

Confucius

孔子



A portrait of Confucius by the Tang Dynasty artist Wu Daozi (680–740)

Born: 551 BC Zou, Lu state

Died: 479 BC (aged 71-72) Lu State

Nationality: Chinese

Era: Ancient philosophy

Region: Chinese philosophy

School: Founder of Confucianism

Main interests: Moral philosophy, Social philosophy, Ethics

Notable ideas: Confucianism

Confucius (551–479 BC) was a Chinese teacher, editor, politician, and philosopher of the Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history.

The philosophy of Confucius emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity. His followers competed successfully with many other schools during the Hundred Schools of Thought era only to be suppressed in favor of the Legalists during the Qin Dynasty. Following the victory of Han over Chu after the collapse of Qin, Confucius's thoughts received official sanction and were further developed into a system known as *Confucianism*. Confucius is traditionally credited with having authored or edited many of the Chinese classic texts including all of the Five Classics, but modern scholars are cautious of attributing specific assertions to Confucius himself.

Aphorisms concerning his teachings were compiled in the *Analects*, but only many years after his death.

Confucius's principles had a basis in common Chinese tradition and belief. He championed strong family loyalty, ancestor, respect of elders by their children (and in traditional interpretations) of husbands by their wives. He also recommended family as a basis for ideal government. He espoused the well-known principle "Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself", an early version of the Golden Rule.

Names

Confucius' family and personal name respectively was 孔丘 *Kǒng Qiū*. His courtesy name was (仲尼 *Zhòngní*). Following an Old Chinese reconstruction, his family and personal name respectively may have been *Kʰʰonʰ* ʔ *Kʷhə*, while his courtesy name may have been *Trunʰsnʰərs*. In Chinese, he is most often known as Kongzi 孔子, literally "Master Kong". He is also known by the honorific 孔夫子 *Kǒng Fūzǐ*, literally "Master Kong". In the Wade–Giles system of Romanization, the honorific name is rendered as "K'ung Fu-tzu". The Latinized name "Confucius" is derived from "Kong Fuzi", which was first coined by 16th-century Jesuit missionaries to China, most probably by Matteo Ricci.¹

Within the *Analects*, he is often referred to simply as "the Master" 子. In 1 AD, Confucius was given his first posthumous name, the "Laudably Declarable Lord Ni" 褒成宣尼公. In 1530, he was declared the "Extremely Sage Departed Teacher" 至聖先師. He is also known separately as the "Great Sage" 至聖, "First Teacher" 先師, and "Model Teacher for Ten Thousand Ages" 萬世師表.

Backgrounds

According to tradition, three generations before Confucius' time, his ancestors had migrated from the Song state to the Lu state. Confucius was said to have been a descendant of the Shang kings or priests through the Dukes of Song.

Personal life

Early life

It is generally thought that Confucius was born in 551 BC. His birthplace was in Zou, Lu state (near present-day Qufu, Shandong Province). His father Kong He 孔紃, also known as Shuliang He 叔梁紃, was an officer in the Lu military. Kong He died when Confucius was three years old, and Confucius was raised by his mother Yan Zhengzai 顏徵在 in poverty. At age 19 he married his wife, surnamed Qiguan 亓官, and a year later the couple had their first child, **Kong Li** 孔鯉.

Confucius was born into the class of *shi* (士), between the aristocracy and the common people. He is said to have worked as a shepherd, cowherd, clerk, and a

book-keeper. When his mother died, Confucius (aged 23) is said to have mourned for three years as was the tradition.

