

CHAPTER TWO:

A Brief History of Confucius Quotation Practice, 220 CE–4th century BCE

A crucial element missing from my survey of Kongzi sayings in chapter one is the historical perspective. Although useful for illustrating the breadth and diversity of early Kongzi sayings, the modern compiler's luxury of treating individual Kongzi sayings as members of a single, synchronic corpus also distorts the picture in various ways. Not every kind of Kongzi saying was available for quotation in every period or every context, either because the evolving image of Kongzi constrained Kongzi quotation practice in new ways or because of the shifting fortunes of the texts which served as sources of Kongzi sayings. How did Kongzi quotation practice change over the course of the early period? What triggered those changes? And what role did specific texts play in these developments?

Kongzi quotation practice in the last two millennia has been dominated by the *Lunyu* and to a lesser extent by Kongzi material contained in the Five (or Six or Seven or Nine or Thirteen) Classics.²⁸¹ When one looks back at this tradition of Kongzi quotation and the countless authors who peppered their texts with *Lunyu* quotations, references, and allusions, be they emperors or statesmen, commentators or philosophers, poets or proselytizers, it can seem as though the *Lunyu* is as old as the Chinese tradition itself.

But the *Lunyu*'s authority was not a historical constant. To demonstrate this point, in this chapter I survey early quotation practice beginning from the end of the early period and moving backwards through the Eastern Han (25–220), Xin 新 (9–23), Western Han 西漢 (205 BCE–9

281. The term “Seven Classics” (*qi jing* 七經), i.e., the Six Classics plus the *Lunyu*, first appears in the Eastern Han period. For references, see p. 156 below.

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Confucianism is often characterized as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion. In fact, Confucianism built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society. It was what sociologist Robert Bellah called a "civil religion," (1) the sense of religious identity and common moral understanding at the foundation of a society's central institutions. It is also what a Chinese sociologist called a "diffused religion"; (3) its institutions were not a separate church, but those of society, family, school, and state; its priests were not separate liturgical specialists, but parents, teachers, and officials. Confucianism was part of the Chinese social fabric and way of life; to Confucians, everyday life was the arena of religion.

The founder of Confucianism, Master Kong (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.) did not intend to found a new religion, but to interpret and revive the unnamed religion of the Zhou dynasty, under which many people thought the ancient system of religious rule was bankrupt; why couldn't the gods prevent the social upheavals? The burning issue of the day was: If it is not the ancestral and nature spirits, what then is the basis of a stable, unified, and enduring social order? The dominant view of the day, espoused by Realists and Legalists, was that strict law and statecraft were the bases of sound policy. Confucius, however, believed that the basis lay in Zhou religion, in its rituals (li). He interpreted these not as sacrifices asking for the blessings of the gods, but as ceremonies performed by human agents and embodying the civilized and cultured patterns of behavior developed through generations of human wisdom. They embodied, for him, the ethical core of Chinese society. Moreover, Confucius applied the term "ritual" to actions beyond the formal sacrifices and religious ceremonies to include social rituals: courtesies and accepted standards of behavior-- what we today call social mores. He saw these time-honored and traditional rituals as the basis of human civilization, and he felt that only a civilized society could have a stable, unified, and enduring social order.

Thus one side of Confucianism was the affirmation of accepted values and norms of behavior in primary social institutions and basic human relationships. All human relationships involved a set of defined roles and mutual obligations; each participant should understand and conform to his/her proper role. Starting

from individual and family, people acting rightly could reform and perfect the society. The blueprint of this process was described in "The Great Learning," a section of the Classic of Rituals:

Only when things are investigated is knowledge extended; only when knowledge is extended are thoughts sincere; only when thoughts are sincere are minds rectified; only when minds are rectified are the characters of persons cultivated; only when character is cultivated are our families regulated; only when families are regulated are states well governed; only when states are well governed is there peace in the world.(3)

Confucius' ethical vision ran against the grain of the legalistic mind set of his day. Only under the Han Emperor Wu (r. 140-87 B.C.E.) did Confucianism become accepted as state ideology and orthodoxy. From that time on the imperial state promoted Confucian values to maintain law, order, and the status quo. In late traditional China, emperors sought to establish village lectures on Confucian moral precepts and to give civic awards to filial sons and chaste wives. The imperial family and other notables sponsored the publication of morality books that encouraged the practice of Confucian values: respect for parents, loyalty to government, and keeping to one's place in society—farmers should remain farmers, and practice the ethics of farming. This side of Confucianism was conservative, and served to bolster established institutions and long-standing social divisions.

