Confucianism in Cross-Cultural Dialogue

洪庆福 著

比较文化中的儒学

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图书在版编目（CIP）数据

比较文化中的儒学 / 洪庆福著. —上海：上海教育出版社，2004.10
ISBN 7-5320-9504-5

Ⅰ.比... Ⅱ.洪... Ⅲ.新儒学—研究—英文
Ⅳ.B244

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字（2004）第109917号

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上海世纪出版集团
上海教育出版社出版发行

易文网：www.ewen.cc

（上海永福路123号 邮编：200031）

各地新华书店经销

商务印书馆上海印刷股份有限公司印刷

开本 890×1240 1/32 印张 7.125 插页 4

2004年10月第1版 2004年10月第1次印刷

印数 1-3,000本

ISBN 7-5320-9504-5/H·0098 定价：(软精)20.00元

Preface

ublications in English on Chinese humanities, with particular reference to Confucianism, have long been a notable presence in academic life both at home and abroad. Naturally, the question itself emerges: why another while there is already choice among many?

A marked proportion of English learners on Chinese collegiate campuses simply demonstrate little knowledge, or even concern about, the many cultural milestones Confucianism has recorded, for good or bad, in the progression of Chinese civilization. Growing by the day their verbal expressiveness on issues relating to the West as they are, they just find it a tall order to address Chinese cultural themes in proportionate effectiveness. These two observations, when combined, readily suggest or well translate into a cultural one-sidedness at best and cultural unconsciousness at worst. For all their alleged command of English, as a result, years of academic pursuit finish with only a "one-way ticket" to excellence in terms of broadly defined mastery of English, and, this "pass" comes to nothing substantial in advancing themselves to the demanding world of cross-cultural communication in an age labeled "multiculturalism" and "globalization", all on a re-engineered traditionalism and localism basis.

A corresponding picture featuring international students doing Chinese studies, as is everywhere recognizable and instantly acknowledged by many, lends an almost equal cause for serious concern. While offered a broad basis for approaching and, then, appreciating the Chinese humanities, they are in the want of a non-partisan guide to the marrow of cultural China and its fabric

of life along the lines of Confucianism. Volumes-thick scholarly writings harass and perplex those expected to get initiated; pocket-size general-interest ones insult, by way of over-simplicity, the intellect and judgment of those well under way to Confucian scholarship; and textbook-format ones neither suffice in extending the horizons of nor stand chances to enrich the grounds for those well-established in Chinese studies. More seriously, there remains to be filled the vacuum of a Chinese-authored (in English) introduction-hermeneutics-and comparativism-perspectived at once—to Confucianism, Confucian China and Confucian culture.

The delivery to you of this 3-volume long *Confucianism: A Comparative Approach & Interpretative Study*—with its respective sub-headings being *A Lead-up to Confucianism*, *The Ascension of Confucianism to State Ideology and Its Downfall*, *Confucianism in Cross-Cultural Dialogue*—is not just meant to supply a cure to the situations briefed on in the above. Aside from an analysis and appreciation of the Confucianism-styled Chinese cultural expression within an interpretative historical framework coupled with an approach lent by comparative studies of Confucianism and Christianity, another key intention is to recapture and present the Confucian impulses to seek answers to the mysteries of human experience in this secular-oriented Oriental land; decipher or carve out order in relating the Chinese man to his perceived universe; respond creatively or otherwise to nature, both inner and outer, as well as to the shifting landscapes of dynastic rise and fall; express the earthly ambitions of the Confucian man himself in his rigidly stratified society; and create lasting monuments in variously fashioned forms indigenous to the Confucian mind.

Also, I have it as my aim first to demystify the Chinese cultural record by showing that Confucianism, as is true of all other time-honored ideologies, did not spring force spontaneously

or independently of other beliefs or creeds, but reflected a set of specific shaping forces of history out of which its material and spiritual representations emerged and, then, to shed light on the view that the many questions, ideas, desires and longings prevailing in a China, a Chinese culture, and a Chinese society now in transition, carry in their "physiology", "psychology" and "ethos" Confucianism for part of their living functions, i. e. just as human endeavors are inseparable from the nature of the universe, the passage for China, the nation, the culture, and the society, to modernity will be ill fated if at the cost of severing linkages with China's national heritage, cultural legacy and societal tradition, of which Confucianism is unmistakably a most enduring element.

Above all, this presentation of Confucianism is expected to serve as a jumping-off point for further exploration into Confucian premises as well as an invitation to promote intercultural dialogue and multicultural symbiosis.