Political career

The Lu state was headed by a ruling ducal house. Under the duke were three aristocratic families, whose heads bore the title of viscount and held hereditary positions in the Lu bureaucracy. The Ji family held the position "Minister over the Masses", who was also the "Prime Minister"; the Meng family held the position "Minister of Works"; and the Shu family held the position "Minister of War". In the winter of 505 BC, Yang Hu—a retainer of the Ji family—rose up in rebellion and seized power from the Ji family. However, by the summer of 501 BC, the three hereditary families had succeeded in expelling Yang Hu from Lu. By then, Confucius had built up a considerable reputation through his teachings, while the families came to see the value of proper conduct and righteousness, so they could achieve loyalty to a legitimate government. Thus, that year (501 BC), Confucius came to be appointed to the minor position of governor of a town. Eventually, he rose to be Minister of Crime. Confucius desired to return the authority of the state to the duke by dismantling the fortifications of the city-strongholds belonging to the three families. This way, he could establish a centralized government. However, Confucius relied solely on diplomacy as he had no military authority himself. In 500 BC, Hou Fan—the governor of Hou—revolted against his lord of the Shu family. Although the Meng and Shu families unsuccessfully besieged Hou, a loyalist official rose up with the people of Hou and forced Hou Fan to flee to the Qi state. The situation may have been in favor for Confucius as this likely made it possible for Confucius and his disciples to convince the aristocratic families to dismantle the fortifications of their cities. Eventually, after a year and a half, Confucius and his disciples succeeded in convincing the Shu family to raze the walls of Hou, the Ji family in razing the walls of Bi, and the Meng family in razing the walls of Cheng. First, the Shu family led an army towards their city Hou and tore down its walls in 498 BC. Soon thereafter, Gongshan Furai—a retainer of the Ji family—revolted and took control of the forces at Bi. He immediately launched an attack and entered the capital Lu.

Earlier, Gongshan had approached Confucius to join him, which Confucius considered at first. Even though he disapproved the use of a violent revolution, the Ji family dominated the Lu state by force for generations and had exiled the previous duke. Although he wanted the opportunity to put his principles in practice, Confucius gave up on this idea in the end. Creel (1949) states that, unlike the rebel Yang Hu before him, Gongshan may have sought to destroy the three hereditary families and restore the power of the duke. However, Dubs (1946) states that he was instigated by Viscount Ji Huan to invade the Lu capital in an attempt to avoid dismantling the Bi fortified walls. Whatever the situation may have been, Gongshan was considered an upright man who continued to defend the state of Lu, even after he was forced to flee. During the ordeal, Zhong You 仲由 had managed to keep the duke and the three viscounts together at the court.¹ Zhong You was one of the disciples of Confucius and was arranged the position of governor at the Ji family by Confucius. When Confucius heard of the raid, he requested from Viscount Ji Huan to allow the duke and his court to retreat to a stronghold on his palace grounds. Thereafter, the heads of the three families and the duke retreated to the Ji's palace complex and ascended the Wuzi

Terrace. Confucius ordered two officers to lead an assault against the rebels. At least one of the two grandees was a retainer of the Ji family, although according to Dubs (1946) probably both were, but they were unable to refuse the orders while in the presence of the duke, viscounts, and court. The rebels were followed in pursuit and defeated in Gu. Immediately after this revolt was stricken down, the Ji family razed the Bi city walls to the ground. According to Dubs (1946), the attackers retreated after realizing that they would have to become rebels against the state and against their own lord. If so, according to Dubs (1946), this incident resulted that the Bi officials inadvertently revolted against their own lord through Confucius' doing, thus forcing Viscount Ji Huan's hand in having to dismantle the walls of Bi (as it could have harbored such rebels) or confess to instigating the event by going against proper conduct and righteousness as an official. He further states that the incident brought to light Confucius' foresight, practical political ability, and insight into human character. When it was time to dismantle the city walls of the Meng family, the governor was reluctant to have his city walls torn down and convinced the head of the Meng family not to do so. The *Zuo Zhuan* calls that the governor advised against razing the walls to the ground as he said that it made Cheng vulnerable to the Qi state and cause the destruction of the Meng family. Even though Viscount Meng Yi gave his word not to interfere with an attempt, he went back on his earlier promise to dismantle the walls. Later in 498 BC, Duke Ding personally went with an army to lay siege to Cheng in an attempt to raze its walls to the ground, but he did not succeed. Thus, Confucius could not achieve the idealistic reform that he wanted and restore the legitimate rule of the duke, returning to the period of the Duke of Zhou. As a result of his unusual degree of success, Confucius made powerful enemies within the state, especially with Viscount Ji Huan. According to accounts in the *Zuo Zhuan* and *Shiji*, Confucius departed his homeland in 497 BC after his support to the failed attempt of dismantling the fortified city walls of the powerful Ji, Meng, and Shu families. He left the state of Lu without resigning, remaining in self-exile and unable to return as long as Viscount Ji Huan was alive.