There was, however, another side to Confucianism. Confucius not only stressed social rituals (li), but also humaneness (ren). Ren, sometimes translated love or kindness, is not any one virtue, but the source of all virtues. The Chinese character literally represents the relationship between "two persons," or co-humanity—the potential to live together humanely rather than scrapping like birds or beasts. Ren keeps ritual forms from becoming hollow; a ritual performed with ren has not only form, but ethical content; it nurtures the inner character of the person, furthers his/her ethical maturation. Thus if the "outer" side of Confucianism was conformity and acceptance of social roles, the "inner" side was cultivation of conscience and character. Cultivation involved broad education and reflection on one's actions. It was a lifetime commitment to character building carving and polishing the stone of one's character until it was a lustrous gem. Master Kong described his own lifetime:

CE), and Qin (221–206 BCE) empires before concluding in the Warring States period (5th century–221 BCE). I argue that Kongzi quotation practice can be divided into two distinct phases: a post-*Lunyu* phase in which authors regularly invoked the *Lunyu* when quoting Kongzi, and a pre-*Lunyu* phase in which Kongzi quotations exhibit little to no overlap with *Lunyu* sayings. The more familiar textual milieu from the perspective of the later tradition is the Eastern Han, Xin, and late Western Han, a time when the authority of both Kongzi and of the *Lunyu* was well-established. But as our survey moves into the early Western Han, Qin, and Warring States periods the familiar will give way to the unfamiliar as the *Lunyu*'s influence becomes difficult if not impossible to detect, even when Kongzi's authority as a source of masterful sayings remains constant.

Kongzi quotation practice in the early period: The Big Picture

The graphs on pages 139–141 summarize the results of my survey of early Kongzi sayings. Graph 1 lists the most significant sources of Kongzi quotations from the Eastern Han (25–220 CE) period, graph 2 those from the Western Han (205 BCE–9 CE), and graph 3 from the pre-Han era.²⁸² Blue (or dark grey if not viewed in color) bars represent the total number of Kongzi attributions in a given text, green (or light grey) bars represent Kongzi quotations which have close parallels in the *Lunyu* and thus might be considered *Lunyu* quotations. Numbers within the diamonds indicate Kongzi sayings with *Lunyu* parallels as a percentage of the total number of Kongzi quotations in a given text. Graded yellow (or graded grey) bars indicate the number of

282. By “significant sources” I mean texts that quote Kongzi more than once or twice.

explicit *Lunyu* attributions, i.e., quotations marked by *Lunyu yue* 論語曰 (“the *Lunyu* says”) or some variation thereof.

I have made every effort to arrange texts in chronological order from bottom to top. However, the uncertain dating and heterogeneous nature of so many early texts makes this difficult, if not possible.²⁸³ For texts whose chronology is relatively certain I have included tentative dates to serve as points of reference.²⁸⁴ However, the near certainty that many of these texts evolved into their present form over the course of the early period and beyond makes all such dates extremely provisional. For a few large compilations, e.g., the *Liji* and *Shiji*, I have listed the data for specific chapters as well as for the entire text.

