

Cambridge University Press
0521643120 - An Introduction to Confucianism
Xinzhong Yao
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Taking into account the long history and wide range of Confucian studies, this book introduces Confucianism – initiated in China by Confucius (c. 552–c. 479 BC) – primarily as a philosophical and religious tradition. It pays attention to Confucianism in both the West and the East, focusing not only on the tradition’s doctrines, schools, rituals, sacred places and terminology, but also stressing the adaptations, transformations and new thinking taking place in modern times.

While previous introductions have offered a linear account of Confucian intellectual history, Xinzhong Yao presents Confucianism as a tradition with many dimensions and as an ancient tradition with contemporary appeal. This gives the reader a richer and clearer view of how Confucianism functioned in the past and of what it means in the present.

There are important differences in the ways Confucianism has been presented in the hands of different scholars. This problem is caused by, and also increases, the gap between western and eastern perceptions of Confucianism. Written by a Chinese scholar based in the West, this book uses both traditional and contemporary scholarship and draws together the many strands of Confucianism in a style accessible to students, teachers, and general readers interested in one of the world’s major religious traditions.

XINZHONG YAO is Senior Lecturer in and Chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Lampeter. He has doctorates from the People’s University of China, Beijing, and from the University of Wales, Lampeter. Dr Yao has published widely in the area of philosophy and religious studies and is the author of five monographs including *Confucianism and Christianity* (1996) and *Daode Huodong Lun (On Moral Activities; 1990)*, four translations (from English to Chinese), and about fifty academic papers. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.



儒家 · 儒學 · 儒教

Cambridge University Press
0521643120 - An Introduction to Confucianism
Xinzhong Yao
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

An introduction to Confucianism

XINZHONG YAO
University of Wales, Lampeter



Cambridge University Press
 0521643120 - An Introduction to Confucianism
 Xinzhong Yao
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 2000

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2000
 Reprinted 2001, 2002

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Sabon (*The Monotype Corporation*) 10/13.5pt
 System QuarkXPress™ [GC]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Yao, Hsin-chung.

An introduction to Confucianism / Xinzhong Yao.

p. cm.

Added t.p. title in Chinese characters.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Added title page title: (Ru jia, ru xue, ru jiao)

ISBN 0 521 64312 0

1. Confucianism. I. Title. II. Title: Ru jia, ru xue, ru jiao

BL 1852.Y36 2000

181'.112-dc21 99-21094 CIP

ISBN 0 521 64312 0 hardback

ISBN 0 521 64430 5 paperback

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Confucianism in history: chronological table</i>	xiv
Introduction: Confucian studies East and West	1
Stages of the Confucian evolution	4
Methodological focuses	10
Structure and contents	12
Translation and transliteration	14
I Confucianism, Confucius and Confucian classics	16
‘Confucianism’ and <i>ru</i>	16
<i>Ru</i> and the <i>ru</i> tradition	17
Confucius	21
Confucianism as a ‘family’ (<i>jia</i>)	26
Confucianism as a cult (<i>jiao</i>)	28
Confucianism as a form of learning (<i>xue</i>)	29
Ethics, politics and religion in the Confucian tradition	30
An ethical system?	32
An official orthodoxy?	34
A religious tradition?	38
Confucian classics	47
Ancient records and the classics	49
Confucius and the Confucian classics	52
	v

List of contents

	Confucian classics in history	54
	The Thirteen Classics	56
	The Five Classics	57
	The Four Books	63
2	Evolution and transformation – a historical perspective	68
	Confucianism and three options	68
	Mengzi and his development of idealistic Confucianism	71
	Xunzi: a Great Confucian synthesiser	76
	The victory of Confucianism and its syncretism	81
	Dong Zhongshu and the establishment of Han Confucianism	83
	Classical Learning: controversies and debates	86
	The Confucian dimension of ‘Mysterious Learning’	89
	The emergence of Neo-Confucianism	96
	Five masters of early Neo-Confucianism	98
	Zhu Xi and his systematic Confucianism	105
	The Idealistic School: Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Shouren	109
	Korea: the second home for Confucianism	115
	Japanese Confucianism: transfiguration and application	125
3	The Way of Confucianism	139
	The Way of Heaven	141
	Heaven and the Confucian Ultimate	142
	Heaven and moral principles	147
	Heaven as Nature or Natural Law	149
	The Way of Humans	153
	Morality as transcendence	155
	Good and evil	160
	Sacred kingship and humane government	165
	The Way of Harmony	169
	Harmony: the concept and the theme	170
	Oneness of Heaven and Humans	174
	Humans and Nature	175
	Social conflicts and their solutions	178
4	Ritual and religious practice	190
	Confucianism: a tradition of ritual	191
	Ritual and sacrifice	191

