



Session 2 Why Confucianism?

Confucianism and Three Options



Session 2-1 Historical Background of the First Stage of Confucian Development

- The End of Zhou Dynasty (1046-256BCE) could be divided into two periods time:
- The Spring and Autumn Period(771-476 BCE): the time of Destroy of the Rites and Collapse of the Music
- The Warring State Period(475-221 BCE): the time that Hundred Schools competing for popularity
- This Period was times when the old order was breaking up and the new ones was not yet established

Cultural Broken Through in Late East Zhou Dynasty (axis age)

- **Hundreds Schools:**
- Rujia 儒家(Confucianism): The Way of Humankind
- Daojia 道家(Daoism): The Way of Heaven and Earth
- Fajia 法家(Legalism)
- Yin-Yang jia 阴阳家 (School of Yin Yang and Five Phases)
- Mojia 墨家(Mohism)
- Bingjia 兵家(School of Military)
- Zonghengjia 纵横家(School of Political Strategy)
- Ming jia 名家(School of Logic)



The Three Options for Saving the Chaos World

- Various proposals and options for how to save the world from collapse and how to lead a meaning life in such a chaotic environment.
- **The Three Central Ones:**
 - The group who propose that **all social conventions and institutions must be abolished** (Daoism: Daode jing; Yellow Emperor's Cannon)
 - The group consists of **the pessimists who had give up all hope of saving the world** (pessimist hermits recorded in the *Book of Zhuangzi*)
 - The group who **intended to change the world.** (Optimists: Confucianism, Moism and Legalism.)



Session 2-2: Main Idea of Daoism and Its Political Popularity in the Former Han Dynasty

- Daoism advocated a quasi-anarchism:
- Return to the primitive life of the ancient times:
 - small state with small population,
 - people living their natural life without political control
- The Popularity of the 'naturalistic and liberal' ideology provided by the doctrines of Huang (the Yellow Emperor) and Lao (Laozi).



Dao De Jing

- Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom; then the people will benefit a hundredfold. (Chapter 19)
- Abandon humaneness (ren) and discard righteousness (yi), then the people will return to filial piety (xiao) and fraternal love (ti)' (Chapter 19)
- Action through Non-action (chapter 37) and Water-like leadership government (chapter 8)



The Second Group: Proposals from the Pessimist

- The second group consists of the pessimists who had given up all hope of saving the world from chaos and destruction.
- The hermits Mentioned in the *Analects* and *Zhuangzi*:
- **They advocated either complete withdrawal from the world or a kind of apathy that was contrary to any positive intervention.**

People should not have a Machine Heart

From *Zhuangzi* (tr. Schipper, 1994:196)

- Tzu-kung [Zigong] ... travelled south to the land of Ch'u. On his way back, he passed through Chin and along the south bank of the Han river. There he saw an old man going to plant his field. He had dug a [diagonal] tunnel to reach the water down in a well. He entered the tunnel clutching a large jug and then came out again to bring water for irrigating his field. It was a hard job which required much effort for a meagre result. Tzu-kung said to the gardener: "There's a tool for this kind of work; in a day you could irrigate a hundred fields. It demands but little effort for a big result. Wouldn't you like to have one?"
- The Gardener looked up and squinted at the speaker, saying: "What is it?"
- "All you need is some wood with holes drilled in it and then assembled like a machine [a lever] that is heavy on one side, light on the other. By moving it up and down, you can draw up water in a constantly flowing stream. It is called a well-sweep. At these words the gardener turned red with anger and said with a laugh: "I have heard my master say that where there are machines, there will be the problems of machines, and these problems will produce people with hearts like machines. With a heart like a machine in your breast, there will be a lacking in pure whiteness. The gods of life [of the body] will be disturbed and there will no longer be a place there for the Tao to dwell. It is not that I do not know your machine. I would be ashamed to use it!"



Session 2-3: The Third Group: Proposals from the Optimists (3 options)

- The group who were intended to change the world.
- Representatives: Confucianism, Moism and Legalism.
- Each school has its own understanding of the steps necessary for 'straightening the crooked system' and proposed positive ways to bring this about.

Confucius' Proposal and Attack to the Second Options

- Confucius championed a **humanistic** outlook. And his solution to the resulting disorder had opened the way for the development of the tradition that was to change political courses in East Asian.
- Confucius argued against those who determined to abandon the world by saying that:
- 'One cannot consort with birds and beasts, if I do not associate with humankind, with whom shall I associate?' (Lun Yu 18:6). (Question: Do you agree?)
- Confucius believed that the prevalent problem of the time could be 'sorted out' if the traditional values were revived. (Question: Do you think so?)

