

## THE CONFUCIAN MORAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIALIST MODEL MAN: LEI FENG AND THE TWENTY FOUR EXEMPLARS OF FILIAL BEHAVIOUR

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The shift in the nature of the socialisation of the general population that occurred in the early years of Communist rule in China has been identified by various scholars as a shift from a focus on loyalty to the family to loyalty to the state (Sheridan, 1968; Yan, 2003; Yang, 1959; Yeh, Yi, Tsao, & Wan, 2013). It has been argued that in this process, filial piety (孝, *xiao*), which in traditional China had been “central in all thinking about moral human behaviour” and “the guiding value permeating all aspects of Chinese society” (Jordan, 1986: 2), was placed under “serious attack” through various ideological campaigns of the 1950s-1970s such as the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” Campaign (Yan, 2003: 183).<sup>1</sup> Scholars of the time attempting to assess the effects of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese society even argued that filial piety had been eliminated from mainland culture altogether (Martin, 1975). While this subsequently proved not to be the case, in the post-Mao era scholars have continued to argue that the Party of the Maoist period was fundamentally antagonistic to the ideology and practice of filial piety: Chow (1991: 209), repeated by Yeh, Yi, Tsao and Wan (2013: 280), has argued that “Chinese communists have found filial piety ideologically repulsive, but have tolerated it as a means of providing welfare support to rural elderly”, while Yunxiang Yan’s 2003 study *Private Life Under Socialism*, discounted the verbal evidence of rural interviewees who had “fond memories” of filial piety practiced in the collective era, as “contradicting existing knowledge about the radical periods of socialism” (Yan: 182).<sup>2</sup> Chow concluded that “the practice of filial piety ... survives in communist China not because it is a tradition worthy of retention but because the Chinese communists do not

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- 1 The negation of the power and authority of the family to arrange marriages that was effected through the new Marriage Law of 1950; the increasing role of the state rather than the family in allocating work and housing; the collectivisation of rural family farms; and the phenomenon of children denouncing their parents to the authorities during political campaigns are all examples offered as evidence of this elimination of the economic, social and moral power of the hierarchical Confucian family and the demise of filial piety.
  - 2 Yan concludes that the weakening of filial piety is the result of a two stage attack first from Communist ideological campaigns of the Maoist period, and second from the practical effects of modernisation and urbanisation in the reform era. (pp 182-189) Shi (2009) also attributes the weakening of filial piety practices to these dual factors.

yet have the resources to replace it with something more they find more compatible with their socialistic ideals (Chow: 223). More recent studies implicitly acknowledge that filial piety existed in the pre-reform era, but do not discuss that period and focus instead on the effect of urbanisation and westernisation on contemporary practices of filial piety (Canda, 2013; Chen, 2011; Cheung & Kwan, 2009; Shi, 2009). We can therefore say that scholars who have investigated the attitude and approach of the early Communist regime towards filial piety have concluded that it was characterised by ideological repulsion, institutional undermining and, at best, reluctant tolerance.

Of course, prior to the Communist takeover in 1949, the twentieth century had witnessed decades of iconoclastic intellectual ferment. Chinese intellectuals blamed China's political weakness and technological backwardness on the moribund nature of traditional Chinese culture and particularly on the Confucian family system. When the Communists took power in 1949, they therefore understood an important part of their mission to be the elimination of Confucian thought and institutions and their replacement with those of a modern socialist nation. It was thus an extreme but logical culmination of this long movement against Chinese tradition that Mao's Cultural Revolution began in 1966 with a campaign to eliminate "old" things (*po jiu* 破旧) which saw the physical destruction of traditional cultural items on a large scale, and traditional culture suppressed for a decade. If, however, one looks beyond the attacks of Maoist zealots on material and superficial manifestations of traditional culture to examine closely the texts of socialist culture that were promoted nationally to replace it, a more complex relationship than destruction and replacement, ideological repulsion and utilitarian tolerance emerges. This paper will argue that in fact, the very revolutionary culture that replaced traditional culture was itself heavily imbued with traditional Chinese values, including the cornerstone of Confucian society – filial piety – and that whether this was a deliberate strategy or the product of the conceptual limitations of the regime's propaganda machine itself,<sup>3</sup> it not only functioned to render the foreign ideology of communism more palatable to a Chinese society that may not yet have been wholly convinced of its merit, but ironically functioned also to perpetuate traditional values in the youth of the time.<sup>4</sup>

In the early decades of the new socialist state, one of the key vehicles used by the Communist regime to instil the new socialist culture and ideology into the populace was the promotion of socialist model citizens for emulation. These included model war heroes such as Dong Cunrui (董存瑞), model workers such as the Daqing Oil Field

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3 Here I am not using 'conceptual limitations' in any negative sense, simply suggesting that those who made decisions on propaganda were also brought up within the traditional Chinese cultural environment, so that in looking to promote socialist models their conceptions of what constituted virtuous and moral behaviour remained influenced by traditional values.