Exile

The *Shiji* states that the neighboring Qi state was worried that Lu was becoming too powerful while Confucius was involved in the government of the Lu state. According to this account, Qi decided to sabotage Lu's reforms by sending 100 good horses and 80 beautiful dancing girls to the Duke of Lu. The Duke indulged himself in pleasure and did not attend to official duties for three days. Confucius was deeply disappointed and resolved to leave Lu and seek better opportunities, yet to leave at once would expose the misbehavior of the Duke and therefore bring public humiliation to the ruler Confucius was serving. Confucius therefore waited for the Duke to make a lesser mistake. Soon after, the Duke neglected to send to Confucius a portion of the sacrificial meat that was his due according to custom, and Confucius seized upon this pretext to leave both his post and the Lu state. After Confucius's resignation, he began a long journey or set of journeys around the small kingdoms of northeast and central China, traditionally including the states of Wei, Song, Chen, and Cai. At the courts of these states, he expounded his political beliefs but did not see them implemented.

Return home

According to the *Zuo Zhuan*, Confucius returned home when he was 68. The *Analects* depict him spending his last years teaching 72 or 77 disciples and transmitting the old wisdom via a set of texts called the Five Classics.

Philosophy



The Dacheng Hall, the main hall of the Temple of Confucius in Qufu

Although Confucianism is often followed in a religious manner by the Chinese, arguments continue over whether it is a religion. Confucianism discusses elements of the afterlife and the views concerning Heaven, but it is relatively unconcerned with some spiritual matters often considered essential to religious thought, such as the nature of souls.



The Analects of Confucius.

In the *Analects*, Confucius presents himself as a "transmitter who invented nothing". He puts the greatest emphasis on the importance of study, and it is the Chinese character for study 學 that opens the text. Far from trying to build a systematic or formalist theory, he wanted his disciples to master and internalize the old classics, so that their deep thought and thorough study would allow them to relate the moral problems of the present to past political events (as recorded in the *Annals*) or the past expressions of commoners' feelings and noblemen's reflections (as in the poems of the *Book of Odes*).

Ethics

One of the deepest teachings of Confucius may have been the superiority of personal exemplification over explicit rules of behavior. His moral teachings emphasized self-cultivation, emulation of moral exemplars, and the attainment of skilled judgment rather than knowledge of rules. Confucian ethics may be considered a type of virtue ethics. His teachings rarely rely on reasoned argument and ethical ideals and methods are conveyed more indirectly, through allusion, innuendo, and even tautology. His teachings require examination and context in order to be understood. A good example is found in this famous anecdote:

廄焚。子退朝，曰：“傷人乎？”不問馬。

When the stables were burnt down, on returning from court Confucius said, "Was anyone hurt?" He did not ask about the horses.

Analects X.11 (tr. Waley), 10-13 (tr. Legge), or X-17 (tr. Lau)

By not asking about the horses, Confucius demonstrates that the sage values human beings over property; readers are led to reflect on whether their response would follow Confucius's and to pursue self-improvement if it would not have. Confucius, as an exemplar of human excellence, serves as the ultimate model, rather than a deity or a universally true set of abstract principles. For these reasons, according to many commentators, Confucius's teachings may be considered a Chinese example of humanism.

