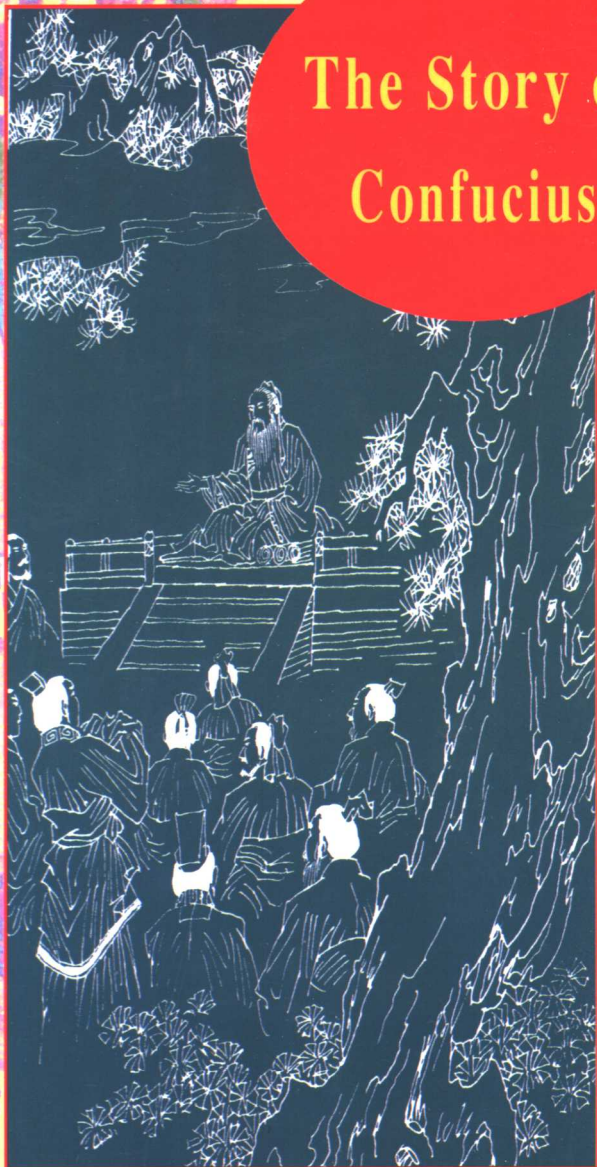


The Story of Confucius



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Written by Luo Chenglie

Translation supervisor: Alatan

Translators: Li Yonggui, Wang Xin, Pang Lixia

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外文出版社电子信箱:

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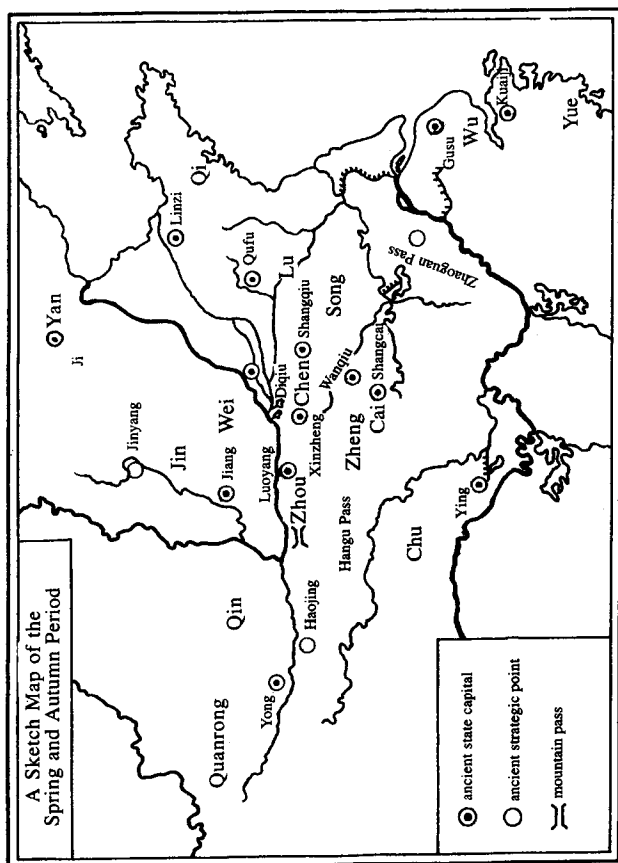
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Portrait of Confucius