4 My thanks to an anonymous reviewer who suggested this line of thinking as a central argument of the paper.

worker Wang Jinxi (王进喜) and model rural Party secretary Jiao Yulu (焦裕禄).<sup>5</sup> The most prominent and the most enduring of all of the socialist models, however, was the People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldier Lei Feng (雷锋), promoted as representing the highest ideals of socialist citizenship, the "ordinary yet great communist spirit" to be emulated by the nation.<sup>6</sup> Because Lei Feng was held up as the ideal new socialist man, the primary biographical/autobiographical documents through which he was promoted are a particularly useful source for understanding the interplay between traditional Chinese culture and Communist culture of the time - in particular the cornerstone value of traditional culture – filial piety.

### Lei Feng as enduring model of ethics and morality

Lei Feng was a model People's Liberation Army soldier who was first catapulted to national fame through a campaign in 1963 when he was promoted across the nation and his deeds were watched on film and emulated by individuals and groups throughout society. Since then Lei Feng has been a recurring figure in mainland Chinese culture and politics for more than half a century. Lei Feng is a fascinating figure, because he is the socialist model and icon who is most representative of Maoist politics and Maoist social ideals, yet despite the discrediting and dismantling of the Maoist project, he has been revived as a model for emulation several times, including major national campaigns in 1985, 1989, 1990, 1993, 2003 and 2012 and mini campaigns now run annually on Lei Feng Day every March 5. In 2011 Lei Feng was the subject of a 22 episode biographical television series starring Tian Liang the Olympic diving star turned actor; a new book-length biography, *Lei Feng*, was published in 2012 (Tan & Peng, 2012); and in 2013 three biographical movies were released to coincide with Lei Feng Day.<sup>7</sup> There is even an on-line game in which you can perform good deeds

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- 5 Dong Cunrui was a young hero of the civil war who blew himself up to destroy an enemy bunker that was blocking a bridge entrance. His model status was promoted through the 1955 film *Dong Cunrui* (董存瑞) from the Changchun film studio directed by Guo Wei. Wang Jinxi lead the team who, under extraordinarily gruelling conditions, drilled the first oil well at the Daqing Oilfield in China's northeast. The field went on to become a major supplier of China's oil needs. Wang and the Daqing oil workers were promoted as a national model in 1964. Jiao Yulu was a model rural party secretary in the early 1960s who worked tirelessly to benefit the people in his county until his death from liver cancer. His selfless service was promoted in a campaign in 1966 including the documentary film *Glorious Model – Chairman Mao's good student Jiao Yulu* (光辉的榜样——毛主席的好学生焦裕禄), China Central News Documentary Film Studio, March 1966.
  - 6 This phrase appears in the publisher's foreword to Lei Feng's Diary, see further discussion below.
  - 7 The TV series *Lei Feng* was directed by Zhao Jin and produced by Shanghai Film Group in conjunction with China Biographical Literature Association and Zhejiang Yongle Screen Production Ltd, 2011. The three films were *Young Lei Feng* (青春雷锋) produced by the Central Youth League Propaganda Department and Hunan Xiao Films No 2 Company Ltd, *Lei Feng's Smile* (雷锋的微笑), produced at the August First Film Studio; and *Lei Feng 1959* (雷锋在1959年) a joint production of the Liaoyang Broadcasting Station in conjunction with several CCP committees and departments in the region.

and rise through levels of difficulty to win a copy of Mao's *Collected Works*. Though Lei Feng has become an object of ridicule among some sections of Chinese society, in general he remains a respected figure.<sup>8</sup> This raises the questions: What is it in the Lei Feng story that makes it more than just out-dated Party propaganda? In what ways does it appeal to core cultural values to engage its audience and do these core values remain unchanged or are they modified in the process? In particular how does Lei Feng's story relate to the core concept underpinning Confucian thought: *xiao*, or filial piety?

### The Story of Lei Feng

As presented in the national emulation campaign of 1963, Lei Feng was born in 1940 in Hunan Province. This was a time of simultaneous civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists and national war against Japan, which occupied much of Eastern China at the time. Lei Feng's father was killed by the Japanese, leaving his mother to care for three young children. Lei Feng's younger and older brothers died, and soon afterwards his mother committed suicide to escape the harassment of the son of her landlord. Lei Feng was left destitute and starving. After the establishment of the Communist regime, Lei Feng's welfare and education were taken care of by the new authorities. After finishing school he worked in the Anshan steel works and was later accepted into the People's Liberation Army where he became a squad leader and member of the Communist Party. He was the recipient of multiple awards for model behaviour and became a local delegate to the National People's Congress. Lei Feng studied the works of Chairman Mao assiduously, lived frugally and devoted himself to serving the people, recording his thoughts and feelings in a diary. He died in a truck accident at the age of only 22. He had been promoted as a model within the PLA for some time before his death and was made the subject of a national campaign to promote socialist morality and ideal personal behaviour shortly afterwards.

