

# WISDOM of XUNZI

## 荀子 智慧故事

陶黎铭 张英  
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英文审订 汪榕培

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诸子百家智慧故事  
Wisdom of  
Ancient Chinese Sages

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# 前言

两千多年前的春秋战国时代，是中国各种思想流派百花齐放的时期，涌现了孔子、孟子、老子、庄子、墨子、荀子、孙子、韩非子等思想家、哲学家，他们开创了儒、道、墨、法等各具特色、影响深远的思想派别，后世称为“诸子百家”。“诸子百家智慧故事”是一套介绍先秦诸子经典的汉英对照系列丛书，将先秦诸子的生平事迹、哲学思想、格言警句、哲理寓言以及与他们有关的历史故事串联成启迪智慧的短小故事，既能满足中国读者的普及型阅读需求，又照顾到国外读者的文化特点，让大家在轻松愉快的阅读氛围中走近春秋战国时代“百家争鸣”的先哲们。

为了让世界更好地了解中国的经典文化，“诸子百家智慧故事”在编写上突出了以下三个特点：

轻松阅读——本系列每本书中文不过七八万字，每个故事就是一个相对独立的阅读单位，仅几百字的内容十分钟就能读完，在当今信息爆炸的快节奏时代，这种文本便于读者随时取出翻阅。

经济阅读——中国的文字特别是古文字常常是外国人阅读中国经典的障碍，本丛书采取汉英双语对照，中文是浅显易懂的白话体，配以通顺晓畅的英语译文，读者无须钻研艰深的典籍，就能了解先哲的智慧。

趣味阅读——本丛书通过一个个短小生动的故事以及古意盎然的插图，为读者深入浅出地解读诸子经典。

先秦诸子经典是中国的宝贵精神财富，至今在中国乃至全世界都有广泛的影响。希望本丛书能够引起广大中外读者对先秦诸子百家的兴趣，并能通过书中的故事体会到博大精深的中国智慧。

# Preface

Over two millennia ago, China experienced a boom of ideas and philosophies in the form of “100 Schools of Thought”. Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi, Xunzi, HanFeizi, Sunzu ... These are the stellar names behind the philosophical schools like Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism, Legalism, etc. in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (from 770 BC to 221 BC). The classics of these ancient sages contain great wisdom and have exerted profound influence on Chinese history and thought. While the classics themselves may seem difficult to understand today, you can find lucid and accessible explanations of the ancient philosophies in the books of *Wisdom of Ancient Chinese Sages*. With the help of a collection of short and interesting stories, you can get to know the lives and thoughts of the ancient sages, the axioms and allegories they employed to illustrate their ideas, and some facts about the historical era they lived in.

With the aim of presenting the ancient Chinese classics to the world audience, *Wisdom of Ancient Chinese Sages* boasts three advantages:

Easiness — Each book in the series is comprised of only a few dozen stories, each of which has no more than 2,000 words and

can be glanced through in a 10-minute coffee break. Even in your busy life, you can always snatch some time to enjoy a story of wisdom and gain some spiritual nourishment.

**Efficiency** — The classics may seem a little obscure today since they are written in the ancient Chinese. In this Chinese-English version of *Wisdom of Ancient Chinese Sages*, however, the classics are rendered in simple, everyday English. Without having to tax your brains, you can readily comprehend the profound wisdom of the ancient sages.

**Attractiveness** — With all the short but lively stories accompanied by beautiful illustrations, *Wisdom of Ancient Chinese Sages* explains to you the ancient philosophical ideas in a friendly and agreeable way.

The ancient philosophical classics in the “100 Schools of Thought” are an important spiritual heritage of China and impose great cultural reverberations beyond the Chinese borders. We hope that the series may let the readers develop an interest in the ancient Chinese sages and their philosophies, and appreciate the quintessential Chinese wisdom that may prove useful in present day.

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荀子生平  
**The Life of Xunzi**



# 荀子

名况，字卿，战国时期赵国人，是战国晚期著名的思想家。

荀子的生卒年史书上没有明确的记载，生平事迹也非常简略。根据有限的历史资料推知，他主要活动于公元前 298 年到公元前 238 年之间，即秦始皇统一六国前后。

在荀子生活的“战国七雄”争霸的时代，强大的齐国为了扩大本国政治文化的影响，在齐国都城的一处城门——稷门之下建立了远近闻名的“稷下学宫”，以优厚的待遇聘请本国和邻国的著名学者来此讲学。这些学者学派背景不同，但是都可以在此发表自己的观点并与其他学者展开讨论，“稷下学宫”一时成为战国时代的学术中心。这些学者除了讲学、著述以外，还可以在学宫招收来自各国的学生，规模最大时有上千名学生，按照学宫的要求跟从学者们研习百家学说。

年仅十五岁的荀子也受到“稷下学宫”名气的吸引，离开赵国来到学宫游学。本来就有“秀才”之称的荀子到了这里如鱼得水，一住就是十几年。在此期间，他广泛涉猎各家学说，得以吸收各家学说的长处，融会贯通。应该说，这是荀子思想萌芽并逐渐走向成熟的关键时期。