List of contents

	Sacrifice to Heaven	196
	Sacrifice to ancestors and filial piety	199
	The cult of Confucius	204
	Learning and spiritual cultivation	209
	Learning as a spiritual path	209
	Spiritual cultivation	216
	Confucianism and other religious traditions	223
	The unity of three doctrines	224
	Confucianism and Daoism	229
	Mutual transformation between Confucianism and Buddhism	233
	Confucianism and Christianity	237
5	Confucianism and its modern relevance	245
	Confucianism: survival and renovation	246
	Stepping into the modern age	247
	The rise of modern Confucianism	251
	Unfolding of the Confucian project	255
	The themes of modern Confucian studies	261
	Confucianism and the fate of China	263
	Confucianism and western culture	266
	Confucianism and modernisation	270
	Confucianism and its modern relevance	273
	The revival of Confucian values	274
	An ethic of responsibility	279
	A comprehensive understanding of education	280
	A humanistic meaning of life	284
	<i>Select bibliography</i>	287
	<i>Transliteration table</i>	309
	<i>Index</i>	330

List of illustrations

An inscribed portrait of Confucius travelling around to teach, supposedly painted by Wu Daozi, a famous painter in the Tang Dynasty (618–906) frontispiece

(Located between pages 138 and 139)

- 1 The statue of Confucius at the main hall of the Temple of Confucius, Qufu, the home town of Confucius
- 2 The Apricot Platform where Confucius is said to have taught, in the Temple of Confucius, Qufu, Confucius' home town
- 3 The Sacred Path leading to the tomb of Confucius, the number of trees at one side symbolising his seventy-two disciples and at the other his life of seventy-three years
- 4 The tablet of Confucius in front of his tomb
- 5 The tablet and tomb of Zisi (483?–402? BCE), the grandson of Confucius
- 6 People meditating in front of the hut at the side of the tomb of Confucius where Zigong (502?–? BCE), a disciple of Confucius, is said to have stayed for six years mourning the death of his master
- 7 The tablet and statue of a Former Worthy (*xian xian*), Master Yue Zheng (?–?) who is traditionally regarded as a transmitter of the Confucian doctrine of filial piety, in the Temple of Confucius at Qufu

List of illustrations

- 8 The Temple of the Second Sage (Mengzi, 372?–289? BCE), at Zou, Mengzi's home town
- 9 Korean scholars paying homage to Confucius in the ceremonies of sacrifice to Confucius at Songgyun'gwan, the National Academy of Confucius (from: Spencer J. Palmer's *Confucian Rituals in Korea*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press and Seoul: Po Chi Chai Ltd, 1984, plate 66)
- 10 Two semicircular pools in front of a hall in the Songyang Confucian Academy, near the famous Chan Buddhist monastery, *Shaolin Si*, Henan Province
- 11 The spiritual tablet and statue of Zhu Xi (1130–1200) in White Cloud Temple, a Daoist Temple, Beijing. The inscription on the tablet reads 'The Spiritual Site of Master Zhu Xi'. His hand gesture is certainly a kind of variation of Buddhist ones
- 12 The stage of the Global Celebration of Confucius' 2549th birthday held by the Confucian Academy Hong Kong, 17 October 1998

Preface

As a schoolboy I read an Indian story about four blind men and an elephant: each of these men gave a different and highly amusing account of the elephant after touching only a specific part of the animal, and, of course, not one of them was able to describe the animal correctly. To my young mind, they couldn't do so because they weren't able to touch the whole of the elephant in one go. In other words, I believed that if any of them had had an opportunity to do this, then he would certainly have been able to generate a correct image of it. As I grew up, and had an opportunity to read more on philosophy and religion, I realised that it was perhaps not as simple as this. Could a blind man, who had never seen or heard about such an animal as an elephant, tell us what it is, even if we suppose that he could have physical contact with ALL the parts of the animal? Besides the limitation of sense experience, there are many other factors that would hinder us from acquiring full knowledge of such an object, and in addition to intellectual inability, there are many other elements that would distort our image.