Key documents in the first national campaign to learn from Lei Feng, were *Lei Feng's Diary* (雷锋日记)(Lei Feng, 1963), published by the PLA Literature and Art Press and a biographical film released by the August First Film Studio in 1963 (Dong Zhaoqi, 1963). An English language biography entitled *Lei Feng: Chairman Mao's Good Fighter* was published in 1968 (Chen Kuang-sheng, 1968).

Sceptics have questioned the authenticity of Lei Feng and his diary, based on claims that the photographs showing him performing good deeds must have been fakes since he only became a national model after his death, and that it would not be possible for Lei Feng to write the diary because as an ordinary soldier he would not have been able to master the style typical of propaganda of the day that the diary exhibits (Jacobs, 2012). There are counter arguments that can be made that point out that Lei Feng was

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8 When I presented an early version of this paper to an audience at the University of Queensland which included around 20 mainland Chinese students studying in our Masters of Interpreting and Translation course, I suggested that Lei Feng was widely seen as an object of ridicule in Chinese society. They reacted to this suggestion quite strongly saying that they studied Lei Feng as school children and had great respect for him.

a model soldier within the PLA well before his death, so that it is not surprising that photographs of him staged or otherwise would have existed, and that since he was a high school graduate and reputedly studied Mao's works in every moment of his spare time, it was not surprising that he was able to replicate the style and language of Mao's writing in his own diary. However, the authenticity of the diary and whether or not Lei Feng existed as a real person are not significant to the current research. What is significant is not what is real or genuine, but what is conveyed by the diary and by the stories of Lei Feng's life. The diary, films and stories therefore are to be understood as cultural texts that are to be deconstructed to discover the values that are embedded within them and the attitudes and behaviour they promote.

An introductory essay by Luo Ruiqing, then Vice-premier of China and Chief of PLA General Staff, originally written for the national newspaper *China's Youth* (中國青年) and re-published with *Lei Feng's Diary*, identifies the target of the campaign: "hundreds of thousands of people are now learning from Lei Feng, and there is a great upsurge in enthusiasm for learning from Lei Feng within the Chinese People's Liberation Army and among the broad ranks of youth" (Luo, 1963:1). So while the campaign was aimed at the whole of society, it was particularly focussed on the younger generations who incorporated both the categories of "youth" - children and young adults in schools and colleges, and the "PLA" whose ordinary soldiers were overwhelmingly young men in their late teens and early twenties.<sup>9</sup> Emulation of Lei Feng through study of the diary was to elevate the Communist moral virtue of Chinese youth to the point where they formed a "spiritual atom bomb" (Luo: 5) that would be able "to defend the socialist revolution and socialist construction against any enemy, any danger or any difficulty, while achieving the modernisation of China's agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology, protecting the nation and contributing to the struggle for world peace" (Luo: 6).<sup>10</sup> The diary was therefore an instrument with which to mould a new generation of China's youth into ideal socialist citizens to carry on Mao's Communist revolution.

All the key works of the Learn from Lei Feng Campaign of 1963 relate roughly the same set of stories, though the film attributes to Lei Feng's friend Wang Dali some of the deeds attributed to Lei Feng in the biography, and in the film events in the diary are condensed and rearranged. Lei Feng's most famous acts of service, also promoted in posters of the time, include anonymously collecting, washing and mending dirty clothes and socks for his comrades; assisting at a building site when he was ill instead of visiting the doctor; escorting an elderly woman and a child home through treacherous conditions, donating his pay to flood victims and to a comrade's sick mother, and when

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9 This is reinforced by the posters that accompanied the campaign which primarily depicted those learning from Lei Feng as children and youth.

10 Note that it was a period of great tension in the Cold War so the talk of struggle for world peace and defending the nation were not entirely hyperbole.

travelling on a train, sweeping the floor and pouring hot water for passengers.<sup>11</sup> The Lei Feng stories present him as continuously both happening upon and seeking out opportunities to help people and taking up those opportunities cheerfully and without any discrimination as to the nature of the task.

