MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİ

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ABSTRACT

This study will discuss the contemporary resurgence of Confucianism in terms of Chinese nationalism. The study will emphasize the fact that Confucianism is one of the most important ideologies that can be linked with Chinese culture, and that Confucianism can never be separated from Chinese culture. The theoretical framework what Confucianism and the history of Confucianism will be briefly explained in order to give the background knowledge of Confucianism. The methodology of this study is document analysis. Statements of Confucius in the book called Lunyu which is compiled by the disciples of Confucius after he died will be elucidated. This is a very famous book that includes many sayings of Confucius in Chinese culture. The book Lunyu should be studiously analyzed in order to fully comprehend the teachings of Confucius. Moreover, how the Chinese government imposes Confucianism on its people will also be discussed. The fact that the Chinese government used Confucianism in order to mitigate multifarious issues in politics and education will also be discussed. Apart from these issues, the fact that the Chinese government availed of Confucianism in order to bring harmony to the society will also be emphasized. This study is crucial in terms of understanding Confucianism and the roles that it played in Chinese Nationalism and society. The fundamental finding which is obtained in the conclusion of this study is the fact that Confucianism is part of Chinese Nationalism.

Keywords: Confucianism, the Chinese government, Nationalism, Marxism, Chinese Culture.

ÖZET

Bu araştırmada Konfüçyüşçülüğün Çin Milliyetçiliği bağlamında çağdaş anlamda yeniden ortaya çıkışı ele alınacaktır. Bu çalışmada vurgulanacak en temel husus Konfüçyüşçülüğün Çin kültürüyle özdeşleştirilebilen en önemli ideolojilerden biri olduğu ve Konfüçyüşçülüğün Çin Kültüründen asla ayrı tutulamayacağıdır. Kuramsal çerçeve olarak Konfüçyüşçülük hakkında temel bilgi vermek amacıyla Konfüçyüşçülüğün ne olduğundan ve bu ideolojinin tarihinden de kısaca bahsedilecektir. Konfüçyüşçülüğün tarihinden bahsedilmesindeki en temel sebep yıllar içinde değişik bilgiler tarafından Konfüçyüşçülüğün nasıl geliştirildiğini açıklamaktır. Bu çalışmanın yöntemi doküman incelemesidir. Çin kültüründe çok önemli bir yere sahip olan, Çince adı Lunyu biçiminde olan meşhur kitaptan da söz edilecektir. Bu kitap Konfüçyüs'ün özlü sözlerinden oluşmaktadır. Ancak kitap, Konfüçyüs öldükten sonra onun öğrencileri tarafından derlenmiştir. Konfüçyüs'ü tam anlamıyla kavramak açısından Lunyu adlı kitap mutlaka dikkatli bir biçimde incelenmelidir. Araştırmada Konfüçyüs'ün Lunyu adlı kitapta yer alan bazı sözleri açıklanacaktır. Bunlara ek olarak çalışmada Çin Devletinin, Konfüçyüşçülüğü topluma nasıl empoze ettiği de tartışılacaktır. Ayrıca bu bağlamda Çin Devletinin siyaset ve eğitimle ilgili çeşitli sorunları çözmek için de Konfüçyüşçülüğü kullandığı izah edilecektir. Çin Devleti ayrıca Çin toplumuna huzuru getirmek için de Konfüçyüşçülüğün bir hayli fazla yararlanmıştı. Araştırmada bu husus da detaylı bir biçimde ele alınacaktır. Bu araştırma, Konfüçyüşçülüğü tam olarak kavramak ve bu ideolojinin Çin milliyetçiliği ve toplumu üzerindeki etkilerini anlamak açısından hayati önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda elde edilen en temel bulgu ise Konfüçyüşçülüğün Çin Milliyetçiliğinin bir parçası olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Konfüçyüşçülük, Çin Devleti, Milliyetçilik, Marksizm, Çin Kültürü.

1. INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that the ideology which influenced China the most, is Confucianism. When we read Confucianism we can easily understand the fact that there have not been that many ideologies that influenced China as much as Confucianism did. In order to thoroughly comprehend Confucianism, some general information about Confucianism will be provided.