One of his most famous teachings was a variant of the Golden Rule sometimes called the "Silver Rule owing to its negative form:

己所不欲，勿施於人。

"What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others."

子貢問曰：“有一言而可以終身行之者乎”？子曰：“其恕乎！己所不欲、勿施於人。”

Zi Gong [a disciple] asked: "Is there any one word that could guide a person throughout life?"

The Master replied: "How about 'reciprocity'! Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself."

Analects XV.24, tr. David Hinton

Often overlooked in Confucian ethics are the virtues to the self: sincerity and the cultivation of knowledge. Virtuous action towards others begins with virtuous and sincere thought, which begins with knowledge. A virtuous disposition without knowledge is susceptible to corruption and virtuous action without sincerity is not true righteousness. Cultivating knowledge and sincerity is also important for one's own sake; the superior person loves learning for the sake of learning and righteousness for the sake of righteousness.

The Confucian theory of ethics as exemplified in *Lǐ* (禮) is based on three important conceptual aspects of life: ceremonies associated with sacrifice to ancestors and deities of various types, social and political institutions, and the etiquette of daily behavior. It was believed by some that *lǐ* originated from the heavens, but Confucius stressed the development of *lǐ* through the actions of sage leaders in human history. His discussions of *lǐ* seem to redefine the term to refer to all actions committed by a person to build the ideal society, rather than those simply conforming to canonical standards of ceremony.

In the early Confucian tradition, *lǐ* was doing the proper thing at the proper time, balancing between maintaining existing norms to perpetuate an ethical social fabric, and violating them in order to accomplish ethical good. Training in the *lǐ* of past sages cultivates in people virtues that include ethical judgment about when *lǐ* must be adapted in light of situational contexts.

In Confucianism, the concept of *lǐ* is closely related to *yì* 義, which is based upon the idea of reciprocity. *Yì* can be translated as righteousness, though it may simply mean what is ethically best to do in a certain context. The term contrasts with action done

out of self-interest. While pursuing one's own self-interest is not necessarily bad, one would be a better, more righteous person if one's life was based upon following a path designed to enhance the greater good. Thus an outcome of *yì* is doing the right thing for the right reason. Just as action according to *Lǐ* should be adapted to conform to the aspiration of adhering to *yì*, so *yì* is linked to the core value of *rén* 仁. *Rén* consists of 5 basic virtues: seriousness, generosity, sincerity, diligence and kindness. *Rén* is the virtue of perfectly fulfilling one's responsibilities toward others, most often translated as "benevolence" or "humaneness"; translator Arthur Waley calls it "Goodness" (with a capital G), and other translations that have been put forth include "authoritativeness" and "selflessness." Confucius's moral system was based upon empathy and understanding others, rather than divinely ordained rules. To develop one's spontaneous responses of *rén* so that these could guide action intuitively was even better than living by the rules of *yì*. Confucius asserts that virtue is a means between extremes. For example, the properly generous person gives the right amount—not too much and not too little.

Politics

Confucius' political thought is based upon his ethical thought. He argues that the best government is one that rules through "rites" (*lǐ*) and people's natural morality, rather than by using bribery and coercion. He explained that this is one of the most important analects: "If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of the shame, and moreover will become good." (Translated by: James Legge) in the Great Learning 大學. This "sense of shame" is an internalization of duty, where the punishment precedes the evil action, instead of following it in the form of laws as in Legalism.

Confucius looked nostalgically upon earlier days, and urged the Chinese, particularly those with political power, to model themselves on earlier examples. In times of division, chaos, and endless wars between feudal states, he wanted to restore the Mandate of Heaven 天命 that could unify the "world" 天下, "all under Heaven") and bestow peace and prosperity on the people. Because his vision of personal and social perfections was framed as a revival of the ordered society of earlier times, Confucius is often considered a great proponent of conservatism, but a closer look at what he proposes often shows that he used (and perhaps twisted) past institutions and rites to push a new political agenda of his own: a revival of a unified royal state, whose rulers would succeed to power on the basis of their moral merits instead of lineage. These would be rulers devoted to their people, striving for personal and social perfection, and such a ruler would spread his own virtues to the people instead of imposing proper behavior with laws and rules.