One of the striking things about the Lei Feng diary, film and biography is the frequency with which references to parents or parent-child relations are evoked even though Lei Feng is an orphan. In fact the overarching discourse of the Lei Feng story is that Lei Feng is a child of the people and the Party. In one of the first entries of the diary, in October 1959, Lei Feng records a dream in which he met Chairman Mao:

“他老人家象慈父般的抚摸着我的头，微笑地对我说：好好学习，永远忠于党，忠于人民！”

“He patted my head like a kindly father, smiled and said to me: study hard, always be loyal to the Party, loyal to the People.” (p.5)

Here typically the Party and Mao are conceptualised as benevolent parents. This takes us back to the question raised earlier: how does parent-child discourse in the Lei Feng texts relate to traditional concepts of parent-child relations as expressed in the traditional concept of 孝 or “filial piety” – a concept that is said to have been “ideologically repulsive” to the Communist regime.

### Filial Piety in Traditional Chinese Culture

Filial piety has been described by scholars as the “guiding principle permeating all aspects of Chinese society” (Jordan 2005: 1); “a guiding principle for patterns of Chinese socialisation and intergenerational communication for thousands of years. To put it in a nutshell traditional values of filial piety demand that people take material as well as emotional care of their aged parents, ensure the continuity of the family line by producing sons, bring honour to their family and avoid disgrace to its name” (Yue & Ng, 1999). Old age is associated with knowledge, experience and wisdom (Ng, 1998:104).

The primary demands of filial piety are obedience to one’s parents when one is young and then nurturing of one’s aged parents when one becomes an adult. Self-sacrifice is an important component of filial piety with the child expected to make whatever sacrifice is necessary for the health, well-being and protection of the parent and family interests. In return parents are expected to nurture and educate their children. Possible frustration at the constraints placed upon them on the part of the young is mitigated by strong identification of the child with the parent: The Confucian Rites (礼记), one of the core Confucian texts dating from around 2000 years ago, describes the members of a family as part of one single body: “Father and son are one body; husband

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11 Boiled water for drinking was supplied to passengers on Chinese trains. In the 1970s, the conductors would carry large kettles of water through the carriages filling tea cups or jars and thermos flasks as they went.

and wife, brothers, are all one body. The relationship between father and son is like that between head and feet. . .” (quoted in Hwang, 1999: 169). Huang notes that the analogy of the body in the Rites incorporates not just the concept of the unity of family but also the concept of hierarchy as the father (head) takes the position above and superior to the son (the feet) (p. 170).<sup>12</sup>

In traditional society, one of the ways in which the concept of filial piety was imbued into children was through the study of ideal behavioural models, the most famous of which were the 24 models (or paragons) of filial piety (二十四孝) dating from the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 A.D.). The Yuan collection was in widespread popular use as an educational tool for children and modified versions continue to be used to the present day. D.K. Jordan’s (2005) analysis of the nature of filial piety as exemplified in the 24 models makes a number of findings on the discourses surrounding filial piety that are relevant to the current research and therefore will be introduced in detail below. In each category I illustrate Jordan’s finding with a reference to examples from the classic text of the Yuan Dynasty, *Twenty Four Models of Filial Piety* 二十四孝 attributed to the scholar Guo Jujing (Guo, Yuan Dynasty) which has been the standard text used in Chinese folk tradition.

### ***The Personnel of filial piety:***

Jordan’s analysis shows that most protagonists of the stories are male (Jordan, 1986: 17) and the majority of objects of filial attention are their mothers (nearly 60% of stories have mother as the object) (Jordan, 1986:19). In the few stories in which women are the protagonists however, the objects of attention are not their own mothers but their mothers-in-law (*ibid.*), reflecting the custom of patrilocal marriage and the primary association of women with their husband’s family after marriage. For example in the Yuan dynasty collection, one of the few women among the exemplars of filial piety is Model 10, Lady Tang, who seeing her mother-in-law had no teeth and was becoming malnourished, fed her from her own breast every day. The stories of men’s filial behaviour towards their mothers often portray them providing food, or providing medicines and devoted care if they are ill. A typical example is the tale of the “Learned Emperor of Han” – Han Wen Di. Listed as Model 2, Han Wen Di always found time to serve his mother with respectful devotion, even when busy with state affairs. When she fell ill, he attended to her day and night for many years and always insisted on personally testing her medicine before spoon-feeding it to her himself. The models of filial piety attest to the particularly powerful emotional and moral significance of the relationship between mother and son in traditional Chinese culture.

### ***Filial piety towards non-parents:***

In the traditional stories, filial piety is only exhibited towards those to whom one has a duty – one’s parents and step-parents (Jordan, 1986:19-20). This includes stories of piety toward abusive step-parents who are thereby transformed in their behaviour

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12 Canda (2013) notes that the concept of hierarchical power is embedded into the character *xiao* which is composed of the ideogram for an elder father above and the ideogram for a son below (p. 214).

and attitude towards the child. In this sense duty and emotion are separated. Model 4 in the Yuan collection, Min Ziqian, is a boy maltreated by his stepmother to the extent that she did not feed or clothe him adequately. When his father eventually realised what was happening he became angry and decided to divorce her. The son however, intervened and begged him not to, saying that if their family was left without a mother the whole family would suffer, whereas if his step-mother remained only he would suffer. His self-sacrificing spirit and concern for the greater good made his step-mother ashamed and from then on she treated him well.