Confucianism is the teachings of Confucius who lived in the years 551-479 B.C. The teachings of Confucius concentrated on many elements, however, one can claim that the fundamental topics of teachings of Confucius included virtue, benevolence, filial piety, self-improvement, and politics. Confucius strenuously desired humankind to always self-improve and be virtuous in his everyday life, as well as stating a lot of statements about how a country should be ruled. About Confucius, in the introduction of the book *The Analects* translated by David Hinton, Hinton claims: "Confucius was the first great figure in this independent intellectual class and China's first self-conscious philosopher who can be historically verified in any sense" (Hinton, 1998, p. xvii).

The Analects (Lunyu) is the most famous work which was compiled by the disciples of Confucius after Confucius died, *The Analects* is considered one of the most accurate works that highlight the doctrines of Confucius very explicitly. The reason that *The Analects* will be discussed is that *The Analects* includes so many important sayings of Confucius that it is really very hard to understand Confucius and Confucianism without fully reading *The Analects*. *The Analects* of Confucius has been translated and interpreted by many scholars like D.C. Lau, David Hinton, Simon Leys, etc. In order to be more specific, an example of what Confucius has stated in *The Analects* about each of the subjects that we have stated above will be provided. First of all, one of the statements that Confucius says about governing a country which is included in *The Analects* translated by David Hinton is:

"To show the Way for a nation of a thousand war-chariots, a ruler pays reverent attention to the country's affairs and always stands by his words. He maintains economy and simplicity, always loving the people, and so employs the people only in due season." (Hinton, 1998, p.4).

From this statement, we can understand the priority that Confucius is giving to honesty and love when governing a country. Furthermore, another one of his sayings that embraces filial piety, virtue, and self-improvement which David Hinton includes in *The Analects* is:

"In youth, respect your parents when home and your elders when away. Think carefully before you speak, and stand by your words. Love the whole expanse of things, and make an intimate of Humanity. Then, if you have any energy left, begin cultivating yourself." (Hinton, 1998, p.4).

This statement made by Confucius which is included in the book *The Analects* translated by Hinton really embraces the subjects of respecting your parents, being honest, and humanity all of which are related to concepts like filial piety, virtue benevolence, and self-cultivation. The reason for giving these examples from *The Analects* was to explain the statements that Confucius has made more clearly.

The research model of this study will be document analysis. Qualitative research will be carried out in this paper rather than quantitative research. In this study, the history, and the dissemination of Confucianism will be discussed and the effects of Confucianism on Chinese nationalism will be analyzed respectively. The fundamental argument of this study will be that Confucianism is an extremely cohesive characteristic of Chinese culture and that Confucianism is part of Chinese nationalism.

The fundamental aim of this study is to argue the fact that Confucianism which is the teachings of Confucius has really become a preponderant characteristic of Chinese culture. This study will seek to prove via document analysis the fact that Confucianism has been used by the Chinese government in order to overcome many hardships and that Confucianism has become a part of Chinese Nationalism. This study is crucial in the realm of Chinese studies in terms of ascertaining the position of Confucianism within the ambit of Chinese nationalism.

2. THE HISTORY OF CONFUCIANISM

After briefly discussing The Analects, the history of Confucianism will be given. At first, as stated by Hoiman and Ambrose (1999), Confucianism has emerged in the Axial Age as a school of thought with two other schools of thought which are Daoism and the Ying-Yang School. However, as stated by the authors, Confucianism influenced Chinese society much more than the other two did.

In addition to this Tamney and Chiang (2002, p.10), briefly explain the history of Confucianism. The authors point out the fact that the term Confucianism was first coined by Western scholars in order to define scholarly works. The authors also state that these scholarly works were referred as *the scholarly tradition* by Chinese people.

Furthermore, Yao (2000, p.2), extensively explains the history of Confucianism. The author explains the fact that the origins of Confucianism were Chinese or East Asian. The author also states the fact that if we are to understand the history of Confucianism we have to divide it, into the same number of periods as Chinese dynasties. Yao (2000, p.2), points out the fact that the reason for dividing Confucianism into periods is because Confucianism has always altered itself in order to adapt itself to the new political and social life conditions and it has managed to adapt itself to every period except the period of Marxism.

