

新中国评论

(英) 库寿龄 (Samuel Couling) 主编

The New China Review

1919-1922

3

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THE NEW CHINA REVIEW

VOL. III.

FEBRUARY, 1921.

No. 1.

KWAN-TSZ

BY

PROFESSOR E. H. PARKER

I.—THE STORY OF KWAN-TSZ.

THE story of Kwan-tsz opens a little before the year 700 B.C. Three statesmen were sitting together in intimate conversation, and two of these had names well-known to every Chinese school-boy, 管仲 and 鮑叔 being the Damon and Pythias of their history; the third, having left no corresponding repute behind him, we shall call by his unmodified Chinese name Shao-huh 召忽. The scene was the capital of the only civilised and organised vassal state impinging upon the sea, 齊, being the northern half of what is now known as Shantung province; and it must be borne in mind, from the outset of this narrative, that, even at this comparatively late date, the whole "empire" of China consisted in the main of a hundred miles or so on each bank of the Yellow River, then, as now, unnavigable except in short sections for anything beyond a scow or a skiff. The subject of conversation was the succession to the dukedom; the regular heir who ultimately succeeded, like most reigning princes of those days, was an incestuous profligate, autocrat in his own domain, quarrelsome towards his fellow vassals — only eight or ten of them of any political importance,—and neglectful of his duty

towards his sovereign liege the King or Emperor 王, whose power had for centuries back been steadily waning, until at last the central autocrat had become a religious and literary figure-head in his circumscribed appanage rather than an effective ruler in the whole Chinese domain: the particular point under discussion however, in or about 700 B.C. was which of the duke's three sons would be the most likely and the most suitable successor. Both Damon and Pythias had been engaged in inter-state commerce before they settled down as advisers to the reigning duke, in whose territory neither appears to have been born, though one of the two at least was of distinguished ancient lineage: indeed it seems to have been the custom in those days for members of governing clans to devote their energies to the cornering of international supplies as well as to the manipulation of international politics.

Damon was particularly anxious that Pythias should undertake the tutorship of the duke's son Candidus 小白, whose qualities he considered most promising. Shao-huh said "No! We three are like the three legs of a tripod" (the figurative Chinese word for a dynasty or ruling house, holders of the nine ancient tripods), "and it is quite uncertain which son will succeed: I do not think it will be Candidus." Damon retorted that the people did not like the mother of Candidus' brother Kew 糾 or 紂 (untranslatable), and thus Kew himself shared her unpopularity, whilst the eldest brother of all (the one who ultimately succeeded) was a contemptible character; on the other hand the fact that Candidus could point to a mother who was both a favourite wife and of ancient lineage had secured to him popular sympathy. Meanwhile the old reigning duke had died, and the despicable successor, the eldest son, after incestuous intercourse with his own sister and conniving at the murder of her husband (the reigning duke of the southern half of Shan Tung 魯), is himself killed in a palace scuffle, and the throne is seized by a maternal uncle 無知—in fact his murderer. In order to save their own lives and those of the two capable sons, Damon and Pythias (the latter in charge of Candidus), take refuge in neighbouring territories, until the assassination of the tyrannical usurper gives them a chance: the two brothers with their respective supporters have, however, to fight a battle before the race for power is definitely settled, and during this fight Damon wounds Candidus with an arrow. Pythias 鮑叔, having placed Candidus securely on the throne pleads hard for his old friend Damon 管仲, taking the ground that the latter's fidelity to Kew (now put to death at his successful brother's demand) augurs for similar fidelity to the lawful sovereign. By a diplomatic stratagem Damon (accompanied by Shao-huh), was obtained alive from the southern

state (afterwards Confucius' native place) above referred to. Shao-huh timorously committed suicide as he was arriving, but Damon courageously "faced the music" and was soon installed as Prime Minister, a post which he held until his death over forty years afterwards.

The Damon of the above story is none other than the first of the Chinese political philosophers, commonly known as Kwan-tsz, and Candidus is the personal name of Duke Hwan 桓 of Ts'i, the first of the Five Hegemons 五霸 for about a century Protectors of China and of its *fainéant* Kings or Emperors; very much as in later days the Shōguns 將軍 of Japan, for centuries took practical charge of the recluse Mikados 御門 and kept the daimios 大名 in order: the Japanese have always been assiduous students of Chinese philosophy, and it is not unlikely that the book of Kwan-tsz has been the foundation of their best political ideas in the past. Subject to variants in the numerous authorities as to personal names, exact dates, and petty details, the above story is amply confirmed and must be accepted as a piece of genuine history.