In later stories, objects of emotional attachment such as a wet nurse also appeared as targets of filial piety showing an expansion from mere filial duty to filial affection (Jordan, 1986:20). Stories of abusive parents who are transformed emphasise the virtue of filial obedience even when parental demands are excessive or unreasonable. Such stories also discursively affirm the power of model behaviour to reshape the behaviour and mentality of people who encounter it – the same principle that underlies the Communist use of models such as Lei Feng to shape the new socialist person.

### *Physical injury:*

A recurring theme of the twenty four models is that of children consciously allowing physical deprivation and injury to themselves in their enactment of filial piety. The child Wu Meng who bared his body to mosquitoes at night to keep them off his parents (Model 11) is one example. Another child Wang Xiang, Model 12, lay naked on a frozen river in an attempt to melt the ice in order to catch fish to make soup for his sick stepmother.

At a lesser level many stories tell of unpleasant or humiliating experiences that protagonists willingly accept in service of their parent. One model son, Ye Qianlou (Model 16) was told that the only way to determine what illness his father was suffering from was to taste his faeces and determine whether they were sweet or sour – he did do without hesitation. In another story, a high official named Huang Tingjian insisted on personally cleaning his mother's chamber pot each morning (Model 24).

At their most extreme, Models of this type exhibit a willingness to endanger or sacrifice their own lives to save their parent. Model 16 above, Ye Qianlou, after determining from his father's faeces that his father's illness was terminal, offered up his own life to heaven in exchange for that of his sick father.<sup>13</sup> In some examples, sacrifice of life also includes the filial son's children: Guo Ju, Model 13, an impoverished man, decided to bury his infant so that his ailing mother would not share her own inadequate portion with the child. As with many of these stories, the filial virtue of the son moves heaven to intervene. In this case, when Guo Ju digs the hole to bury his infant, he finds a chest of gold that allows him to save both his mother and his son. Apart from promoting

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13 The stories of the filial models who are willing to come in close contact with human excrement and give up their lives for the parent are echoed by the story of the Cultural Revolution model hero who drowned while trying to rescue another man from a cesspool, cited in Sheridan (1968:65).



the concept that moral virtue is rewarded, the fortuitous outcomes carry the connotations that devotion, determination and willpower can overcome physical and spiritual adversity to achieve super-human outcomes, a concept that clearly found resonance in the socialist era in the form of stories such as “The foolish old man who moved the mountain”.<sup>14</sup>

***Nurturing the elderly:***

Supporting and nurturing parents in old age and sickness is a recurrent theme in the 24 Models as evidenced by many of the examples cited above. Model 8, Jiang Ge, carried his aged, widowed mother on his back to escape turmoil in their home area. He then did odd jobs to feed and clothe her handsomely while himself wearing rags and eating scraps. When peace came to their area, his mother wished to go home, so he gave up the secure, well-paid job he had just found, bought a cart, secured his mother comfortably inside and pulled her home himself. Jiang Ge’s story praises extreme self-sacrifice and self-denial as well as the complete subordination of one’s own long term interests and desires to satisfy the demands and even whims of the parent.<sup>15</sup>

The tales of the 24 models tell us that in service of one’s parent, no act is too menial, too dirty, too dangerous, or too unpleasant no matter what the age or status of the individual concerned. They promote extreme obedience, self-denial of the basic requirements for survival and even sacrifice of one’s own or one’s children’s lives for the benefit of the parent.

**Reading Lei Feng through the 24 models of filial piety**

Returning to the discussion of Lei Feng, the question can now be asked: To what extent are the Lei Feng stories underpinned by the same discourses on filial piety that underlie the 24 models? Given that socialist culture supposedly stood in opposition to traditional culture is there anything in the Lei Feng stories that negates or undermines the traditional discourses of filial piety? Aspects of the Lei Feng texts that are relevant to this analysis will be discussed below.

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14 ‘The foolish old man who moved the mountain’ was a story strongly promoted by Mao to embody and instil the socialist spirit of persistent effort to achieve superhuman goals. In the story an old peasant decides that the mountain behind his home needs to be moved. Though people laugh at him he continues to move the mountain barrow load by barrow load for the rest of his life. When he died his children took over and so on until the mountain was gone. Mao’s used the story as an analogy for removing the psychological mountains of traditional culture weighing on the Chinese people, but it was also used to inspire the large scale projects such as digging dams that were carried out by manpower alone in the 1950s and 60s.

