

The Ethical Origin and Harm of Chinese Family Corruption

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Abstract: *In China, family corruption is generated from the political ethics with vague boundaries between public and private, the clanism ethics with "Ever the dog swaggers when its master wins favor" and the familyism ethics with "The child and the father conceal their crimes from each other". It is very easy to speed up the corruption of public power and induce political crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to suit the remedy to the case and establish a more targeted supervision and early warning system to prevent similar problems in the future.*

Keywords: *China, Family corruption, Ethical roots*

1. Introduction

Family corruption refers to the behavior of state public officials who use public power or their own influence to acquiesce or support family members or other relatives to transfer state or social wealth to families by illegal means. It has the characteristics of high incidence rate, strong concealment and wide coverage. Facing up to and deeply exploring the ethical root and harm of family corruption is an important prerequisite for effective prevention and control of family corruption.

2. The ethical root of family corruption

Compared with other types of corruption, family corruption has always been the focus and difficulty of preventing and controlling corruption because of its high incidence and strong concealment. Through the analysis of Chinese family corruption cases, we can find its unique ethical roots.

One of the root causes is the political ethics with vague boundaries between public and private. This kind of political ethics originated in the isomorphism of family and state. In this structure, the emperor needs to treat the people as his own children, and local officials also should be the "parents" in their jurisdiction. The country was regarded as a family with massive scale, so it was difficult to distinguish between public and private. Since modern times, the political ethics of no distinction between public and private continued to exist in the soil of acquaintance society, and gradually changed into the concept of "In the public sphere, even if I don't use improper means to obtain additional benefits, others will do so". Mr. Fei Xiaotong has made a very vivid summary of this in *From the Soil-the Foundations of Chinese Society*: "When it comes to public ownership, it almost means that everyone can take advantage of it. In this regard, we have only rights but no obligations."

The second root is the clan ethics of "Ever the dog swaggers when its master wins favor". The old ideas such as mutual support and care among clan members, "building near water first gets the moon" and "fecal water should not flow into the other's field" put the growth and development of the whole clan before the social public interest, and regarded it as an obligation for clan members to seek some convenience for their relatives and friends, especially those who are relatively weak. If a clan member refuses to help others, he may face collective pressure from the clan, such as being excluded and isolated by the other members, losing the clan protection, and declining the status of the lineal blood relatives. On the contrary, they can enjoy more discourse power and family resources in the clan. For example, in *Master Zuo's Spring and Autumn Annals, the 16th year of Wen gong*, at that time, the monarch was decrepit and muddleheaded. Gongsun Shou in the Song abandoned his official position, but asked his son to be an official to ensure the stability of the clan. This shows the prosperity of clan ethics in traditional Chinese society.

In the view of those who believe in family ethics, being an official is not to serve the people, but to serve "his own family". The motivation of being an official is to protect his wife and children, honor his ancestors and return home ostentatiously. Therefore, on the one hand, the ethical view of familism points to the passive acceptance of family obligations, on the other hand, it breeds the vanity behind some cadres' active rent-seeking. This kind of thought has been handed down to the present day, which provides moral relief for some Chinese cadres' behaviors of damaging the public and helping the private.

The third root is the family standard ethics of "son is father's seclusion, father is son's seclusion". On this scale of ethics, the weight of family affection is greater than morality. This is not absolute, but it is not uncommon. The strong trust relationship among family members and the fame and wealth binding of "When one person is prosperous, the whole family becomes prosperous; when one person is down, the whole family becomes down" make criminals have various means in accepting bribes and transferring illegal gains. Under the influence of this kind of ethics, the members involved in the family corruption cover each other before the incident and protect each other after the incident, which makes it more difficult to detect the family corruption.

3. The harm of family corruption

In addition to the general harm of corruption, the following two consequences of family corruption have seriously eroded the social ecology, which is worthy of attention.

First, it erodes fairness and justice and causes political crisis. Different from other types of corruption, family corruption is often manifested as the whole corruption of a certain family. The most important principle of public power "what is taken from the people should be used for the people" is trampled, which is used to seek the private interests of a family and a surname. In the end, family members or build up enterprises sheltered by public power to grab economic benefits; or they consider themselves privileged class, causing bad social impact.

Second, intervene in the selection of public officials to speed up the corruption of public power. Family corruption includes not only obtaining property illegally with the help of public power, but also arranging relatives and friends to enter the ranks of public officials by using their own power and influence to further expand the family officialdom network. This kind of chaos will not only disturb the normal election order, form the personal attachment relationship in the official system, bury the root of sectarianism, but also strike the enterprising spirit of excellent talents, and finally fall into the vicious circle of Gresham's Law, accelerate the corruption speed of the whole public power system, and do great harm.

4. Conclusion

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, "serving the people wholeheartedly" is the ruling purpose of the Communist Party of China. The goal of social governance is to establish a fair and just social distribution system, realize common prosperity, and promote everyone's free and comprehensive development. There is no doubt that family corruption runs counter to the ruling purpose and social governance goal of the Communist Party of China. To curb the harm of family corruption, the State Supervision Commission needs to start from the specific ethical concepts that cause family corruption, make full use of information technology, and accurately supervise the prone subject and process of this corruption.

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