

CHINA moulded by CONFUCIUS

THE CHINESE WAY
IN WESTERN LIGHT

by

CHENG TIEN-HSI, LL.D. LOND.

Of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law and Honorary Bench; Quain Prizeman in Public International Law; Fellow of University College, London; Ambassador to the Court of St. James's; Formerly Judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice; Professor of Law in the University of Peking; Senior Member of the Law Codification Commission; Judge of the Supreme Court; Vice-Minister and Acting-Minister of Justice; Special Commissioner of the Chinese Government for the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London, 1935.

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Civilization and Art of China (William Clowes &
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Translation from Chinese into English:

First Draft Civil Code

Supreme Court Decisions

Prize Court Judgments, etc.

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孔子模型之中國人

(華道西光)

鄭天錫



To the Loving Memory of
MY PARENTS
This Book is Respectfully
Dedicated

'When the *Great Principle* (the ideal social order that Confucius had in his mind) prevails, the world is like one home common to all; men of virtue and merit are to be elected to be rulers; sincerity and amity pervade all dealings between man and man; people shall love not only their own parents and own children, but also those of others; the aged, the young, the helpless widows and widowers, the orphans, the destitute, the incapacitated, and the sick shall be well provided for and well looked after, while the able-bodied shall exert themselves in their aid; men shall be appropriately employed and women suitably married; one detests that things are abandoned or wasted on earth, but, when gathered or stored up, they are not to be retained exclusively for oneself; one detests that exertion does not proceed from oneself, but its fruits are not to be regarded exclusively as one's own. Thus there will be no, and no cause for, conspiracy, robbery, theft, or rebellion, and no need to bolt one's outside door. This is a true Commonwealth.'—Confucius, *Book of Li*, Bk. XXI, Title *Li Yun*, Ch. 9.

FOREWORD

IT is no small measure of consolation to be able to feel that one's time is not idly spent, when others are 'doing their bit' in a tormented world. It is with this feeling that I look back on my few years' quiet existence in Geneva during the Second World War; for, profiting by an existence without the usual daily routine, I have been able to put in a concrete shape a few reflections that have cropped up during a long period of years. My sojourn in the West has covered a good part of my life, and I always cherish a happy memory of it both in things I have learned and in persons I have met. For years I have deemed it an agreeable duty to try in my small way to introduce into my country what I have learned abroad, and thus to contribute, as best I can, directly and indirectly to a better understanding between the East and the West. But understanding requires mutuality, and so I feel it also my duty to try to bring in return to the West some of the ideas and ideals that my country and my countrymen have treasured for centuries. In this attempt I need hardly say that I express my views and thoughts simply as a private individual, wholly independent of any public capacity that I may possess or have possessed. One thing, however, I may say. While the treasures of a country, in the form of works of art like those which a few years ago I had the honour, as Special Commissioner of my Government, to bring over for exhibition in London, and which have attracted world-wide attention, can be seen by the eye, those, in the form of wisdom of the sages like those which will be unfolded in this book, such as what is said about 'noiseless music, formless manners, and badgeless mourning',¹ appeal rather to the soul.

To be exact, part of this work consists, by way of illustrations, of translation, with comments, of selected passages from the ancient Classics, including under this term the doctrines of Confucius and other sages, and, as a supplement to literature, a chapter of a well-known historical romance. In the translation of the Classics, and, particularly, of the

¹ *Book of Li*, Bk. LI, Title *Confucius at Leisure*, No. 29. These words used poetically in praise of certain rules of benevolent government may be interpreted to mean that the best music which a ruler may give to his people is harmonious tranquillity through good administration, the perfect manners which a ruler may set to his people are dignified serenity, and the deepest mourning which a ruler may show to his people afflicted by death is sympathetic succour.

doctrines of the sages, I have tried to be as faithful as possible to the original, as a slight inaccuracy might modify its real sense, if not its apparent meaning, and, in order that my readers may judge the meaning for themselves, to keep as close as possible to the literal sense of the text, as deviation from it would defeat the purpose. But as the Classics are mostly worded in a language proper to the ancients, and as translation often involves interpretation,¹ too literal a translation would be worse than useless; because it not only would be unintelligible, but even might convey a wrong idea of the original. In other words, while a free translation is undesirable, a translation that is too literal is impossible. To try to bring out, in accordance with the spirit of this observation, what I believe to be the correct meaning of the text has been my task; but no little difficulty has been experienced in the attempt. The translation of certain words and certain phrases, in particular, has necessitated much research and meditation. For instance, in translating the passage from Confucius quoted in the front page of this work, I had, in order to make the sense of the text clear, to say 'helpless widows and widowers', as it really means, instead of 'widows and widowers', as it literally appears to be; for, without adding the word 'helpless', the phrase would be open to the observation that there is no reason why a widow, who might have inherited a large fortune from her husband and have grown-up children, or a widower, who might have come by a handsome estate through the death of his wife and himself be still able-bodied, should, merely on the strength of being such, be treated in the same way as the incapacitated or the sick. Instances like this are many and, in consequence, I have had in a number of cases to add words to the sentence in order to complete the sense; but, in order to indicate that the added words are mine, I have as a rule put them in brackets. Moreover, as this book is intended to be readable not only in the cloister but also in the club, as it were, for which reason part of the work has been written in a lighter vein, the choice of materials has likewise absorbed much labour. I wish I had more time at my disposal to do justice to my attempt; but one must not expect too much in a lifetime. Happily, consciousness of fidelity to one's task is always a form of consolation for its imperfect execution. It may be added that I have taken care to set out the exact reference of every passage

¹ In interpretation, as distinguished from comment, I follow strictly, at least in spirit, the orthodox commentary, *if any*, unless I have good reasons for deviating from it, in which case I always set out the reasons. Interpretation of an ancient text, without regard to the commentary universally accepted for centuries and without giving reasons for disregarding it, would be like navigation without the compass, and would lead not only to uncertainty but even to the abuse of interpreting it according to one's caprice or to suit one's purpose.

from the Classics and, especially, of every saying quoted from the sages. This is, in my opinion, a detail of some importance, particularly when the quotations are worded in a foreign language and make the very subject of comment or discussion. As to references to English literature they are meant not for the average reader, because they would be superfluous, but only for those whose mother tongue is not English, and who, in consequence, may not always be familiar with it.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Dr. Hu Tien-She, Director of the Sino-International Library, Geneva, for having kindly lent me many Chinese books for consultation and a few pictures for illustration. My children, by helping me, in the course of the preparation of this work, either in fetching volume after volume from the library or in typing page after page at home, have also facilitated my task. Their services are affectionately acknowledged.

F. T. CHENG

*Geneva,
December 1945*

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