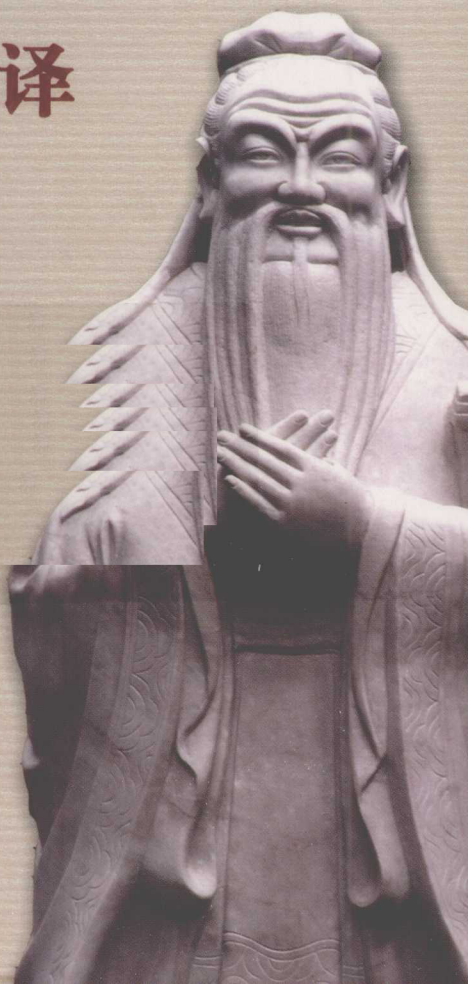


Getting to Know **CONFUCIUS**

— A New Translation of
The Analects

论语新译

Translated by
Lin Wusun



外文出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Preface

The Analects, known as a classic on Confucius' teachings and experiences, was compiled by his disciples and second-generation disciples during the Spring and Autumn Period (722—480BC) in Chinese history. It is comprised of 20 separate "books", which are broken down into 492 passages. Though many of the passages are short, they often carry profound meaning.

For more than two thousand years, *The Analects* and Confucian thought have had an immeasurable impact on the Chinese people and Chinese culture. Confucian tradition constitutes the core and bedrock of the Chinese civilization, consistently making an impact on the development of China throughout history. Though Chinese students today no longer recite the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*, Confucian thought is still subtly influencing the ethos of the Chinese people. Confucianism is still very much alive with its positive values concerning society and ethics.

Centuries ago, missionaries who had been to China began to introduce *The Analects* to the West. With China's increasing influence abroad, *The Analects* and Confucius have evoked widespread interest in the world. Confucius and Confucianism belong not only to China but also to the entire world.

Mr. Lin, a celebrated translator in China, was the president of the China International Publishing Group some twenty years ago and is now an adviser to the Translators Association of China. He studied in India and in the United States and has actively engaged himself in promoting cross-cultural exchange throughout his career. Mr. Lin is therefore intimately aware of the different conceptual thoughts and reading habits of readers abroad and entertains his own ideas on bridging the gap between Chinese and Western cultures. Since the 1950s, he has worked in different fields of journalism and made remarkable achievements in translation. His translations, to mention a few, include *The Art of War by Sun Zi*; *The Art of War by Sun Bin*; *Riverside Talks — A Friendly Dialogue between A Christian and An Atheist*, and *Shanghai Pudong Miracle: A Case Study of China Fasttrack Economy*. This book is yet another example of his applying cross-cultural understanding in solving translation difficulties.

Mr. Lin started the translation of *The Analects* in the late 1990s. Since then, he has read extensively

Chinese and foreign books on *The Analects* as well as the latest studies in the field. Time and again, he revised his translation. To help foreign readers better understand *The Analects* and Confucian thought, he included in the book accounts about the life of Confucius, the development of Confucian thought, and the lasting influence of Confucius on Chinese philosophy and society. Mr. Lin also added necessary background information and explanatory notes to important passages and terminologies found in *The Analects*. In addition, to further help Western readers, Mr. Lin draws comparisons between Confucius, Socrates, and even Jesus, in their thoughts, experiences and influences.