Moreover the author Yao (2000, p.3), also claims that the evolution of Confucianism can be divided into five stages. The author names the first stage of *Confucianism information* according to the author this first stage is a classical form of Confucianism. As stated by Yao this form of Confucianism had emerged in the spring and autumn period which was between 770-476 BCE, when Confucius and his disciples tried to develop a new system of philosophy and considered this the key to peace and harmony. Afterward, in order to improve this philosophy, new interpretations and ideas were developed by remarkable scholars such as Mencius and Xunzi during the Warring States period. It was because of their contributions that Confucianism became one of the fundamental schools that had many different interpretations.

The author Yao gives the name *Confucianism in adaptation* to the second stage. Yao explains the fact that in the second stage Confucianism encounters a reform and begins to be renewed. During the time of the Han, Dynasty Confucianism recovered from the persecutions done by the Qin Dynasty. Afterward, as stated by the author, the Confucian scholars began to adapt their doctrines to the empire. Yao also states that during this adaptation period classical Confucianism has been expanded. In this stage, two very distinguished schools came into existence.

These were the New Text and the Old text. There has been a debate between these schools and as a result, Confucianism encountered extremely new interpretations. After these “Classical Learning” emerged. “Classical Learning” can be linked with scholastic studies. As stated by the author Yao, one of the fundamental characteristics of the classics was the close focus on interpretations of words and sentences. During the late Han Dynasty, the interpretations of divinity have been increased. This posed a challenge to Confucianism. In an effort to confront this challenge, some scholars intended to integrate the philosophy of Daoism into Confucianism and others tried to unite Confucianism with Daoism. As a result, Confucianism and Daoism have been united and this was called Mysterious Learning.

The author gives the name *Confucianism in the transformation* to the third stage. Yao explains the fact that in this stage, Confucianism confronts challenges from Buddhism as well as Daoism. As a response, Confucianism developed a new form of Confucianism. In order to thoroughly explain the next events which took place at this stage, the author points out the fact that different scholars reinterpreted Confucianism. When explaining this stage the author Yao states:

“Inspired by Buddhist philosophy and Daoist spirituality, Confucian scholars reformulated the Confucian view of the universe, society, and the self on the one hand, and endeavored to strip Confucian Learning of the elements they considered to be Buddhist-Daoist superstitions on the other. The result of their efforts was a comprehensive system of new Confucian Learning called Dao Xue or Li Xue, which as such is normally translated in the West as Neo-Confucianism.” (Yao, 2000, p.8).

The author Yao names the fourth stage of *Confucianism in variation*. In this stage, Yao talks about the emergence of Confucianism in other East Asian countries. Yao also states the fact that it has been

introduced to North America as well. However, the most significant event that the author points out in this stage is the reinterpretations of Confucianism. The author also states that the scholars in each country have interpreted Confucianism according to their own frames of reference with the intention of fulfilling their countries' social and political needs. As a result, Confucianism became richer in terms of interpretations.

In the last stage, which is named *Confucianism in renovation* by the author, the author Yao emphasizes the fact that some very important scholars in the 20th century such as Xiong Shili, Liang Suming, Qian Mu, etc. have dedicated their lives to improving Confucianism. Yao also explains that their contributions have shaped a huge part of "Modern New Confucianism." As it can be understood from these explanations a lot of scholars have contributed to the development of Confucianism by interpreting this doctrine according to the needs of their country. Therefore it can be concluded that Confucianism is an ideology that affected both China and other countries throughout history.

3. EFFECTS OF CONFUCIANISM ON CHINESE NATIONALISM

First of all, in order to thoroughly comprehend what nationalism is, we must ascertain the definition of the theory of nationalism. Anderson (2006, p.5), extensively discusses the concept of the theory of nationalism and points out the fact that except for some countries like the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union almost all the other countries have defined themselves in national terms after World War II. However, Anderson argues that each definition of nationalism made by theorists entails certain paradoxes (Anderson, 2006, p.5). For this reason, Anderson (2006, p.6), proposes a new definition by referring to nationalism as an "imagined community." The reason that the author proposes this definition is because of the fact that even the smallest nation still have the image of their communion in their minds albeit never knowing their fellow members.