Having fully understood the problem arising from the intellectual process of knowing things, Zhuangzi, a Daoist philosopher of around the fourth century BCE, argues that our vision has been blurred by our own perceptions when coming to grasp things, and that true knowledge is possible only if we take all things and ourselves to be a unity, in which no differentiation of 'this' and 'that' or of 'I' and 'non-I' is made. Shao Yong, a Confucian scholar of the eleventh century CE, approached this problem from a similar perspective. For him, error in human knowledge

Preface

is due to the fact that we observe things from our own experience. He therefore proposed that we must view things, not with our physical eyes, but with our mind, and not even with our mind, but with the principle inherent in things. When the boundary between subject and object disappears, we will be able to see things as they are.

The majority of scholars who have been trained in the West, however, find it difficult to accept the underlying philosophy of the Chinese methodology proposed above. A much appreciated intellectual tradition in the West maintains that an investigation must start from a separation of subject and object, and that experience along with a critical examination of experience is the only guarantee of the ‘objectivity’ of the investigation. According to this view, a differentiation of values from facts is therefore central to any presentation of a religious and philosophical system.

Neither of these two seemingly different and even contradictory methodologies alone can assure us of a true knowledge of religion and philosophy. More and more people are coming to appreciate that we would benefit from a combination of these two approaches in our investigation of religious and philosophical traditions. Although this is a topic far beyond the parameters of a short preface, suffice it to say, that the inquiry into religious phenomena should involve empathy to some degree, and that an inquirer should be able to enter into the doctrine and practice of a religion almost as an ‘insider’, as well as to step outside as a critical observer. Indeed this methodology underlies the structure and contents of my introduction to Confucianism, and readers may easily see that the nature and image of the Confucian tradition as revealed in this book have been the result of a ‘double’ investigation, with the author being both a ‘bearer’ of the values examined and a ‘critic’ of the doctrine presented.

The formation of the book took place whilst lecturing on Confucianism in the University of Wales, Lampeter. I have run this course for a number of years, and the last time I did it was during the first term of the 1998/9 academic year, when I had just completed the first draft of this book. Conveniently, I took the manuscript as the textbook for the course, and I was pleased to know that it functioned well in this capacity both in and outside the class. Looking back at the writing process, I realise how much I have benefited from teaching and from the questions asked and suggestions made by the students.

Preface

I am grateful to Clare Hall, University of Cambridge for awarding me a Visiting Fellowship in 1998, which, supported also by the Pantyfedwen Fund and the Spalding Trust, made a significant contribution to the completion of the first draft of the book. Intellectually, I benefited from conversations and discussions with colleagues both at Lampeter and at Clare Hall, whose knowledge and insight added much value to the formation and reshaping of my original presentation. A number of colleagues, friends and students read various parts of the book. I would especially like to thank Oliver Davies, Gavin Flood and Todd Thucker, for their comments and advice, which have enabled me to avoid errors and oversights and to correct infelicities of English style throughout the book. Any that remain are, of course, my own responsibility.

Various sections of this book originally appeared as papers in academic journals or as part of research projects. Among them, 'Peace and Reconciliation in the Confucian Tradition' (*Reconciliation Project*, Gresham College) becomes the basis of the third section in chapter 3, and 'Confucianism and its Modern Values' (*Journal of Beliefs and Values*, no. 1, 1999) has been incorporated into the third section of chapter 5. I wish to thank the editors for allowing me to reuse the materials in this book. I would also like to thank the editors of Cambridge University Press, especially Mr Kevin Taylor, for their efforts in nurturing the project and bringing this book to the readers.

Confucianism in history: chronological table

In the world	Chinese history	Confucianism
	Legendary ages	Sage-kings: Yao, Shun, Yu the Great
	Xia Dynasty (2205?–1600? BCE)	Jie, the last king, a condemned tyrant
	Shang or Yin Dynasty (1600?–1100? BCE)	Tang, the founding father Zhou, the last king, a condemned tyrant
	Zhou Dynasty (1100?–249 BCE) Western Zhou (1100?–771 BCE) Eastern Zhou (770–256 BCE) Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE) Warring States period (475–221 BCE)	King Wen, King Wu, Duke of Zhou, the three Zhou sages; Confucius (551–479 BCE) The Confucian classics School of Zisi (483?–402 BCE) <i>The Great Learning</i> and the <i>Doctrine of the Mean</i> Mengzi (372–289 BCE) Xunzi (313?–238? BCE)