A unique feature of this book is Mr. Lin's compilations of 30 useful quotations into a small pamphlet to be inserted in the book or carried separately for further study. This special design shows the translator's consideration for the readers and makes it so unusual among books on the same topic.

This new translation of *The Analects* by Mr. Lin will satisfy the needs of foreign readers in understanding Confucian thought and Chinese culture. It is hoped that every notable quotation from the book will resonate with the reader and help him appreciate the intricacies and practicality of Chinese philosophy.

"Rome was not built in one day," nor was this

book. Upon the publication of this new translation of *The Analects*, I have the honor to write this preface to share with readers from around the world the cream of Chinese philosophy.

Zhou Mingwei
President
China International Publishing Group

Translator's Preface

In the late 1990s, I did my translation of *The Analects* in the beautiful seaside city of Qinghuangdao. However, since the Foreign Languages Press which commissioned me for the task changed its plan, I had time to add to my understanding of the original text by reading up on all the relevant academic works available to me. This process of deepening and regurgitation continued for over a decade during which I edited my own translation many times.

A word of explanation is needed as to why I describe my book as “a new translation”. It is new because it benefits from the latest research materials on *The Analects* published by Chinese academia.

I want specially to thank my wife Zhang Qingnian for her unflinching support and encouragement. She is the translation's first reader and her criticisms and suggestions did much to improve its faithfulness and readability.

Lin Wusun
November, 2009

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Introduction

Who was Confucius?

Confucius* (551—491 BC) ranks the foremost among China's ancient thinkers. His teachings had a profound influence on the development of Chinese history and left a deep imprint on the Chinese psyche. He is also said to have initiated private tutoring, which constituted a forward step in Chinese education. Prior to him, there existed only official schools, the sole preserves of the children of the aristocracy. People nowadays who are used to public education might not appreciate the full impact of private tutoring as a revolutionary measure which helped to promote social mobility in ancient China. The introduction of the system of imperial examination whose content, during most periods in Chinese history, centered on Confucius' teachings, gave the children of different social background, particularly the under-privileged, a chance to pass the examination and move up the social ladder. To

*Latinized version of Kong Fuzi (Master Kong). His full name is Kong Qiu (孔丘).

commemorate the Master, Confucius temples existed all over China, even down to the counties, the country's basic administrative unit.

Confucius was born during what is known as the Spring and Autumn Period (722-480 BC) in Chinese history. His native state was Lu, located in what is now Shandong Province in eastern China. At that time, the Zhou Dynasty (1030-211 BC) was in serious decline. Its rule was confined to a limited domain. The heads of its vassal states, whose rulers were mostly descendents of the first king's close relatives and ministers, simply went their own way. And these vassal states were fighting among themselves, sometimes to the extent of the stronger conquering the weaker ones. Within these states, ministers often turned their rulers into puppets. Usurpations and palace coups were commonplace. It was in these tumultuous times that Confucius grew up. He therefore turned to the past to seek inspiration and role-models and to find cures and solutions to current social ills. Many of the ancient concepts were developed and heroes reconstructed to fit in with Confucius' own philosophical and ethical ideas. And he called on the young to surpass the old. In this sense, he may be considered a traditionalist, but not a conservative.

Confucius had a unique childhood. His father Shuliang Ge^{*} was a warrior of rather low status. Generations back, one of his forefathers, a distinguished aristocrat by the name of Kong Fujia, had moved to the state of

^{*}Kong is his surname while Shuliang is his style name and Ge his assumed name.

Lu from the neighboring state of Song to escape persecution after a palace coup there. His mother was his father's third wife. Already in his 60s, Shuliang Ge had married her, a young woman from the capital, Qufu, in the hope that she would bear him a healthy son. She accomplished that, only to see her husband die when Confucius was only three. She then moved back home with her son and, despite a difficult life, devoted her entire energy to bringing up the child with distinction. Confucius did not fail his mother's expectations. His low social status did not prevent him from mastering the language skills, history and other branches of knowledge. A self-taught man, he took up various lowly jobs and avidly studied all the historical documents he could lay hands on. He thus became a widely-recognized scholar.