Confucianism has been a cohesive tradition of China for long years. However, as stated by Tamney and Chiang (2002, p.55), it can be said that during the time of Mao, the ideology of Marxism pretty much terminated the ideology of Confucianism. In contemporary China, however, there has been a resurgence of Confucianism and now Confucianism is under the Chinese government's protection as well.

In addition to these Tamney and Chiang (2002, p.61), explain how the Chinese government sees Confucianism very extensively. In this book, the authors explain the fact that the Chinese government has used Confucianism in order to overcome many hardships. The authors claim that, in order to maintain their control, the government of China began using Confucianism once again in the 20th century. They also state that after the communist party which is between 1950 and 1976, there was an interest in Confucianism in terms of adopting it as an ideology. The authors also state, what Gungwu suggests about the reasons for this interest in Confucianism. Wang lists three fundamental reasons. First of all, Gungwu states that many scholars have noted that in the last two decades the main reason for the economic development in countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan was because of the influence of Confucianism. In order to explain the influence of Confucianism more explicitly, the author claims, "Confucian ethics was said to be playing the same role in these countries that the Protestant ethic played in the development of the West." (Tamney and Chiang, 2002, p.62).

As stated by the authors, the second reason for the Chinese government becoming very interested in Confucianism is the need for moral principles. According to the author, with the rise of economic issues, as well as the repression of moral principles during the Cultural Revolution, there was a lack of moral principles to follow. The authors explain this situation by stating, "The result was that many in the population were left without any firm set of principles to believe in or structured rituals to bring order to their lives." (Tamney and Chiang, 2002, p.62).

It can be concluded that the moral principles of Confucianism can enable people living in a certain nation to have a better grasp of understanding the soul of communion thus constructing the "imagined community" which was explained in the previous pages. The authors note that for this particular reason the Chinese government tried to revive the moral principles by introducing Confucianism. Therefore Confucianism has been imposed on society as a set of moral rules to follow. The authors Tamney and Chiang include what Gungwu states about this situation: "Without the revolutionary ideals which guided earlier generations of cadres, what can be done to save China from becoming an increasingly money-grubbing society." (Tamney and Chiang, 2002, p.62).

This statement perfectly emphasizes the significance of having a set of principles to follow. The third reason for this interest which is mentioned in the book is the interest of politicians. This matter has been pointed out by Tamney and Chiang (2002, p.62). In their book, the authors explain the third reason to be the interest in the scholarly tradition by stating: "Third, the interest in the scholarly tradition is tied to the efforts by mainland politicians to woo the overseas Chinese for investments, tourism, and their allegiance." (Tamney and Chiang, 2002, p.62).

Therefore, as it can clearly be understood from Tamney and Chiang's statement above the Chinese government became very interested in Confucianism after the 1980s and has used it to mitigate many issues. After extensively analyzing how the government sees Confucianism, I would like to extensively discuss the fact that Confucianism is part of nationalism in China.

There are a lot of reasons why Confucianism is part of nationalism. First of all, about this subject Gungwu (2012), states that Confucianism was used to determine all matters of public morality, and broad categories of duties and relationships that give significant support to the authoritarian system. By pointing out this fact Gungwu (2012), argues the fact that Confucianism is one of the foundations of Chinese identity and consciousness and therefore closely linked to the roots of nationalism. Secondly, a country's nationalism is closely related to its cultural traditions. When explaining nationalism, Zhao (2004), states:

"As a modern concept, nationalism "combines the political notion of territorial self-determination, the cultural notion of the nation as one's primary identity, and a moral idea of justification of action to protect the rights of the nation against the other" in the anarchical world." (Zhao, 2004, p.6).

One can argue that Confucianism has been extremely conspicuous in the culture of China. Bell (2008:9), emphasizes the fact that Confucianism is a big part of China's culture. In this book, Bell notes that in today's China, Confucianism is being taught to children from a young age. Bell states that especially the concept of filial piety is taught to young children extremely well. The author also points out the fact that in schools they teach little children the responsibility of taking care of their elderly parents. In other words, they are trying to build up the awareness in children that they must take good care of their parents when they become old, which is a Confucian tradition. As well as this, according to the author, in primary schools, the teachers grade the children according to how well they have comprehended the concept of filial piety. Confucius highlights the importance of filial piety by stating:

子曰: "父在, 观其志; 父没, 观其行; 三年无改于父之道, 可谓孝矣" (Zhang, 2006, p.7).

