

Module 2, Discussion 1: The Mandate of Heaven

Main Topic

The Mandate of Heaven is what grants authority to a Chinese emperor over his people. It is his responsibility to provide order for and prosperity to others. By claiming these responsibilities, he is also affirming his aptitude and competency to the Chinese people. If life in China grows difficult and unbalanced, it is his fault alone, and he will be replaced.

Wm. Theodore de Bary from the video *Confucian Teaching* said about the Mandate of Heaven: "...exercise [the authority of the Mandate of Heaven] in a responsible way, [be] responsible for the welfare of the people." This means that the emperor must be genuinely concerned about all of his people if he is ever to fulfill his duties. For better or for worse, the people of China looked toward the emperor for prosperity, and held him accountable for both good and hard times. If China had not been so isolated from other parts of the world, I imagine that this political arrangement would have been much more dysfunctional than it was.

If I were an advisor to the president regarding the nature and workings of the Mandate of Heaven, I would tell him that he does not come across as being genuinely concerned for the people of the United States of America. He is an effective orator and oozes confidence in his own abilities, but the people do not believe him when he says that he has a plan. When hardship comes and cannot be avoided, I would remind Barack Obama that a president must be uncommonly authentic and incredibly thorough if people will ever be convinced that he deserves to keep such unattractive responsibilities.

Re: Module 2, Discussion 1 (by Nichole Martin)

"Next, you need to extensively seek out wise men or women to aid you with your decision making."

But not too much....

Re: The Mandate of Heaven (by Stephanie Siino)

"If the president doesn't rule in the best interest of the people, he or she will be replaced by another Mandate of Heaven."

Aren't there a lot of striking similarities between the Emperor of China and the President of the United States of America? It sometimes seems like we are not as far along as we like to think we are.

Re: Module 2, Discussion 1 (by Joshua Swetland)

"Now your Majesty is entering on the inheritance of his virtue; -- all depends on how you commence your reign. To set up love, it is for you to love your relations; to set up respect, it is for you to respect your elders. The commencement is in the family and the state.' again this demonstrates the view of the people as extended family rather than simply subjects to be obedient to the king, if they were just subjects there would be no concern to express love and respect but the minister wanted them the people to know they were loved and respected much like we would want our family members to know we love and respect them."

You're right in that it emphasizes the importance of all people in a society, which is uncommon in so many different societies in history (and presently).

I am curious how power was abused by the emperor, however. Chinese culture may have had the Mandate of Heaven as an important part of its society and political structure, but stratification no doubt existed.