In this capacity, he began to teach while looking for official posts by offering advice to the rulers and high officials of Lu. Despite several failures, he did once become a senior official himself. However, when he tried to introduce reforms in accordance with his political doctrines, he met with strong resistance as these moves affected the vested interests of the officialdom. According to tradition, Confucius was appointed the Minister of Justice, but the duke of Lu and his chief minister stopped attending court when the neighboring state of Qi presented them with a troupe of singsong girls to distract them from Confucius' reform programs. He therefore decided to seek his political future abroad. He traveled to many states with his disciples and offered his service to their rulers. He was

received with honor in several of the states. However, none took his advice seriously. Totally disappointed, he returned to Lu 13 years afterwards and spent the rest of his life teaching and editing ancient classics. His health impaired by the untimely death of his son and two of his most beloved disciples, he died at the age of 73, still convinced that he had a historic mission.

The Analects and Confucius' Ideas

The Analects, probably compiled by his disciples and disciples' disciples who put their heads together to recollect what the Master had said and done, was originally in the form of wooden or bamboo strips. These were destroyed by order of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), who was a believer in legalism and authoritarian rule. Confucian scholars and texts perished in large numbers in his notorious campaign of extermination. Not long after, during the early Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD), Emperor Wudi adopted the Confucian doctrines at the advice of his minister, the scholar Dong Zhongshu, a move which contributed to the stability of his rule. From then on, Confucian ideas won the favor of the ruling class and therefore enjoyed a privileged position in China. As time went by, Confucius was idolized as a sage and Confucianism became the dominant thought.

However, owing to Qin Shi Huang's persecution, only three versions of *The Analects* survived. There was an

edition in the State of Lu, and another in the neighboring Qi. Soon, another was discovered, hidden in the wall of the house of Confucius' descendents. *The Analects* we have today is an edited version which has probably experienced many changes through the ages. This can be proved as new versions of the classic have been found in ancient tombs by archeologists in recent years.

Confucius' overriding concern was the formation of a good government. To make this possible, he envisaged a virtuous and wise ruler who cared for his people and whose own meritorious behavior would make him a role-model for his ministers and subjects. He would surround himself with virtuous ministers and distance himself from unscrupulous servitors. At the bottom level, Confucius devised the formation of a harmonious family which he considered the nucleus of the society. There was a whole set of rules guiding the hierarchical relationship between father and sons, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brothers and between friends. Trust, mutual concern and the sense of right and wrong were considered much more important and effective in weaving the social fabric than the implementation of strict rules and regulations. Life-long learning and continuous strivings to improve one's ethical standard would make one a man of honor worthy of admiration and emulation. That, he believed, would contribute to the making of an ideal society. A passage in *The Great Learning*, another Confucian classic taken from the ancient document *Li Ji*

and edited by the Song Dynasty Confucian scholar, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), best epitomizes the above Confucian ethical-political ideal when it stated: Cultivate yourself and then your family will be put in order. When all the families achieve that, then the local government will be well run, and that will lead to peace and order in the whole country.

To us moderns, Confucius was not free of mistaken and out-dated ideas. His belittlement of women is notorious. Some current scholars tried to explain away his saying in this regard by giving us a different interpretation. However, this is not really necessary when we remember that Confucius lived in a patriarchal society where women had no social status and Confucius' attitude was merely a reflection of his times. Another passage showed him to consider the common people to be too ignorant so that there was no need for one to bother with informing them of what was going on. Still another such anachronism was his low opinion of physical labor such as farming and gardening. When his disciple Fan Chi asked him about his view on these matters, he answered he knew nothing about them, adding later that Fan Chi was indeed a petty man. The whole question hinges on how we should look at positive historical figures. However great they might be, they should not be put on a pedestal, prettified or glorified beyond their true selves. Confucius was what he was, a great thinker despite all his faults.

In *The Analects*, we find Confucius a very human figure, with his likes and dislikes, his hopes and disappointments, sometimes even a bit self-contradictory in his