The English translation of this saying of Confucius which is included in the book *Lunyu* is: "Master said: When the father is alive observe his aspiration but when the father is gone, observe his practice if the son hasn't changed his father's path for three years, then it can be said that he is filial." This saying of Confucius makes the reader understand the precedence that Confucius takes over filial piety. Apart from this, Confucius also emphasizes the significance of filial piety by stating:

子曰: "父母在, 不远游, 游必有方" (Zhang, 2006, p.48).

The English translation of this saying is "The Master said: when the parents are alive do not travel far away, the departure must have a direction." As it can be understood from these sentences Confucius recommends that parents should be taken care of by their daughters and sons at all times. If their children are obliged to travel, then this departure should have a certain direction. This statement made by Confucius really makes the reader understand how important filial piety is in Confucianism. Furthermore, Bell concludes the fact that there has been a great interest in studying Confucian classics by saying:

"Over the last decade or so, the teaching of the Confucian classics has moved back into the mainstream of society. Courses on Confucianism are among the most popular on university campuses (conversely, courses on Marxism struggle to get students, unless they are made compulsory; and universities have substantially cut compulsory Marxist courses). The teaching curriculum for secondary schools now includes teachings of the classics, and thousands of experimental schools have been set up that focus largely on the classics." (Bell, 2008, p.11-12).

This statement really makes the reader thoroughly comprehend the priority that is given to Confucianism in Chinese culture. Since the concept of nationalism is closely related to a country's culture and since Confucianism has made this kind of a deep impact on Chinese culture we can confidently say that Confucianism is part of Chinese nationalism. Moreover, the author includes what Eva Wong who established China's most famous executive coaching system, says about Confucianism (Bell 2008, p.12). Wong claims that the teachings of Confucianism are in their blood.

This statement made by Eva Wong really tells us a lot about how Confucianism is perceived in China. This statement explains the fact that Chinese society perceives Confucianism as something much more than an ideology. Also, in a patriotic sense, we can say that a certain characteristic of nationalism or patriotism of a country is in their blood, and if the same thing about Confucianism can be said, then we can doubtlessly say that it is part of Chinese nationalism.

In addition to the cultural aspect, the concept of nationalism also has a political aspect, which we are going to discuss in the following pages. In other words, we can get an idea of a country's understanding of nationalism by looking at the ideologies that its government has adopted. A government can use nationalism to maintain its solidarity, order, etc. In order to explicate this fact, Unger refers to nationalism as a feeling by stating: "Naturally, it is a sentiment that the Party leadership feels it advantageous to play upon." (Unger, 1996).

In the following pages, how the Chinese government has used Confucianism in order to maintain order and harmony will be elaborated. In order to reinforce the claim that the government is encouraging Confucianism, it is useful to give a quotation from Bell: "In China, the moral vacuum is being filled by Christian sects, Falun Gong, and extreme forms of nationalism. But the government considers that such alternatives threaten the hard-won peace and stability that underpins the country's development, so it has encouraged the revival of China's most venerable political tradition: Confucianism" (Bell, 2008, p.8).

About maintaining harmony Bell also gives the statistics of the rural discontent. Bell records that in 2005, there were 87,000 illegal disturbances. Therefore the government has called for harmony by using Confucianism. Apart from the intention of harmony, the government is also using Confucianism to rejuvenate the soul of nationalism. This is a fact that is clearly stated by Tamney and Chiang:

"More broadly, we can say that Confucianism is being used to revive Chinese nationalism as both a source of internal support for state governments and as a basis for connecting Chinese people around the World." (Tamney and Chiang, 2002, p.63).

No one can deny the fact that the ideology which is being used with the purpose of rejuvenating that country's nationalism is part of that country's nationalism. An ideology that is being used in order to bring back the spirit of nationalism is definitely part of that country's nationalism. Moreover, as stated by Prasenjit (1996), Confucianism has made such a deep impact on Chinese culture that we can understand the fact that the ideas of Confucian modernizers such as Kang Youwei and Zhang Zhitong were to establish a state, based on Confucian principles in the early twentieth century.