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Foreword

The Story of Confucius is a popular literary biography of Confucius, the great Chinese thinker and teacher who was born in 551 BC in the State of Lu, southeast of today's Qufu in Shandong Province. This book chronicles the life of Confucius until his death in 479 BC: His poverty in his youth, his participation in politics, his devotion to his teaching and study and compilation of classical literature, and his training of a group of talented students that helped create Confucianism, the school of thought that introduced the idea of "Benevolence" to join the "Way" of Lao Zi as one of two milestones in China's traditional philosophy that helped lay the foundation of China's traditional culture. In China's long feudal society, Confucian thought became the dominant one, and for more than 2,000 years it has been a part of the ethical awareness, spiritual life, traditions and customs for the Chinese people.

The Story of Confucius focuses on important aspects of the life of Confucius such as his family, his many travels, his life in politics, his collecting and editing of ancient books, his composing *The Spring*

and *Autumn Annals* (the first chronological history in China) and his teaching of some 3,000 elite students. While bringing to life the personal history of one of the world's most influential thinkers, this book also offers rich information about the time in which Confucius lived, the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770 — 221 BC). It was a period of economic and social upheaval, but also one of the most dynamic periods of academic thinking in Chinese history when a pattern of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" in ideology created an intellectual climate of vigor and vitality.

With life-like characters based on historical fact, *The Story of Confucius* reveals Confucius and his spirit of lifelong study in a way that also can help serve as a guide to those wanting a more direct understanding of the essence of his ideology as explained in *The Analects*, the collection of the words and deed of Confucius that involves politics, economics, ethics, education, philosophy and history.

The Heir of a Well-known Father

An American scholar once said, "Confucius — China," indicating that in the eyes of modern Westerners ancient China and Confucius are synonymous. Although this representation is quite inexact, it reveals that for most Westerners their view of China's long history, well-developed culture, civilized politeness and harmonious surface is intimately tied to their view of Confucius.

Confucius, the greatest philosopher in the history of ancient China, also ranks first among the top ten great names in the cultural history of the world, and Chinese people are very proud of the important part Confucian thought plays in the treasury of world civilization.

In his lifetime, Confucius was but a poor scholar who cannot be said to have achieved his political ambitions. Nevertheless, it is this man who contributed to the treasury of human culture by founding Confucianism, analyzing ancient literatures and teaching other famous scholars who were to follow.

According to the *Book of Confucius' Family Tree*, the ancestor of Confucius can be traced back to

Xuanyuan, the Yellow Emperor.

The Yellow Emperor, who lived 4,000 or 5,000 years ago (when China was in the primitive society stage), was chieftain of an alliance of tribes in the Yellow River valley. It is said that he had been transformed into a human from an angel turtle, and thus he is also known as Tianyuan (Heaven Turtle). His people were so good at hunting that they were able to capture more than enough animals for food, enabling them — as the captured animals bore cubs — to begin to develop animal husbandry. That is why these people were also known as the Tribe That Has Bears. To live a better life, Lei Zu, the wife of the Yellow Emperor, is said to have taught her people to keep silkworm to make cloth. In addition, the people of the Yellow River valley also learned how to build palace buildings, boats and vehicles — all of which was attributed to the Yellow Emperor whose surname is therefore known as “Xuanyuan” (“Xuan” and “Yuan” are both parts of a vehicle). These people also are credited with later inventing primitive agriculture so that the social production at the time developed further. It is also said that they defeated in battle the Chi You Tribe from the south at Zhuolu by driving wild beasts to rush into the enemy. Shortly thereafter, they won again in a war with a nearby tribe headed by the Yan Emperor. These two wars helped form a big coalition of different tribes who came from either the Central

Plains or north and south. Later, many tribes from the east also became allied with the people of Yellow Emperor and blended in different ways. As time passed, the authority of the Yellow Emperor was consolidated in the areas of Yellow River valley and the Central Plains.