While he supported the idea of government ruling by a virtuous king, his ideas contained a number of elements to limit the power of rulers. He argued for according language with truth, and honesty was of paramount importance. Even in facial expression, truth must always be represented. Confucius believed that if a ruler were to lead correctly, by action, that orders would be deemed unnecessary in that others will follow the proper actions of their ruler. In discussing the relationship between a king and his subject (or a father and his son), he underlined the need to give due

respect to superiors. This demanded that the subordinates must give advice to their superiors if the superiors were considered to be taking the course of action that was wrong. Confucius believed in ruling by example, if you lead correctly, orders are unnecessary and useless.

Disciples of Confucius

There is not much known of Confucius' disciples and a little over half of them had their surnames recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*. The *Analects* records 22 names that are most likely Confucius' disciples, while the *Mencius* records 24 names, although it is quite certain that there have been many more disciples whose name were not recorded. Most of Confucius' disciples were from the Lu state, while others were from neighboring states. For example, Zigong was from the Wey state and Sima Niu was from the Song state Confucius' favorite disciple was Yan Hui, most probably one of the most impoverished one of them all. Sima Niu, in contrast to Yan Hui, was from a hereditarily noble family hailing from the Song state. Under Confucius' teachings, the disciples became well-learned in the principles and methods of government. He often engaged in discussion and debate with his students and gave high importance to their studies in history, poetry, and ritual Confucius advocated loyalty to principle rather than to individual in which reform was to be achieved by persuasion rather than violence.^[29] Even though Confucius denounced them for their practices, the aristocracy was likely attracted to the idea of having trustworthy officials who were studied in morals as the circumstances of the time made it desirable. In fact, the disciple Zilu even died defending his ruler in Wei. Yang Hu, who was a subordinate of the Ji family, had dominated the Lu government from 505 to 502 and even attempted a coup, which narrowly failed. As a likely consequence, it was after that that the first disciples of Confucius were appointed to government positions.^[29] Few of Confucius' disciples went on to attain official positions of some importance, some of which were arranged by Confucius. By the time Confucius was 50 years old, the Ji family had consolidated their power in the Lu state over the ruling ducal house. Even though the Ji family had practices that Confucius disagreed and disapproved, they nonetheless gave Confucius' disciples many opportunities for employment Confucius continued to remind his disciples to stay true to their principles and renounced those who did not, while being openly critical of the Ji family.

Legacy

Confucius's teachings were later turned into an elaborate set of rules and practices by his numerous disciples and followers, who organized his teachings into the *Analects*. Confucius' disciples and his only grandson, Zisi, continued his philosophical school after his death. These efforts spread Confucian ideals to students who then became officials in many of the royal courts in China, thereby giving Confucianism the first wide-scale test of its dogma.

Two of Confucius's most famous later followers emphasized radically different aspects of his teachings. In the centuries after his death, Mencius 孟子 and Xun Zi 荀子 both composed important teachings elaborating in different ways on the fundamental ideas