History of Moism (Mojia)

- The school of Moism was founded by Mo Di, who was born shortly after the death of Confucius. Mo Di lived during the period of the warring states, which was characterised by chaos, confusion and conflict between the various feudal states.
- Mo Di sought to address the problems of his period through creating a philosophy based on universal love and promoting attitudes and conduct that is most useful to people. It is recorded that on one occasion he walked ten days and ten nights to prevent a larger state from attacking a smaller one.
- The Moist movement was highly authoritarian. Mo Di was treated by his followers as virtually infallible, and his successors were also accorded great obedience by their followers.
- During the fourth century BCE the movement was strong enough to rival Confucianism. Confucians start to attack Moist school: Mengzi (371-289) denounced the doctrine of universal love as one that undermined children's relations with their parents and fit only for "beasts". Xunzi attacked Mo Di's opposition to music as indicative of a lack of refinement on the part of Mo Di.
- During the third century BCE the movement went into decline, all but disappearing by the time of the unification of China in 221 BCE.
- Little interest was paid to the Mozi until the arrival of Christianity in China, when scholars explored the similarities between Moist and Christian teaching on universal love. Later, during the communist period Moism received some official sympathy because of its opposition to aristocratic privilege



The Special Characteristic of Legalism

- The men who composed the School of Law were not united by loyalty to a master, nor by organisation, nor because they were contemporaries, nor did they have the relation of pupils to teacher in the clear-cut way of the Confucians.
- The list of men included in the group varies, and the classification itself was not made until their epoch had closed.' (Shryock, 1966:16)

Proposal from the School of Law or Legalism (fajia)

- Within the application of Legalism, **universal laws** punish anyone who violates them to maintain social order;
- for Confucianism, **universal virtues** lead anyone who learns and practices them to goodness.
- Legalism attacked Confucian education and learning as a path to vulnerability and weakness, as pointed out by a later leading Legalist, Shang Yang (390-338?)
- The Legalist policies proved to be an efficient way for the government to accumulate wealth and increase the power of the state.

Session 2-4: The Relationship between Mozi and Confucian Tradition

- Although Mozi (479-381? BCE) was once a student within the Confucian tradition, with the **same idea of Confucianism in the function of government** by maintaining that a good government was one that could **bring benefits to the people**, **bring order to the society**, and could **increase population to the state**.
- The Moist proposal directly opposed the benevolent government of Confucianism.
- Contrast to **Confucius' moral political code system**, the Moism opted for a **utilitarian way** to **improve people's material welfare**, to **install the social order of justice** and to **reform political structure**.

Moist Religious Proposal (Mojia)

Confucian Humanist Proposal	Mohist Religious Proposal
Confucians treasured ritual/propriety (li) and music for their value in cultivating virtues	the Moists dismissed ritual and music as useless
Confucius' s human centred, this world concerned ancestor worship and filial piety	Moism's shamanistic belief in spirits and sought a solution for social and spiritual problems by making offering to Heaven and faithfully carrying out the Mandate or Will of Heaven
Confucianism stresses the supreme importance of personal character and the extension of family affection	the Moists emphasised utilitarian love and universal equality



Confucianism	Mohism
Graded Love Centred with Father-son relationship	Equal Universal Love
Moral War: 仁者无敌 (Question: Can morality win/conquer the enemy?)	Opposition to offensive war but help and support the defensive war (Question: your viewpoint?)
Regard Music as necessary tool for harmonizing of personality and society	Opposition to music as a source of extravagance, associating it with the waste of public resources
Emphasize on three years' mourn and elaboration of funerals	Opposition to elaborate funerals
Heaven is a moral guidance	Heaven is a personal force for punishment of bad deed
Mandate of heaven/ benevolent Government	Government based on merit



Confucianism and Legalism

- Legalism reached its peak at the end of the Warring States period and overwhelmed all other schools by helping the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-206BCE) to unify the whole of China.
- The important representatives of Legalism who completed the job were Li Si and Han Feizi
- They both the students of Xunzi, One of three most important Figure in the formation stage of Confucianism



The Victory of Confucianism and Its Syncretism

- Confucianism suffered greatly during the short-lived Qin Dynasty.
- With the advent of the Han Dynasty, Confucianism found itself at a turning point facing new opportunities, challenges and problems.
- Classical Confucianism needed to adapt to this new environment and to change in order to satisfy cultural, social and spiritual needs.
- The Han Confucians took these challenges seriously and Confucianism entered a new era.
- Those who could not or did not adapt to the new circumstances were rebuked as 'despicable Confucians' (bi ru), while those who did it successfully gained a high reputation.