My method for counting Kongzi attributions and for identifying attributions with *Lunyu* parallels will become clearer in my discussion of specific examples below, but a few points should be noted at the outset. First, my data for Kongzi attributions and *Lunyu* parallels include explicit attributions (i.e., sayings prefaced by *Kongzi yue* 孔子曰 and its variants) as well as possible implicit attributions, e.g., when *Mengzi* 7B/37 describes Kongzi with words attributed to Kongzi in the *Lunyu*: “Mengzi said, ‘Kongzi could not find men of the middle Way to associate with...’” (孟子曰：孔子不得中道而與之...).²⁸⁵ Even without the *Kongzi yue* quotation marker, here the explicit association with Kongzi at least marks it as a possible *Lunyu* quotation. Unattributed *Lunyu* parallels that do not at least mention Kongzi in some way have not been included in my

283. Although it is in need of revision, Michael Loewe’s (ed.) *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* is still the best introduction to the chronology of early received texts.

284. My (rather cautious) approach here might be contrasted with that of Paul Fischer in his 2009 article “Intertextuality in Early Chinese Masters-Texts: Shared Narratives in *Shi Zi*.” Despite his thoughtfulness on the question of parallels, Fischer seems to take for granted that early masters-texts can be dated according to the lifespan of their eponymous authors.

285. *Mengzi* 7B/37 (*SBCK* 14/16a–b; *KZJY* pp. 516–17). I discuss *Mengzi* 7B/37 in greater detail on p. 204.

data set. I address such parallels at the conclusion of the chapter.

As a general rule, the criteria for determining whether or not two texts are “parallel” will vary according to the interests of the surveyor.²⁸⁶ Since I am primarily concerned with determining the extent of the *Lunyu*’s influence and circulation in the early period, the phrase “*Lunyu* parallel” will mean “a piece of text which is similar enough to the *Lunyu* that one might plausibly interpret it as a quotation of the *Lunyu*.” Here the word “might” is crucial: a *Lunyu* parallel is only a candidate *Lunyu* quotation.²⁸⁷ As I will argue below, there were *Lunyu* parallels long before there were actual *Lunyu* quotations.

In my terminology, a “*Lunyu* parallel” is both verbally and syntactically similar to a *Lunyu* saying.²⁸⁸ It will share at least three words with a *Lunyu* entry (although graphic and semantic variants are permissible) and those words will be related to one another in a similar way.²⁸⁹ Similar themes or ideas will not count as “parallels” unless they are expressed in similar language. For instance, book 22 of the *Xunzi*, “Zheng ming 正名” (“Rectifying names”), contains four instances of the two-word phrase *zheng ming* 正名, which also appears at *Lunyu* 13/3 (“I would invariably rectify names!” [*bi ye zheng ming hu* 必也正命乎]). But since the specific context in the

286. Fischer 2009, p. 4: “Judging which passages are ‘similar enough’ to warrant being counted as ‘parallel’ is a subjective matter and will always be problematic.”

287. Schultz 1999, p. 142: “[N]ot every parallel is a quotation or involves some type of literary dependence. Formulae and stereotypical phrases often appear to be similar to quotations, but simply reflect standardized expressions for describing characteristics, gestures, common actions, as well as repeated natural phenomena. Proverbs are also problematic since they combine striking formulation with a complete, though often generally applicable, thought. Proverbs may be considered to be a type of quotation, since similar introductory formulae are sometimes used. Yet the ideas of origin or authorship and of context, which are inherent elements of true quotation, are lacking.”

288. Here I follow Schultz (1999, p. 222).

289. Compare Schultz (1999, p. 19, 217) on “verbal parallels.” For Schultz as well, verbal parallelism does not imply “verbal dependence,” i.e., quotation proper. He prefers to restrict quotation to instances “in which an exegetical purpose in reusing earlier material can be demonstrated or where an understanding of the earlier text and context is helpful, if not essential, for a proper interpretation of the new text” (p. 221ff). Christiane Haupt (2006, p. 22) in her study of *Lunyu* parallels uses a four-character standard.