It is recorded that the Yellow Emperor had 25 sons (that is to say, there were 25 sub-tribes under the tribal coalition headed by Yellow Emperor), and had 12 surnames. Qi, the chieftain of the eastern tribes was one of his descendants. According to legend, Jian Di, Qi's mother, gave birth to Qi after eating a big black bird's egg. When Qi's throne was handed down to his fourteenth generation, his descendant Tang came to be known as a wise and able emperor. Tang "got his full power after eleven conquests" to become the founder of the Shang (also known as Yin) Dynasty after conquering the Xia Dynasty. After that, by going on several campaigns and pacifying some internal disputes, he consolidated his power, which did not fully stabilize until the reign of Tai Jia, his grandson. The Shang Dynasty lasted over 400 years (about 16th century to 11th century BC), a period of time when a slave system prevailed in Chinese history. As the most powerful slave-owners, the emperors had many slaves working for them and a great fortune in their hands.

The cruelty of the emperors as rulers in this era is exemplified by Zhou, named Shou (or Shou Xin),

the last emperor of the Shang Dynasty and one of history's notorious tyrants. With most nobles in the last years of the Shang Dynasty leading a dissipated life — they seemed to be drunk or in a dream every day — Zhou was typical of them. Zhou piled burdens on his people to satisfy his increasing greed, extorting more and more tributes from his dependent states so that the people were boiling with resentment. Meanwhile, he lavished favors on Da Ji (one of his concubines) and put crafty sycophants in charge of important tasks, leading to extreme corruption. Some loyal ministers (for example, Bi Gan and Shang Rong) who tried remonstrating with him were executed by him. Others (Qi Zi, a royal relative and minister, for example) were driven to madness or were forced to flee. Even Wei Zi, the elder brother of Zhou, could not escape such a fate.

Wei Zi, named Qi, was the eldest son of Di Yi, the 30th king of the Shang Dynasty. At the time he was born, his mother was not the wife but a concubine of the king.

A few years later, Wei Zi's mother was upgraded to become the king's wife after his former wife died. She then gave birth to Zhou who became the only legal heir to the throne, not Wei Zi who failed to succeed to the power although he was Zhou's elder brother. Since Wei Zi was kind, merciful and peaceful in nature, he was determined — out of concern for the future — to speak to his younger brother

about his increasing greed, arrogance, and cruelty. However, at first King Zhou just turned a deaf ear. Then he was outspoken in his dislike for Wei Zi. Still later he even warned Wei Zi not to poke his nose into his business or else. Wei Zi's efforts came to nothing, although it is evident that the effort made was not only for the good of his brother, but for the 400-year-old Shang Dynasty as well. To assure his safety, Wei Zi had to flee under an assumed name to protect himself from the insult of possible national subjugation.

During the 11th century BC, King Zhou was attacked by troops of the western Zhou led by King Wu. In a battle at Muye (the southwest part of the present-day Qi County, Henan Province), a nearby suburb of the capital of the Shang Dynasty, King Zhou burned himself to death at Lutai when his slave soldiers turned coat. The Shang Dynasty was destroyed in one blow.

At this moment, Wei Zi, as a minister of surrender, knelt down before the horse of King Wu to welcome an army of a just cause. Having long heard of Wei Zi's wisdom and loyalty, King Wu regarded him with special respect and conferred on him — together with Wu Geng, the son of King Zhou — a territory to the far east.