Reasons of the Victory of Confucianism in Han Dynasty

- There were many causes for this final triumph.
- **One of these** was certainly that Confucians preserved and reintroduced **religious ritual and court ceremonies**, which were enjoyed and highly valued by the new rulers.
- **A further reason** for the rise of Confucianism was the scholar's knowledge of the **skills necessary for state administration**.
- The founder of the Han Dynasty (Gaozu, r.206-195BCE) was not greatly in favour of Confucianism, yet he appeared to have been impressed by some of the advice he received from Confucian scholars
- Thus, Confucianism, with its **knowledge of ceremonies** alongside its **understanding of the needs for state administration**, proved itself to be a strong candidate to provide the new minders of the Empire with the **skills necessary to manage the state**.



Session 2- 5: The First Battle: Win against the Legalists

- The Qin Dynasty adopted Legalism, and under the guidance of Legalist policies the state of Qin consolidated its power and by 221 BCE has subdued all the warring parties, thus unifying China.
- It ruled this vast land by imposing harsh penal laws and ruthlessly putting down rebellions.
- Confucians argued that history thus demonstrated that while Legalism was useful in a time of war, it was unsuitable as the basis of a permanent government;
- and that if the Han rulers were not about to make the same mistake, an alternative to Legalism was imperative.

The Second Battle: Against Daoist Doctrines

- The early Han emperors took heed of the failure of the Qin and initially favoured a 'naturalistic and liberal' ideology provided by the doctrines of Huang (the Yellow Emperor) and Lao (Laozi).
- Huang-Lao were believed to proposed little or no governmental interference. As a result, the economy began to recover and the state was becoming richer.
- However, there was a fundamental weakness in the Huang-Lao doctrine which diametrically opposed Legalistic extremes with individualism.
- Such a doctrine could not satisfy the needs of a strong and growing empire, and failed to provide any coherent administrative policies.



Confucianism: The Best Option of the Time 1

- A new form of Confucianism took shape in the flow of eclecticism and inclusiveness.
- It accepted the cosmic view of the Yin-Yang School and partly adopted the Daoist view of life.
- It made some use of Legalism policies to strengthen the power of the rulers and took advantage of the Five Elements theory to explain the cyclical nature of history and the change of dynasties.
- What emerged was an eclectic Confucianism which appealed to all levels of Han society and which met approval from its rulers.



Confucianism: The Best Option of the Time 2

- Thus, the Confucians of the Han on the one hand were open and flexible, syncretic and inclusive, and on the other they retained power from unifying the thought by controlling and containing other doctrines.
- Together these two dimensions contributed to the success of Confucianism.
- Emperor Wu (r.140-87BCE) took the final step and established the Confucian classics as the state orthodoxy and the worship of Confucius as the state cult.



Why Could Confucianism be a Syncretic and Inclusive Tradition?

- The Doctrine of the Mean:
- The Master said: "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Mean! Rare have they long been among the people, who practise it.!"
- The Master said: "I know how it is that the path of the Mean is not walked in: The knowing go beyond it, and the stupid do not come up to it. I know how it is that the path of the Mean is not understood: The men of talents and virtue go beyond it, and the worthless do not come up to it."



What is the Doctrine of the Mean

- The middle way, the right/ proper harmony: to mean proper,
- Proper order in society: Ruler acts as what should a ruler do; minister acts according to the request of a minister
- Proper behaviour: perfect action—not too much, not inferior and take hold two extremes,
- Fair and unbiased, impartial, flexible, ready for adjusting



The Applications of the Doctrine of Zhong Yong and Harmony

- In the relationship between the Profit (li) and the Justice/morality (yi)
- The relationship between law/ritual and morality
- The relationship between social education and self cultivation



Confucius' Golden Age:

- Rulers are sage kings with whole virtue and wisdom, acted as the Parents of the people
- Orderly harmonious relationships spread all over the world
- People doing things according to the responsibility of their roles
- Upright and virtue is the only assessment for ruler and people