associated with Confucius. Mencius(4th century BC) articulated the innate goodness in human beings as a source of the ethical intuitions that guide people towards *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ*, while Xun Zi (3rd century BC) underscored the realistic and materialistic aspects of Confucian thought, stressing that morality was inculcated in society through tradition and in individuals through training. In time, their writings, together with the *Analects* and other core texts came to constitute the philosophical corpus of Confucianism. This realignment in Confucian thought was parallel to the development of Legalism, which saw filial piety as self-interest and not a useful tool for a ruler to create an effective state. A disagreement between these two political philosophies came to a head in 223 BC when the Qin state conquered all of China. Li Ssu, Prime Minister of the Qin Dynasty convinced Qin Shi Huang to abandon the Confucians' recommendation of awarding fiefs akin to the Zhou Dynasty before them which he saw as counter to the Legalist idea of centralizing the state around the ruler. When the Confucian advisers pressed their point, Li Ssu had many Confucian scholars killed and their books burned—considered a huge blow to the philosophy and Chinese scholarship. Under the succeeding Han Dynasty and Tang Dynasty, Confucian ideas gained even more widespread prominence. Under Wudi, the works of Confucius were made the official imperial philosophy and required reading for civil service examinations in 140 BC which was continued nearly unbroken until the end of the 19th Century. As Moism (teachings of MO-ZI) lost support by the time of the Han, the main philosophical contenders were Legalism, which Confucian thought somewhat absorbed, the teachings of Lao-tzu, whose focus on more mystic ideas kept it from direct conflict with Confucianism, and the new Buddhist religion, which gained acceptance during the Southern and Northern Dynasties era. Both Confucian ideas and Confucian-trained officials were relied upon in the Ming Dynasty and even the Yuan Dynasty, although Kublai Khan distrusted handing over provincial control. During the Song Dynasty, the scholar Zhu Xi (AD 1130–1200) added ideas from Daoism and Buddhism into Confucianism. In his life, Zhu Xi was largely ignored, but not long after his death his ideas became the new orthodox view of what Confucian texts actually meant. Modern historians view Zhu Xi as having created something rather different, and call his way of thinking *Neo-Confucianism*. Neo-Confucianism held sway in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam until the 19th century.



Life and works of Confucius
By
Prospero Intorcetta, 1687.

The works of Confucius were translated into European languages through the agency of Jesuit scholars stationed in China Matteo Ricci started to report on the thoughts of Confucius, and father Prospero Intorcetta published the life and works of Confucius

into Latin in 1687.[¶] It is thought that such works had considerable importance on European thinkers of the period, particularly among the Deists and other philosophical groups of the Enlightenment who were interested by the integration of the system of morality of Confucius into Western civilization.

In the modern era Confucian movements, such as New Confucianism, still exist but during the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism was frequently attacked by leading figures in the Communist Party of China. This was partially a continuation of the condemnations of Confucianism by intellectuals and activists in the early 20th Century as a cause of the ethnocentric close-mindedness and refusal of the Qing Dynasty to modernize that led to the tragedies that befell China in the 19th Century.

Confucius's works are studied by scholars in many other Asian countries, particularly those in the Chinese cultural sphere, such as Korea, Japan and Vietnam. Many of those countries still hold the traditional memorial ceremony every year. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believes Confucius was a Divine Prophet of God, as were Lao-Tzu and other eminent Chinese personages.[¶]

In modern times, Asteroid 7853, "Confucius", was named after the Chinese thinker.

Visual Portraits

No contemporary painting or sculpture of Confucius survives, and it was only during the Han Dynasty that he was portrayed visually. Carvings often depict his legendary meeting with Laozi. Since that time there have been many portraits of Confucius as the ideal philosopher. In former times, it was customary to have a portrait in Confucius Temples; however, during the reign of Hongwu Emperor (Taizu) of the Ming dynasty it was decided that the only proper portrait of Confucius should be in the temple in his hometown, Qufu. In other temples, Confucius is represented by a memorial tablet. In 2006, the China Confucius Foundation commissioned a standard portrait of Confucius based on the Tang dynasty portrait by Wu Daozi.

Death and Legacy



Tomb of Confucius in Kong Lin cemetery, Qufu, Shandong Province



Confucius Monument in Rizal Park, Manila, Philippines

Burdened by the loss of both his son and his favorite disciples, he died at the age of 71 or 72. Confucius was buried in Kong Lin cemetery which lies in the historical part of Qufu. The original tomb erected there in memory of Confucius on the bank of the Sishui River had the shape of an axe. In addition, it has a raised brick platform at the front of the memorial for offerings such as sandalwood incense and fruit.