15 This model’s unflinching cheerful willingness to fulfil minor, menial roles as required by higher authority (his mother) also has interesting parallels with what was promoted as the Lei Feng spirit, the willingness to be a small cog in the great machine of the socialist state i.e. taking on whatever tasks are required of one, no matter how small or unglamorous as a contribution to the collective cause.

*The establishment of xiao as discursive context for understanding Lei Feng – Party relations*

The first point for examination is the way in which the Lei Feng story is established discursively as a context in which *xiao* is a relevant concept. Lei Feng's diary as published in 1963 is only 89 pages long. Those 89 pages, however, contain 34 references to relationships that are like family relationships but which are not since Lei Feng was a war orphan. Since each page of the diary contains on average only around 15 lines, this means that a reference to a family-like relationship between Lei Feng and Mao or the Party occurs on average more than once every 40 lines of the diary. This densely repeated referencing to family creates tight discursive parameters for conceptualising the individual's relationship with the Party that confines it significantly within traditional paradigms dominated by filial piety. Such references within the Lei Feng diary include 21 references to the Communist Party, Party Cadres or to Chairman Mao as being either father or mother. To break down further all references to family: Mao is referred to three times as like a kindly father, twice as a mother, once as exceeding one's parents, and once as nurturing Lei Feng – that is, taking on a parent's role. The Party is referred to as like a kindly mother eight times; as a father once; as fostering and educating Lei Feng twice and once is described as superior to a mother. Senior Party cadres are described as parents twice and exceeding parents once. An old woman is likened to Lei Feng's grandmother once, and the "Revolutionary big family" is referred to three times. Lei Feng and a revolutionary martyr are referred to as "child of the Party" three times and child of the *zuguo* ("the nation" or "the fatherland" – literally meaning "land of one's ancestors") once. One reference indirectly indicates family relations by blood reference: "the blood of the Party permeates every cell of my body" (在我的周身的每一个细胞里, 都渗透了党的血液) (p. 12). Recall that the family was considered to be part of one body, so to share blood is to be part of the same family. The results are summarised in Table One below:

**Table 1** Frequency of family analogies used in the 1963 *Diary of Lei Feng*.

Family reference \ Object	Chairman Mao	Party Cadres	The Party	Old woman	Lei Feng /martyr	General
Like a mother	2		8			
Superior to a mother			1			
Like a father	3		1			
Like parents		2				
Exceeding parents	1	1				
Nurturing/educating etc. Lei Feng	1		2			
Like a grandmother				1		
Share the same blood			1			
Child of the Party					3	
Revolutionary big family						3
Child of <i>zuguo</i> /fatherland					1	

From Table One a number of observations can be made on the discursive link established between the traditional parent-child relationship and that between the Party and new socialist man. First, it can be seen that even though Mao was a man and the Party has always been overwhelmingly dominated by men, the Party and Mao are constructed as mother ten times and father four times, which is similar to the distribution of mother and father as objects of filial piety in the Confucian classic discussed above where it is the mother who is emphasised as the object of reverence and service. We can infer that constructing Mao and the Party as “mother” would hence be a particularly powerful way of creating links between the individual and the Party by evoking emotions and behaviours associated with traditional notions of filial piety. Second, references to Mao, the Party and Party cadres as “exceeding” or “superior to” parents or to a mother also rely on evoking traditional understandings of the attributes of the ideal Confucian parent and the obligations of filial behaviour to have meaning. Here the deployment of the comparative implicitly attributes to the Party all the virtues of the traditional ideal mother or parent and more, so that the discourse surrounding the Party and Mao remains defined by the paradigms of filial piety. Supporting this discourse, the description of the behaviour of the Party and Mao complies with that of the ideal Confucian parent: nurturing (哺育), fostering (培养), educating (教育), rearing (培育) and guiding (教导) as well as showing parental affection (关怀). The very first page of the diary sets up this image with a short poem.

一九五九年 x 月 x 日    1959 x month x day

毛主席啊象父亲，	Chairman Mao is like a father，
毛主席思想太阳。	Chairman Mao's thought is like the sun。
父亲时刻关怀我，	Father always shows loving care towards me
太阳培育我成长。	The sun fosters me to maturity. (p. 1)

The poem illustrates how the discourses of the diary achieve a complete synthesis of the personal and the political, with the political expressed in terms of traditional family relations governed by the concept of filial piety.

The third notable feature of the data presented on Table One is the discursive representation of Lei Feng and a revolutionary martyr as children. This is achieved both through direct appellation or self-appellation (“child of the Party”, “child of the *zuguo*/fatherland”) and through the implications of Lei Feng’s declaration that the blood of the Party runs through every cell in his body. On the child’s side, traditional filial piety demands unquestioning and immediate obedience towards the parent, and we can find throughout the diary examples of Lei Feng’s pledges to be eternally obedient to the Party and to Mao. For example: 8 January 1960: Oh Great Party, you are my kindly mother, my everything belongs to you. I will forever obey you, serve you faithfully to the death and eternally be your loyal son. (伟大的党啊，您是我慈祥的母亲，我所有的一切都是属于您的，我要永远听您的话，在您的身下尽忠效力，永作您忠实的儿子) (p. 17).