In terms of structure and content, the materials used, culled from both primary and secondary sources, are offered chronologically. Each chapter will begin with an introduction designed to bring up a brief sketch of some of the most important dates, people, events, and developments of the period or topics under focal study. Put otherwise, subject-matter is produced successively and presented in a meaningful historical context, facilitating the eye and mind with an unobstructed view of the prevailing historical and material conditions that so powerfully impacted the form, content, reach and reverberation of each weighty Confucian expression in the realm of attitude and idea and in that of cultural artifact. This approach, whenever needs be, is modified to accommodate culturally significant ideas or developments by way of pulling them out of the chapter or section covering their period of occurrence and discussed either sepa-

rately or in conjunction or comparison with others that came to life in other periods or entered the cultural stage of other nations. A detailed survey and, hence, treatment of all the Confucianism-related Chinese humanities can not only be unwieldy and confusing, but also go out of bounds for the purposes of this approach to and study of Confucianism. Instead, I have distilled from the mass of available information covering Confucianism in all its sweeping historical periods what I consider the crucial points, always aiming to grasp the essence of the mosaic of political, economic and social developments, bringing to light, thereby, the pervasive themes attracting, choices made and propositions upheld by the Confucian scholar-official (both conventionally favored ones and those discounted or neglected for various reasons) and the Confucian society in both times of certainty and confidence and those of challenge and crisis.

For the generation of this guide to a comparative and interpretative study of Confucianism, I'm grateful to many an encouraging voice, instructive hand, enthusiastic eye, and enlightening mind. I owe special thanks to Professor Rolf R. Mirus, University of Edmonton, Canada. He was a major force in driving the need for such a writing into my mind when I was working on a CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) in the 1995-1996 period. Professor Sun Jingyao, Shanghai Normal University, Professor Fang Hanwen and Professor Ye Linsheng, Soochow University, they all shared my vision and affected, both with their insight into comparativism and Chinese culture and with their intelligent concern for structure and detail, the way I discuss certain issues and frame particular arguments, and for this I'm most appreciative. I'm also fortunate enough to have been extended invaluable and hard-to-single-out support from the following teaching and research staff members at the Foreign Studies School, Soochow University: Zhou Zhengxing,

Lu Zhaoming, Xu Qinggen, Ding Wanjiang, Du Zhengmin, Zhu Quanming and Chen Gao. I wish to recognize in particular the contributions of Miss Yang Zhihong: working with me on the project all along, she has assisted me all the way from manuscript through clean copy with patience, smile, and advice, a vote of confidence in this undertaking. This writing is a rewarding experience. The task has been made more enjoyable by many of my students. Rather than the "dum-dum" kind of empty-eyed gawkier, they have exhibited surprising originality in the feedback process, a follow-up to my instructing them on traditional Chinese culture with the draft of this book functioning as core reading material. Finally much credit for the successful production of this 3-volume long project goes to Shanghai Education Publishing House. I offer my thanks for their sponsorship, academic review and criticism. Equally, I acknowledge the cooperative spirit the editorial staff have displayed in transforming manuscript into this beautiful book. Mr. Xu Wenkan and Ms. Ni Yajing deserve a special note of appreciation: their unflappability, good humor, and eagle eyes have led to considerable improvements in the launch of this project.

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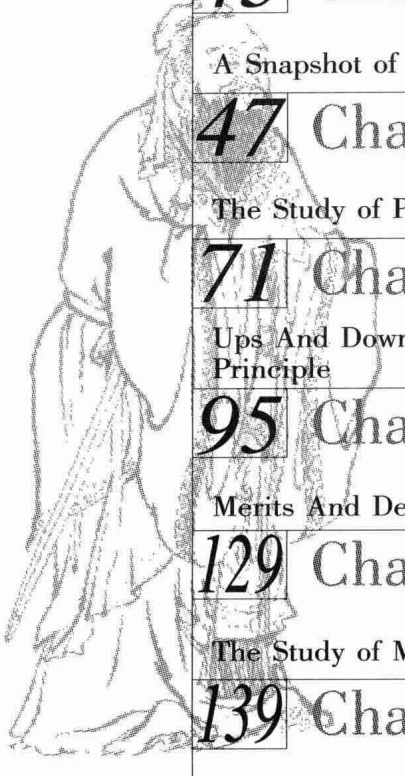