Memorials of Confucius

Soon after Confucius' death, Qufu, his hometown became a place of devotion and remembrance. It is still a major destination for cultural tourism, and many people visit his grave and the surrounding temples. In pan-China cultures, there are many temples where representations of the Buddha, Laozi and Confucius are found together. There are also many temples dedicated to him, which have been used for Confucians ceremonies.

The Chinese have a tradition of holding spectacular memorial ceremonies of Confucius (祭孔) every year, using ceremonies that supposedly derived from Zhou Li (周禮) as recorded by Confucius, on the date of Confucius' birth. This tradition was interrupted for several decades in mainland China, where the official stance of the Communist Party and the State was that Confucius and Confucianism represented reactionary feudalist beliefs which held that the subservience of the people to the aristocracy is a part of the natural order. All such ceremonies and rites were therefore banned. Only after the 1990s did the ceremony resume. As it is now considered a veneration of Chinese history and tradition, even Communist Party members may be found in attendance. In Taiwan, where the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) strongly promoted Confucian beliefs in ethics and behavior, the tradition of the memorial ceremony of Confucius (祭孔) is supported by the government and has continued without interruption. While not a national holiday, it does appear on all printed calendars, much as Father's Day does in the West.

Descendants

Confucius' descendants were repeatedly identified and honored by successive Imperial governments with titles of nobility and official posts. They were honored with the rank of a marquis thirty-five times since Gaozu of the Han Dynasty, and they were promoted to the rank of duke forty-two times from the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. Emperor Xuanzong of Tang first bestowed the title of "Duke Wenxuan" on

Kong Suizhi of the 35th generation. In 1055, Emperor Renzong of Song first bestowed the title of "Duke Yansheng" on Kong Zongyuan of the 46th generation.

Despite repeated dynastic change in China, the title of Duke Yansheng was bestowed upon successive generations of descendants until it was abolished by the Nationalist Government in 1935. The last holder of the title, Kung Te-cheng of the 77th generation, was appointed Sacrificial Official to Confucius. Kung Te-cheng died in October 2008, and his son, Kung Wei-yi, the 78th lineal descendant, had died in 1989. Kung Te-cheng's grandson, Kung Tsui-chang, the 79th lineal descendant, was born in 1975; his great-grandson, Kung Yu-jen, the 80th lineal descendant, was born in Taipei on January 1, 2006. Te-cheng's sister, Kong Demao, lives in mainland China and has written a book about her experiences growing up at the family estate in Qufu. Another sister, Kong Deqi, died as a young woman.

Confucius's family, the Kongs, has the longest recorded extant pedigree in the world today. The father-to-son family tree, now in its 83rd generation, has been recorded since the death of Confucius. According to the Confucius Genealogy Compilation Committee, he has 2 million known and registered descendants, and there are an estimated 3 million in all. Of these, several tens of thousands live outside of China. In the 14th century, a Kong descendant went to Korea, where an estimated 34,000 descendants of Confucius live today. One of the main lineages fled from the Kong ancestral home in Qufu during the Chinese Civil War in the 1940s, and eventually settled in Taiwan. Because of the huge interest in the Confucius family tree, there was a project in China to test the DNA of known family members. Among other things, this would allow scientists to identify a common Y chromosome in male descendants of Confucius. If the descent were truly unbroken, father-to-son, since Confucius's lifetime, the males in the family would all have the same Y chromosome as their direct male ancestor, with slight mutations due to the passage of time. However, in 2009, the family authorities decided not to agree to DNA testing. Bryan Sykes, professor of genetics at Oxford University, understands this decision: "The Confucius family tree has an enormous cultural significance," he said. "It's not just a scientific question." The DNA testing was originally proposed to add new members, many of whose family record books were lost during 20th-century upheavals, to the Confucian family tree. The fifth and most recent edition of the Confucius genealogy was printed by the Confucius Genealogy Compilation Committee (CGCC) it was unveiled in a ceremony at Qufu on September 24, 2009. Women are now included for the first time

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia