

The Relationships Between Parents and Children in the Perspective of Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Cultures: the View from Lithuania

Summary

The family relationships between parents and children seems to be one of the most important problems in all contemporary cultures from Lithuania and Scandinavian countries to East Asian societies. The ethics of filial piety (*xiao*), which traditionally was a basis for those relationships in China, was and still is viewed in very different ways by Western people. The main purpose of the paper is to discuss the view of *xiao* and the importance of its ethics for the contemporary global world, as it was expressed by Lithuanian students of sinology at the Centre of Oriental Studies at Vilnius University. This view was gained from the questionnaire recently made by the author herself, and motivated by the premise about the difference in treatment of this Chinese virtue among different Western countries, depending on the different attention to

children and individual rights, the respect for authority or family relationships in various countries. This problem will be discussed in the broader perspective of the history of the treatment of *xiao* in China and the West, ending with the analysis of its treatment in contemporary Chinese society, based on the investigations by Chinese anthropologists and sociologists. The paper argues that in forming the view of *xiao* in contemporary West, one has to take into account not only differences in its understanding between old and new generation in China herself, but also discrepancies between its „theory“ (i.e. its presentation in Chinese classical and didactic texts) and actual practice, which becomes even more problematic in contemporary China because of the dissolution of the authority of those texts.

Key words: filial piety (*xiao*), Confucianism, respect, care, duties, virtue.