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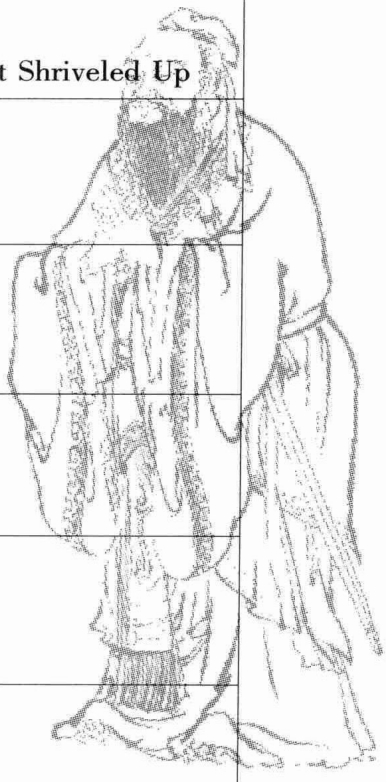

Chapter 1

The Song-Yuan-Ming Histories: Grounds for the Birth of Song-Ming Confucianism

History of the Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms

A rough 150 years after the Tang regional and local organizations started to slip continually from the control of the Tang court, the Tang empire dissipated for good in 907, leaving what had been the Tang territories, together with its northeastern and northwestern border areas, a vast stage for the play of the so-called Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms—The Dynasties are: the Later Liang (established in 907), the Later Tang (established in 923), the Later Jin (established in 937), the Later Han (established in 947) and the Later Zhou (established in 954). The Ten Kingdoms are: the Khitan or Khitai (the term being the source of Cathay, the name of north China for medieval Europeans), the Tangut north of the Yellow River Basin, and eight small kingdoms to the south of the Yangtze River.

The five dynasties successively founded in the Yellow River valley all displayed an indefatigable industry in trying to immortalize their respective regimes. Nestled deep in the heart of each of their rulers was a wish to reunify the lands severed by war-lordism into a single House under one dynastic rule. In order to realize the wish, each of them had the appointment of the right personnel to the right positions for his prime attention area. Thus, each successive dynasty followed in the footsteps of its predecessor to take the bold and courageous step of stripping

nobles of their dominance over politics, and the accompanying one of terming a large number of people from relatively humble social origins to civil administrative and military posts. Whether or not civil/military service exams should be given as a basis for such recruitment and promotion was of only secondary concern to emperors of these dynasties. What mattered first and foremost to them was whether applicants had the practical skills as required of them by the courts, and whether candidates could swear allegiance to their masters. Talents who were recruited largely on the two bases did serve each of the dynasties well. They were given much credit for constructively bringing their administrative and military leadership skills to the satisfaction of the following needs as expressed by every one of the five dynasties:

—Accelerate the rise of absolutism when acting as court ministers;

—Supervise central and local finances when serving as fiscal/tax officials;

—Provide safety for tribute transport in their capacity of transport superintendents;

—Crack down on local insurgences in their position as commanders of armed forces.

For all their talents and their highly applauded achievements, they just could not prevent their respective dynasties losing more and more of their economic resources. Nor could they muster up sufficient military prowess to meet challenges offered up by opposing warlords. When Fortune's Wheel so moved that one dynasty was to be replaced by another, these talents tore down their allegiance to pin it on the winning party. And, in the same manner as that revealed in this shifting of allegiance, dynasty changed names all too rapidly. None of these five dynasties was able to stay in triumph any longer than 14 years before being visited by the tragedy of death.

The ten kingdoms made many good contrasts to the dynasties. A look at the eight small ones first: Among all the economic phenomena attesting to this was, first, the rise in the south of such centers of commerce and handicrafts as Chengdu, Jinlin (present-day Nanjing), Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Jinzhou and Changsha. Secondly, while repeated wars of attrition rendered the Five Dynasties' whole rural communities destitute in the Yellow River basin, economies of the Ten Kingdoms remained relatively stronger. Another significant difference: whereas in the case of the Dynasties rulers' focal interest lay in an re-integrative process—for this reason, warlords punched and counterpunched, pressed and counter-pressed one another—rulers of the Kingdoms were overwhelmingly absorbed in maintaining what they and/or their fathers had won, upon declaring their respective kingdom independent of the Tang empire. It is no suggestion that the Kingdoms never engaged in any eyeball-to-eyeball conflicts among themselves. Nor do we mean by this that there weren't any riots or disturbances within each kingdom. History confirms that this maintenance job, for each of them, was full of frictions, both at one kingdom's interface with other kingdoms and on its home turf which, as things turned out, sent the authority in each kingdom shrinking further with the coming of each new year. However, none of the kingdoms was as interested as any one of the Dynasties in putting itself on the tortuous road back to reunification. And it was essentially this that sealed the Kingdoms' fate.

And, then, talents' expectations and ways of life varied from party to party: while the getting of a job the civil/military service exam way was high on agenda within the Dynasties, the refining of tastes was of prime consideration for their counterparts within the Kingdoms. It was commonplace in the Kingdoms that instead of accepting official job offers, men of letters found

themselves employed in the study of art and literature, i. e. they tended to set a low value on official positions, but a high one on the "four treasures" of a scholarly study: brush-pen, ink stick, paper, and ink slab. This inclination toward cultural excellence, incidentally, was to provide sufficient ground for the cultivation of Confucianists of the Principle & Mind Schools.

The least similarity to the Dynasties, however, was born by the Khitan and Tangut kingdoms, specifically in that each one of the two kingdoms made a complete substitution of its own non-Han speaking kingdom for all Han-speaking Chinese dynasties and kingdoms as its ultimate objective ever since its rise, and in that both kingdoms survived longer than any dynasty and any other kingdom.

The earliest evidence of "ominous" developments of the rise of these two peoples was observed in the last years of the Tang empire. The Khitan people, who were related to eastern Mongols, were the first to threaten to petrify the Tang court. During the 31 years after they had, first made their formidable presence north of the Tang empire (in today's Liaohe River valley area in northeastern China), the Khitan mounted successive military operations against the Tang House, with the result that what are the northern parts of present-day Shanxi and Hebei provinces turned to be their booty. And the Khitan grew increasingly aggressive since 947 when they made Yanjing (for Beijing) their southern capital (Beijing thus started its history as capital town.) and renamed their kingdom as the (Great) Liao Empire. The Empire put raids, one after another, into what were previously parts of Tang territories, presenting itself as an insuperable barrier, preventing any one of the aforementioned five dynasties from any effective attempt at unification of China. Then, it grew so strong that it was able to force the Song Dynasty (We'll brief on the history of the Song Dynasty later.) to flee to southern China,

and that it lasted until 1279 when Kubilai Khan took the whole of China and christened Yanjing "Khanbalik".

While many historical facts can be offered as explanation for such a sustainable growth of the Liao Empire, we, for the purposes of this book, will only call your attention to the very fact that the Khitan put a dual system of administration to effective use. One part of the dichotomy consisted of administrative principles and practices, and related rules and/or norms binding upon the Khitan people. It was the place where the Liao court put the Khitan people under its tribal jurisdiction, perpetuated the Khitan tribal rites and maintained their steppe style of everyday life. What constituted the other part were basically the Tang styled management of government administration and other Tang cultural institutions. It is self-explanatory as to where and for whom this style and these institutions were supposed to take effect: Han-speaking communities and Han-speaking people in general. It is no educated guess but fact that this part featured officials bearing the same titles, tax schemes with the same regulations, and examinations of the same styles and contents, as those which had been used by the Tang court. And the Chinese language, of course, was spoken in these communities by these people.

The Tangut, a people of Tibetan origin, made its strong military appearances on what were previously parts of Tang territories at a much later stage in time, although they had been in contact for centuries with several Chinese dynasties up to the Tang one. During the several decades that bridged the Tang and post-Tang years, the Tangut took moves across what are now Ningxia, Gansu and Northern Shan'xi regions, which were in nature similar to the ones taken by the Khitan in what are modern Shan'xi, Hebei and Beijing. Upon a successful completion of these military actions, they started, from 1038, to annex one

piece after another of what were once northwestern lands of the Tang House, posing their kingdom as an increasing menace to the Song House. And like what the Liao Empire did, the Tangut pressed the Song House for tribute money year after year since around 1004.

However, while economic conditions for the Tangut kingdom were relatively better and/or stabler than those for the Liao Empire (The former developed a semi-oasis economy combining pastoralism with irrigated farming.), it finished behind the latter in military strength. In terms of government skills, the Tangut also proved weaker than the Khitan: the former just lacked the adroitness as possessed by the latter in handling the issue of Sinicization. For this reason, the Tangut found it hard to square real-life endeavors with expectations of toppling over the Song House. And, the expectations, had they been still there in mind when entering the 1220s, had but to die on the vine. Seven years into this decade, the kingdom kissed the ground and was never able to rise up again as a kingdom.

History of the Song Rule

Zhao Kuangyin was the man who brought order into the morass of facts revealed in the many separate efforts (toward reunification) as were exerted by each and all of the five dynasties and the eight small kingdoms in the south. Shortly upon his usurping the Later Zhou throne, he established the Song Dynasty in 960.

In his effort at "Return To Normalcy", to use Warren Harding's most well-known slogan, Zhao exhibited not only dominative military craft, which was derived from his experience accrued over the years of his service in the Later Zhou court as general of the King's Army, but also unrivaled skill in polito-military manoeuvring. Rather than decimating leaders of the