Soon after, however, Wu Geng ganged up with Guan Shu, Cai Shu and Huo Shu — the three high-ranking officials sent by King Wu to supervise Wu

Geng — to launch a rebellion. This was quickly put down, and the four men were beheaded. In the course of this incident, Wei Zi showed much loyalty to King Wu. As a consequence, Wei Zi was further granted the title of Lord of the State Song (present-day Shangqiu County, Henan Province) to console the adherents of the former (Yin) Dynasty. From this, it can be seen that Song was the surviving political power base of the Yin people after Wu Geng's rebellion and that Wei Zi was the founder of the State of Song.

Under the newly-established Zhou Dynasty, the State of Song became a dukedom and enjoyed much political power. When Wei Zi's son died at a young age, Wei Zi handed down the throne to his younger brother according to the succession system of the Shang Dynasty. So Wei Zhongyan became the next Lord of the State of Song, and Confucius was actually one of his descendants.

And then, after Wei Zhongyan, the fourth successor was Duke Min, and then Duke Yang, the younger brother of Duke Min, who was killed by Fu Si, the second son of Duke Min. Then Fu Si offered the throne to his elder brother, Fu Fuhe, who declined. So Fu Si ascended the throne himself as Duke Li and to his elder brother Fu Fuhe conferred Li (the present-day Xiayi, Henan Province). Esteemed for his role in abdicating the throne, Fu Fuhe is the tenth generation ancestor of Confucius.

The great grandson of Fu Fuhe was Zheng Kaofu, known for his knowledge of ancient literatures and modest and simple life. Although he assisted Duke Dai, Duke Wu and Duke Xuan in succession in governing the State, Zheng Kaofu did not claim credit for himself. It is recorded that a tripod pot (symbol of destiny) was enshrined and worshipped in his house, on which was engraved this inscription:

“Every time I accept a position, I always express my greatest sincerity, first lowering my head and then walking with stooped shoulders to take orders. When I walk in the street, I never swagger. I use this pot to cook food and take its inscription as my motto.”

According to legend, Zheng Kaofu edited and catalogued some well-known literary works such as *Xuan Niao* (Black Bird) and *Yin Wu* that are now included in the “Ode to the Shang Dynasty” of *The Book of Songs*. That these odes give a vivid description of the history of the Shang people — singing the praises of the merits of the forerunners of the Shang Dynasty — offers a good indication of how much Zheng Kaofu admired and respected his ancestors. It is a fact that his way of life and his attitude had some effect on Confucius.

Kong Fujia, son of Zheng Kaofu, twice took the post of Da Si Ma, the commander-in-chief of the troops in the reign of both Duke Mu and Duke

Shang in the State of Song. However, Kong Fujia fell prey to a political struggle among the nobles. One day, his wife, one of the beauties in the State, was noticed by Hua Du, whose power was second only to the king. Hua Du started a smear campaign against Kong Fujia in order to take his wife. He spread the rumor that the poverty of his State was the result of successive military expansions and that Kong Fujia was the chief culprit behind the poverty.

Meanwhile, Kong Fujia was so honest that he did not pay much attention to these rumors, nor did he bother to give any explanation to his people. As a result, the next year Hua Du was able to kill Kong Fujia and forcibly take his wife with the help of the discontent of the people. Further when the king, Duke Yang, complained about this unfair treatment of Kong Fujia, this led to the king himself being killed by Hua Du, an event in the history of the State of Song known as "the Treachery of Hua Du." The incident reveals how powerful senior officials were at the time and how the power of Confucius' ancestors began to decline.

Hua Du was so malicious that — to leave no chance for Kong Fujia — he decided to kill the son of Kong Fujia, Mu Jinfu. However, he failed when Mu Jinfu took a chance to escape to the State of Lu. Mu Jinfu chose this State as a good place to move to for several reasons: The State of Lu (in the