The book of Kwan-tsz, which, if it were of his own composition, would date from 650 B.C., is still with us, and is certainly a revelation of first-class mental activity at an unexpectedly early date; but we do not need the testimony of Chinese commentators from B.C. 80 downwards to convince us that the chapters, which in any case are arranged in the most higgledy-piggledy fashion, have been put together by various political admirers at different dates ranging between, say, 500 and 100 B.C. This is not to say that much of the book contains Kwan-tsz's actual words, but in his time there was no literature in the *belles lettres* sense at all, and indeed no consecutive or sustained Chinese literature of any kind. The bowl of 590 B.C. which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum is perhaps one of the longest and most literary specimens of Chinese political history in existence, and deals with proved events but one generation later in date than Kwan-tsz; yet even this production, composed by the Emperor's own scribes, does not carry us beyond the declamatory style of Egyptian, Babylonian, and Persian inscriptions. Confucius' history, considered so wonderful in 480 B.C., has no style about it at all, and is merely a jerky, laconic diary of chief events; its novelty and then rare merit lay in its exact dates: the very first appearance of "style" in literature appears to be the principal commentary on that same Confucius' history, which commentary cannot well be older than 450 B.C. After that date style rapidly improved as China herself rapidly developed in intelligence and enterprise, until at the "destruction of the books" in 213 B.C. it had reached a pitch of

dialectical perfection scarcely excelled in any subsequent age. What happened, then, was probably this :—in Kwan-tsz's time the archives at the various capitals, the registers, the regulations, and so on, were short, pithy memoranda in the charge of specialists or scribes 史 whose primitive arrangements were somewhat on the lines of our own ancient Exchequer table : there was a free exchange of bamboo slips, conveying to the states orders from the King, and also diplomatic "notes" from vassal to vassal. Kwan-tsz's wonderful administration we are about to describe no doubt set the example of intensive politics to other courts, and his maxims were gradually circulated, in such wise that more or less complete sets were filed at the royal and at the chief vassal courts, accessible to Confucius of Lu 魯 amongst other ministers, for Confucius has left on record his opinion about Kwan-tsz's administrative genius. Any one who has read carefully the three Commentaries on Confucius' own history, and the contemporary "Remarks concerning the States" supplementary thereto; Mencius; the various contentious philosophies of the period, etc. etc., will have no difficulty in agreeing with the Chinese critics who have made a special study of Kwan-tsz that his so-called "book" was put into shape (shapeless though that shape is) chiefly by smart writers of the so-called "Fighting States Period," i.e., the period between the death of Confucius and the destruction of literature, say 480-213 B.C. Whether one or more collections of Kwan-tsz shared the fate of Confucian literature we can most probably now never know ; but in any case what survived after that catastrophe had to be put together once more when the destroyer of literature was dead and gone, and when the Han dynasty was firmly seated on the imperial throne. One of the subordinate Han princes 劉向 who busied themselves with recovering the remains of ancient literature, himself furnishes a preface to Kwan-tsz's book as we now have it, and therefore in asserting the truth of the whole story, and in proceeding to give a digest of Kwan-tsz's marvellous *Kultur* (in many respects so like that of modern pre-war Prussia), we state clearly that the book of Kwan-tsz in its present shape cannot be more than 2,000 years old, though his actual words undoubtedly are reproduced here and there.

No sooner had the Duke and Kwan-tsz reconciled their past differences, than complete confidence prevailed between the two unbrokenly until their deaths. Damon's advice to Pythias that Candidus was the promising successor whose tutoring should be undertaken proved correct: Pythias remained alongside Damon as joint adviser for the greater part if not the whole of this long period, clearly recognising Damon's superior genius, but himself

manifestly the more gently (and also, perhaps, the more honourably) inclined of the two. It must be remembered that the sanctity of rulers (subsequently so persistently inculcated by Confucius) was then in full vogue as a fundamental principle of dynastic and also of vassal rule; equally well established was the view that all rulers must be guided by the advice of competent ministers. Kwan-tsz, himself of royal stock, although a private speculator, was throughout strongly imbued with the "king can do no wrong" idea, from the moment when he first took service under the Duke's father; and however sternly he might fight for or against this or that successor to that divinity hedging a ruler, once that successor on the throne, with religious rites completed, he from that moment treated his person as semi-sacred.