In addition to this, in Fitzgerald's (1996), article Fitzgerald explains the fact that when some Chinese scholars realized that Confucianism was bound to vanish in the nineteenth century during the destruction of imperial China, they predicted that this can very well be the disappearance of China as a whole. This situation indicates how crucial Confucianism was in China. Confucianism was so closely linked with the state itself that the Chinese scholars have predicted that the end of Confucianism would be the end of China as well, which is another example of why Confucianism should be considered as part of nationalism in China. In his article, Fitzgerald also claims that Confucianism was a state ideology.

This statement pretty much tells everything about Confucianism being part of Chinese nationalism because as we have stated above the ideologies that have been adopted by a country's government can give us an idea of that country's nationalism. Moreover, another very important fact about Confucianism is discussed in the article (Pye 1996). In this article, Lucian notes that early reformers had described Confucianism as the "essence" of China.

However, in order to fully comprehend that Confucianism really is part of Chinese nationalism, one of the most important statements is provided by Chun in his (1996), article. In this article, Chun points

out the fact that we should look into Confucianism in order to understand how the ideology of national culture is put into everyday practice by claiming:

“In order to understand how this larger ideology of national culture was transformed into everyday practice, one must look first at the way in which certain traditional values, especially those of Confucianism, were used to give meaning to Nationalist ideology.” (Chun, 1996).

We can clearly understand the significance of Confucianism from the statement made by Chun. From this statement we can understand that Confucianism is so well integrated into Chinese culture that it can even influence nationalist ideologies. Lastly, one of the other ideologies that can be closely linked with China's nationalism is Marxism. However, Bell argues that some parts of Marxism have originated from Confucianism by saying:

“It could be argued, however, that the parts of Marxism that really took hold in the population—the importance of material well-being and an aversion to otherworldly outlooks—did so because they resonated with deeper Confucian roots.” (Bell, 2008, p.10).

By looking at this statement, we can doubtlessly conclude the fact that if an ideology like Marxism, which is extremely strongly linked with Chinese nationalism, has Confucian roots, then Confucianism can very well be considered as part of Chinese nationalism as well. To sum up, we can conclude that Confucianism can be considered part of Chinese nationalism due to both cultural and political reasons. Also, as Jiang Qing who is a Confucian intellectual, states, (Bell 2008, p.13), Confucianism can even be more appropriate for China when compared with Western-style liberal democracy.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, we have discussed the ideology of Confucianism and its effects on Chinese nationalism. We sought to emphasize the fact that Confucianism is such an important part of Chinese culture that we can never talk about the culture of China without discussing the role of Confucianism. Apart from this the fundamental argument of this research was the fact that Confucianism was an ideology that has made a deep impact on Chinese culture. Furthermore, this study argued the fact that Confucianism is part of Chinese Nationalism.

Moreover, we have also explained what Confucianism was, the history of Confucianism, as well its process of evolution. Explaining Confucianism and the history of Confucianism was very important in order to help us understand Confucianism more clearly. The Analects which is considered to be one of the most canonized works that are attributed to Confucius was also discussed. We have pointed out the fact that The Analects was extremely important in order for us to thoroughly comprehend the doctrines of Confucius. We have also briefly discussed some of the statements of Confucius that are included in The Analects in order to prove how important The Analects was.

In addition to these, we have also analyzed how the Chinese government sees Confucianism. The fact that the Chinese government availed of Confucianism in order to develop multifarious elements such as public morality and harmony has also been emphasized. Analysis of how the Chinese government sees Confucianism was crucial in order to thoroughly understand why Confucianism is part of nationalism in China. When analyzing Confucianism in terms of Chinese nationalism, how the Chinese government sees Confucianism has to be discussed also. Otherwise, we can fail to understand what Confucianism means in terms of politics.

Lastly, we have extensively argued that Confucianism is part of nationalism in China. We have explained that Confucianism had made a deep impact on Chinese culture both in terms of politics and culture. While arguing that Confucianism is part of Chinese nationalism. The fundamental finding that has been obtained in the conclusion of this study is the fact that Confucianism is really a very cohesive characteristic of Chinese culture and that the Chinese government used Confucianism in order to achieve many goals regarding politics and education. Another finding which is obtained in the conclusion of this study is the fact that the Chinese government used Confucianism to rejuvenate the soul of nationalism.

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