Confucianism in history: chronological table

In the world	Chinese history	Confucianism
	Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE) First emperor (r. 221–210 BCE)	Burning of books and the killing of Confucian scholars
Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam, Korea and Japan Indian Buddhism was introduced to China and interacted with Confucianism	Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) Former Han (206 BCE–8 CE) Liu Bang (r. 206–195) Emperor Wu (r. 140–87) Xin Dynasty (9–23) Later Han (25–220)	Confucianism became the state orthodoxy Classics annotated Grand Academy established Old Text School Dong Zhongshu (179?–104 BCE) New Text School Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18CE) Liu Xin (?–23 CE) Huan Tan (23 BCE–50 CE) Wang Chong (27–100?) Ma Rong (79–166) Zheng Xuan (127–200) Chenwei Literature
National Academy in Korea established (372) <i>The Analects</i> were brought to Japan in 405(?) by a Korean scholar Wang In.	Wei–Jin Dynasties (220–420) Wei (220–265) Western Jin (265–316) Eastern Jin (317–420)	Mysterious Learning Wang Bi (226–249) He Yan (d. 249) Xiang Xiu (223–300) ‘Pure Conversation’ Ruan Ji (210–263) Ji Kang (223–262) Daoist Religion incorporated Confucian ethics
	Southern and Northern Dynasties (386–581)	Buddhism flourished and debates between Confucianism and Buddhism intensified

Confucianism in history: chronological table

In the world	Chinese history	Confucianism
Nestorians came to China (635) Korean Silla Kingdom (365–935) established Confucian Studies First Japanese Constitution (604) incorporated Confucian ideas	Sui-Tang Dynasties (581–907) Sui (581–618) Tang (618–906)	Confucianism gradually regained its prestige; civil service examination system established Han Yu (768–824) Li Ao (772–841) Liu Zongyuan (733–819)
Korean Koryo Dynasty (918–1392): civil service examination system; national university	Song Dynasties (960–1279) Northern Song (960–1126) Southern Song (1127–1279)	Renaissance of Neo-Confucianism Zhou Dunyi (1017–1073) Zhang Zai (1020–1077) Rationalistic School Zhu Xi (1130–1200) Idealistic School Lu Jiuyuan (1139–1193) Practical School Chen Liang (1143–1194)
	Yuan Dynasty (1260–1368)	Harmonising Rationalism and Idealism Wu Cheng (1249–1333) Zhu Xi's annotated <i>Four Books</i> as standard version for civil service examinations (1313)

Confucianism in history: chronological table

In the world	Chinese history	Confucianism
Korean Yi Dynasty (1392–1910): Neo-Confucianism Yi Hwang (1501–1570) Yi I (1536–1584) Japanese <i>bakufu</i> system Fujiwara Seika (1561–1619) Hayashi Razan (1583–1657) Japanese <i>Shushigaku</i> Yamazaki Ansai (1618–1682) Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714) Japanese <i>Yōmeigaku</i> Nakae Tōju (1608–1648)	Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)	Chen Xianzhang (1428–1500) Wang Yangming (1472–1529) Schools of Wang Yangming Li Zhi (1527–1602) Donglin School Gao Panlong (1562–1626) Liu Zongzhou (1578–1654)
Korean Practical Learning Korean Eastern Learning Japanese <i>Kogaku</i> Itō Jinsai (1627–1705) Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) James Legge (1815– 1897) translated the Confucian classics into English	Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)	Learning of the Han School of Evidential Research Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692) Huang Zongxi (1610–1695) Dai Zhen (1724–1777) New Learning Kang Youwei (1858–1927)

Cambridge University Press
 0521643120 - An Introduction to Confucianism
 Xinzhong Yao
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Confucianism in history: chronological table

In the world	Chinese history	Confucianism
Wing-tsit Chan (1901–1994) W. T. de Bary Okada Takehiko Cheng Chung-yin Tu Wei-ming	Republic of China (1911–) People’s Republic of China (1949–)	Modern New Confucianism Xiong Shili (1885–1968) Fung Yu-lan (1895–1990) Tang Junyi (1909–1978) Mou Zongsan (1909–1995)