He proceeded to formulate a policy as follows: the power of the king (so the "Emperor" was then called) is diminishing day by day; the vassal states, mostly relatives agnate or cognate, are neglecting their homage and kinsman duties; Tartars of all kinds are becoming more and more threatening in the north, whilst the great semi-Chinese state of the south, 楚 (both banks of the Yangtze valley, from the mountain gorges eastwards to modern Shanghai and Hangchow), is increasing in pretension, and even presumes on grounds of remote kinsmanship to claim "imperial" rights and succession to our own supreme royal throne. I propose therefore to lay before your Grace* a number of administrative measures, the ultimate object of which will be to save the imperial privileges and dignity, force the leading vassal states (then only half-a-dozen of a status roughly corresponding with that of Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, Baden, Oldenburg, Mecklenburg, etc., in the German Empire) to fulfil their liege responsibilities; put a stop to these incessant local wars of ambition; and give peace and prosperity to the people. Thus Kwan-tsz. The Duke from first to last gave him a free hand, always, however, carefully discussing each proposition before giving his sanction, and taking good care to reserve his own prerogatives, interests and pleasures. The greater part of the book, accordingly, consists of long and reasoned conversations (often much in the style of Confucius' shorter and jerkier *Analects*) followed by draft schemes carefully worked out. Having intimated what is the groundwork of the present story we shall now proceed† to analyze one by one the

*The "Duke" was only a Marquess, but all reigning princes were styled "duke" after death, provided they were politically legitimate.

†The subjects of (i) a ruler's general duties, and (ii) the universality of *tao* or the (right) way have already been published in the June 1920 number of this *Review* (p. 248).

methods of procedure : but it must be remembered that the best thoughts are promiscuously scattered about, varied and repeated ; it has been a laborious work to pick them out, piece them together, and reconstruct them as an intelligible whole.

II.—LESSONS FROM FORMER DYNASTIES.

It is plain from the authorities cited by Kwan-tsz in order to inculcate his teachings, that the chief if not the only literature available to him were the so-called "classics" in their older form, a century or more before Confucius and his disciples collected, pruned and re-arranged them. Collectively the *sien-wang* 先王 or "former kings" are frequently brought forward as models of how perfect administration was traditionally conducted in the good old times. More specifically, lessons are drawn from the "five generations" 五代, i.e., founders of dynasties, or families. Individually the worst and the best monarchs are mentioned in the usual way, special stress being laid on the villainies of the last monarchs 桀 and 紂 of the only two hereditary houses (B.C. 2205-1766 and 1766-1122) preceding the highly organised 周 dynasty under which Kwan-tsz lived, and upon the virtues of the founders 湯 and 文武 of the two new ruling houses succeeding those degenerates. There is little or nothing to show us in what form these records were kept, nor in quoting from the History, Odes, Changes or Ceremonies (as Confucius left them to us), does Kwan-tsz seem ever to name them as separate books or collections. In his days archives and writings appear to have been relegated to the charge of paid scribes 史, whose duty it was to record happenings at the nod of rulers and to keep the tallies, registers, etc., ready for production before the council at any moment. A gentleman would acquire at school by heart all a man of his rank would be supposed to know "as one in authority and not as the scribes." Certainly in one place Kwan-tsz uses the expression *wu-king* 五經 (later meaning "five classics"), but he there means the "five regular" sub-divisions of ceremonial. In one place he apparently speaks of the *yüan-pên* 原本 ("original volumes" in modern Chinese) of the former kings' *shu* or "books," an expression which the Chinese commentator explains by collating *kien-ts'eh* 簡策, or inscribed "bamboo slips," strung together at one end, as we know they continued to be until silk and paper began to replace them at the beginning of our era ; but closer scrutiny proves that he meant "go to the root" of, and not "original volumes," no such expression being known in those days : it