公元前 285 年前后，荀子离开已露出衰败气象的“稷下学宫”。紧接着齐国也遭到了入侵，国力受到很大削弱，“稷下学宫”当然也未能幸免，遭到了严重破坏。好在相隔五六年之后，齐襄王收复齐国失地，并着手重振“稷下学宫”的辉煌。于是，荀子被召回“稷下学宫”。此时的“稷下学宫”，老一辈学者陆续过世，需要补充一些学问好、名望高的学者做先生。在这种情况下，荀子凭借着当年在“稷下学宫”打下的学问基础和学术名声，受到了齐王的尊敬，十年之间三次被奉为“祭酒”，主持学宫的一切学术活动。正是在这个时期，荀子确立了自己在当时的

学术地位，成为继孔子、孟子之后儒家学派的又一位代表人物。

之后荀子曾到秦国考察，积极推行自己的政治学说。他看到当时的秦国自然条件优越，山川险固，物产丰足，而且民风淳厚朴实，于是认为将来可能统一各国的一定是秦国。但是，他认为秦国现在还不具备称王的资格，还有许多需要改进的地方，于是向秦昭王进言要重用“儒家学者”，鼓吹儒者在朝廷可以美政，在民间可以美俗，既可以位列王公大臣，也可以做一名普通的社稷之臣。当然，秦昭王并没有听从他的建议，既不采纳荀子的意见，也没有重用荀子。这让荀子很失望，于是又返回齐国。

而此时齐襄王已死，齐国朝政混乱，国力日渐衰微。荀子针对时弊发表自己的意见，却因此得罪了当时权贵，遭到排挤。于是荀子只好又离开齐国，前往楚国任兰陵令，可是他又遭到嫉贤妒能的小人攻击，很快被解职。不过此时的荀子已经名扬天下，离开齐国后马上被赵国待为上宾，他所阐述的军事理论让赵国君臣对他十分敬佩。

荀子只在赵国待了几年，在政治上并没有发挥出太大的作用。后又被楚国的春申君请回去继续做兰陵令。春申君死后，荀子再没有做官，一直呆在楚国兰陵，专心著述，死后葬在兰陵。

可以说，荀子一生绝大部分时间都在游学、讲学、著述中度过，政治上没有什么突出的建树。但是他培养了很多学生，其中最有名的是法家代表人物韩非和秦丞相李斯，他们分别发展和实践了荀子的学说。

荀子是战国晚期著名的思想家，儒家学派的代表性人物。他对先秦诸子百家的学说兼收并蓄，其学说涉及了哲学、政治、经济、法律、伦理、教育、军事等诸多方面。其中，荀子的“天人观”、“性恶论”、“治国主张”等都是很重要的。

**Xunzi's** given name was Kuang and his literary name Qing. Born in the state of Zhao, Xunzi was a great thinker in the late Warring States period.

No specific historical records on the life and death of Xunzi could be found, and even the account of his life stories is very brief. Judging by the limited historical data, Xunzi was mainly active between 298 BC and 238 BC, namely, the period around Emperor Qin Shihuang's unification of the other six states.

Xunzi lived in the times when the Seven Warring States were competing with each other for power, during which, with the aim of expanding its own political and cultural influence, the powerful state of Qi established the well-known "Jixia Academy" under Gate Ji, one of the city gates of Qi's capital, and employed famous scholars both from its own state and the neighboring states to teach there with high pay. These scholars came from different backgrounds but were all allowed to air their own opinions and to have discussions with other scholars, thus making "Jixia Academy" the academic center for a time in the Warring States period. Besides teaching and writing books, these scholars were allowed to receive students from all states to the academy as well. Consequently, there once housed thousands of students at most to learn the thoughts of different schools from the scholars on the requirements of the academy.

Also attracted by the fame of "Jixia Academy," the fifteen-year-old Xunzi left Zhao to study in the academy. Xunzi, already known as a "scholar," felt like a fish getting into the water there, so he stayed in the academy for over ten years. During that time, he studied the thoughts of different schools extensively so as to grasp their advanced ideas and gain a thorough understanding.



It should be said that it was the crucial time when Xunzi's thought developed and became mature.

Around 285 BC, Xunzi left Jixia Academy that had already showed signs of decline. Immediately after his departure, the state of Qi also met with invasion, which greatly weakened its state power. Of course, Jixia Academy was not spared from such misfortune and also suffered great losses. Fortunately, after five or six years, King Xiang of Qi recovered the lost territory and set about restoring the glory of Jixia Academy. As a result, Xunzi was called back to Jixia Academy. However, at this time, the older generation of scholars had passed away one after another, so there arose the need to find some scholars who not only possessed broad knowledge but also enjoyed high prestige to take their place. Under such circumstances, Xunzi won so much respect from the King of Qi with his knowledge acquired earlier in Jixia Academy and his academic reputation that he was given the honor as "Jijiu," the principal of the academy, for three times during a period of ten years, presiding over all the academic affairs in the academy. It was just during this period that Xunzi established his own academic status as another representative figure for the Confucian School after Confucius and Mencius.

After that, Xunzi once travelled to the state of Qin on an investigation tour, actively promoting his political doctrines. He saw Qin enjoying favorable natural conditions, with strategic and impregnable mountains and rivers, rich produce and simple and kind people. So he believed that it must be Qin that could gain control over all the other states in the future. However, he thought that Qin had not possessed the qualification for claiming the throne yet, with still a lot of improvements to make.