Another diary entry illustrates this framing of Lei Feng’s relations with the Party in terms of the child-parent *xiao* (孝) obligations very appositely:

July 1, 1961

我象一个学走路的孩子，党象母亲一样扶着我，领着我，教会我走路。我每成长一分，前进一步，这里面都渗透着党的亲切关怀和苦心栽培。。。亲爱的党，我慈祥的母亲，我要永远做您的忠实儿子，为建设社会主义和实现共产主义而献出自己的全部力量直至生命。

...I am like a child learning to walk, the Party, like a mother supports me, leads me, teaches me to walk. Every inch I grow, every step I advance is permeated with the Party's loving care and assiduous cultivation. Beloved Party, my kindly mother, I want to be your loyal son forever ...to construct Socialism and realise Communism I will give my whole strength and even sacrifice my life."

From the analysis of data above it can be concluded that in constructing the new socialist man, rather than undermining and eliminating traditional discourses on the nature and obligations of filial piety, the Lei Feng diaries transfer the object of filial respect and service from the parent to the Party and Mao. Because Lei Feng was an orphan, however, this switch in the object of devotion does not involve any conflict between traditional filial obligations to a parent and the new filial behaviour towards the Party and therefore does not represent a negation of the former. In fact the diary includes a record of Lei Feng facilitating one of his subordinates, Qiao Anshan in fulfilling his filial obligations towards his parent – significantly again the mother: The entry for 30 December 1961 records how when Qiao's mother fell ill, seeing that Qiao was short of money, Lei Feng gave him his whole month's allowance of ten yuan to take to his mother (to purchase food and medicine) along with a gift of biscuits (a luxury food item)(p. 60). Clearly the moral power of this particular diary entry is derived from its conformity with the demands of traditional filial virtue and echoes the content of several of the Yuan dynasty tales of filial paragons, such as Han Wen Di or Wang Xiang who provided food and medicine to their mothers.

As noted earlier, one of the recurring themes of the stories of the Twenty Four Models of Filial Piety is the willingness of filial sons to suffer discomfort, or death or to self-harm in order to enact filial piety. The boy who bared his body to be bitten by mosquitoes in place of his parents was an example of relatively mild suffering, while the men willing to give up their own lives or those of their children to save that of the parent represent the most extreme cases. In a more recent story, a man even cut out part of his liver and cooked it in an attempt to find a medicinal cure for his parents' illness. These symbolic acts of willing self-harm find resonance in the declarations of loyalty repeated throughout Lei Feng's diary. In 1960 he wrote: Whatever the Party tells me to do, I will do it, without questioning the cost (p.12), while the entry for November 8 of that year reads: "For the Party and the people I would willingly enter a sea of fire and a mountain of knives, have my head broken and my bones smashed, my body and heart are red and will never ever change" (p. 17).

As well as this resonance between symbolic extreme forms of self-harm, there are significant parallels between entries in Lei Feng's diary and more minor instances of

self-deprivation or volunteering for unpleasant tasks on the part of the filial paragons. As noted earlier Filial Model 24, Huang Tingjian, was famous for personally scrubbing his mother's chamber pot every morning. Lei Feng's diary entry for 17 October 1962 records how he cleaned out the full cess pit on his morning off, while the 30 December 1961 entry describes how he taught his men not to shirk the dirty jobs such as toilet cleaning. The filial paragon Jiang Ge took on menial labour, went barefoot and wore rags to provide his mother with good food and clothing, while Lei Feng's diary entry of 8 May 1962 records how he refused a new uniform for summer, insisting on repairing his old uniform to save resources for the people. Other entries record him willingly completing menial tasks such as helping in the kitchens or washing his colleagues' bedding (15 October 1961), or giving up lunch in order to take a sick soldier to the medical centre (22 June 1962). Filial paragon, Huang Xiang, endured the cold to warm his parents' bed and Wang Xiang tried to melt river ice with his body to catch fish for his stepmother while Lei Feng (16 January 1962) braved the bitter cold to change the oil in an army truck. Once again we can conclude that the model behaviour of the new socialist man exhibits very strong correlation with behaviours praised in the traditional paragons of filial piety – except that the beneficiaries of the model behaviour have expanded beyond the family to include a broader range of society.

