

## How Japanese Face the Confucian Concept of *Xiao* 孝?

Wang Xiaolin, City University of Hong Kong

When Chinese classics of Confucian studies were imported and introduced to Japan in the early age, most of the key concepts in this realm were interpreted in a proper way in Japanese language. This has effectively helped the Japanese understanding of Confucianism. Yet, comparing with those well settled concepts, the most important concept *xiao* 孝 seems to be always interpreted in varied forms with unstable semantic structure in the past centuries. For instance, in neither the orthodox Japanese Confucian studies school's textbooks nor Japanese folk legends, *xiao* tends to be constantly used in its *ondoku* 音讀 (Chinese pronunciation) but without a concrete *kundoku* 訓讀 (Japanese translation). Although this phenomenon has been noticed by some scholars, there is no study on the reason from the perspectives of both philology and Sino-Japanese comparative thought. Only a few works had been done but were as a sort of introduction on the influence of *xiao* on Japanese culture. Why has the concept of *xiao* never been absorbed smoothly by Japanese? Is there any kind of the semantic structure of the concept resisting its integration with Japanese ideas? Using the sources of both Japanese Confucian studies and folk legends, this paper will examine the acceptance and interpretation of *xiao* in Japanese intellectual context and try to answer these questions.