Apart from willingness to self-sacrifice in the interests of the parent, the filial child is also noted for his role in nurturing his parents, usually his mother once she gets old. The Lei Feng stories also contain many instances of Lei Feng caring for older women or the mothers of his comrades-in-arms in roles that would traditionally have been expected of a dutiful son. In the *Lei Feng* film, such good deeds include giving up his seat to an elderly woman on a bus, accompanying an elderly woman with her grandchild through the rain and mud and across rivers to her home, and sending twenty *yuan* to the sick mother of his friend Wang. Significantly, in the accompanying letter, Lei Feng addresses Wang's mother as "Dear Mother" and signs the letter "Your Son." This both conceals Lei Feng's identity and indicates that conceptually he is operating through the framework of filial piety.

Lei Feng's deliberate concealment of his identity when performing good deeds became one of the iconic features of the actions of a model socialist person, emulated with pride by many enthusiasts in the Cultural Revolution period. For example, Chen Xiaomei recalls how as a child at the time, in an effort to emulate Lei Feng, she used to go to school very early and sweep the classroom secretly before anyone else arrived (Chen Xiaomei, 1999). Not seeking praise for or acknowledgement of one's virtuous behaviour was recognised as a form of virtue in itself. Interestingly even this discourse of modest anonymity has a precursor among the models of filial piety: In a Ming Dynasty version of *Twenty Four Paragons of Filial Piety for Women* (女二十四孝图说) the protagonist of the last story is a dutiful daughter-in-law whose gravely ill mother-in-law has been prescribed "dragon liver soup" to cure her illness. At a loss as to how to find "dragon liver", the woman instead cuts a slice from her own liver and pretending it is sheep's liver, makes a broth which immediately cures the illness. It is only when the woman's sister-in law discovers she is bleeding profusely from her wound that this selfless act is known to the whole family and her outstanding filial piety receives recognition. The discourse of the story is that the act of *anonymously* performing the filial duty increases its moral value and significance.

So how should we interpret this heavy utilisation of concepts of *xiao* within Lei Feng discourse? The issue can be considered from a number of angles: Assuming that the diary was indeed written by Lei Feng and represented his thoughts and feelings, from the point of view of the war orphan who had traumatically lost his entire family as a young child, the conceptualisation of Mao and the Party as family may have been fulfilling a psychological need as a member of Chinese society. In a society and culture in which identity is based on knowledge of one's place within a social network based on family relations, to be without any family is to have no identity. For the war orphan Lei Feng, the Party with Mao at its head took over the function of parents in providing education, food and a livelihood, so it would not be surprising if he were to regard them as substitute family that could provide him with a sense of identity in the Chinese cultural context.

From the Party's point of view the transference of the obligations and expectations of traditional Confucian filial piety in the conceptualisation of the relationship between the Party and ordinary individual members of society had a number of advantages. Since *xiao* demands complete obedience and devotion from those in the role of child, it was (and still is) clearly in the interests of the Party to be conceptualised in the role of parent. In particular, conceptualising the Party as mother promoted a deep emotional attachment and sense of moral obligation on the part of the individual towards the Party. This in turn facilitated the Party's task of introducing to the Chinese people the new ideology and social system by rendering it familiar and compatible with deeply embedded traditional values. At the same time however, this deployment of filial piety in an education campaign aimed primarily at the younger generations, functioned to reinforce and preserve the very Confucian ideology that decades of revolutionary activity had purportedly been seeking to eliminate.

The promotion of Lei Feng's diaries in the 1960s can also be seen as an attempt to foster a spirit of public responsibility into a society that had traditionally differentiated strongly between the family to whom one had responsibilities and duties of care and the rest of society to whom one did not (Hwang, 1999:170), and in this sense it was a radical challenge to traditional thought and practice. In the Lei Feng stories, the borders of "family", and hence the parameters for the operation of *xiao*, have been expanded to incorporate the whole of society. In this respect it is interesting to note that even in the 1960s when Lei Feng first emerged as a model the stories had little content concerning class antagonism. The diary itself, while clearly positioning Lei Feng as a member of the proletariat, rarely refers to "class enemies" and does not relate any incident of Lei Feng encountering class-based antagonism or sabotage either overt or covert in contemporary society.<sup>16</sup> Everyone Lei Feng encounters is discursively incorporated into

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16 Reference to class enemies or class conflict is confined to entries that recall the suffering of poor people in the old society, such as when Lei Feng recalls the death of his family (15 November 1960) or relates the similar experience of another soldier (30 January 1961). In this respect it forms a contrast with much fiction and film of the 1950s and 1960 which often relied upon class conflict and the attempted sabotage of class enemies to form the basic structure of their plots.

the “revolutionary big family.” This lack of class conflict and focus on social cohesion and unity is one of the elements that have allowed the Lei Feng stories to be reiterated relatively unchanged through several decades of rapidly changing social, political and economic environments since his death.

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