Xunzi looks nothing like the *Lunyu* version, I do not count the phrase *zheng ming* 正名 as a “parallel.”²⁹⁰

The high degree of variability among parallel Kongzi sayings has forced me to make numerous subjective decisions about whether a given Kongzi quotation truly counts as a *Lunyu* parallel. In the case of Eastern Han texts, for which the question of the *Lunyu*’s influence can be answered straightforwardly, it matters relatively little whether one among hundreds of possible *Lunyu* quotations counts as a *Lunyu* parallel. But for the Warring States and early Western Han, periods for which the existence of the *Lunyu* is very much in doubt, a great deal hinges on the analysis of a handful of parallels. Consequently, when identifying possible *Lunyu* parallels in Warring States and Western Han texts I have used a much laxer standard than for later texts, with the result that my data for *Lunyu* parallels in Graph 3 also include Kongzi attributions which vary significantly from their *Lunyu* counterparts.

Consider the parallels to *Lunyu* 13/18 listed in Appendix 2:A. In the progression from the late third-century *Lüshi chunqiu* passage to the Western Han *Hanshi waizhuan* and Eastern Han *Baihu tongyi* we see a typical example of *Lunyu* parallel variability. Even when Warring States-era parallels can be found for a given *Lunyu* passage, those parallels tend to have more numerous and more significant variants than parallels from later periods. Although the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Lunyu* versions share a similar context (the Upright Self story) and interest (father-son relations and the question of “honesty” [*xin* 信] or “uprightness” [*zhi* 直]), the differences between them (e.g., using the Duke of She as an interlocutor instead of the king of Chu) and the accompanying Kongzi sayings are substantial enough to make the *Lüshi chunqiu* version seem an unlikely *Lun-*

290. See Fischer 2009 for a list of 24 kinds of intertextuality in early Chinese texts. Since my goal in this chapter is to date the *Lunyu* and not to study intertextuality per se, I am not concerned with such fine-grained distinctions.

A significant shift in Kongzi quotation practice is evident in the contrast between the Eastern Han (graph 1) and pre-Han eras (graph 3). Although a wealth of texts in both periods quote Kongzi and/or the anonymous Master, Warring States texts contain zero instances in which an author explicitly attributes something to the *Lunyu*. Even more remarkably, Warring States texts include a much lower percentage of Kongzi sayings with *Lunyu* parallels compared to Eastern Han texts. By my (very rough) count, roughly 70% of Eastern Han Kongzi attributions parallel the *Lunyu* as opposed to 9% in the pre-Han era. Keep in mind that the 9% figure is significantly inflated because it also includes parallels with substantial variants like the *Lunyu* 13/18 parallel in the *Lüshi chunqiu* discussed above.

If the Warring States and Eastern Han periods represent two extremes of Kongzi quotation practice, the Western Han period falls somewhere in between. Some texts, e.g., the *Shiji*, look more like Eastern Han texts insofar as they include a relatively high percentage of *Lunyu* parallels. On the other hand, texts like the *Huainanzi* and *Liji* do not appear to privilege *Lunyu* Kongzi sayings over non-*Lunyu* sayings. The *Shiji*/*Huainanzi* comparison is particularly striking. Both texts are very large compendia (just under 600,000 characters for the *Shiji* and over 130,000 characters for the *Huainanzi*), both were conceived as comprehensive *summa*, and both were compiled (at least in part) during the reign of Emperor Wu (141–87 BCE). Nonetheless, these two texts use *Lunyu* Kongzi sayings to very different degrees very differently to *Lunyu* Kongzi sayings, with 63% of the *Shiji*'s Kongzi sayings having parallels in the *Lunyu* compared to 14% of the *Huainanzi*'s. Thus it would seem that the few decades between the submission of the *Huainanzi* in 139 BCE at the beginning of Emperor Wu's reign and the compilation of the *Shiji* towards the end of Emperor Wu's reign marked a turning point in the influence of *Lunyu* Kongzi

sayings. Early Western Han texts (with the possible exception of Lu Jia's 陸賈 [d. c. 140 BCE] *Xinyu* 新語)²⁹¹ do not appear to privilege *Lunyu* Kongzi sayings, whereas late Western Han texts make frequent use of *Lunyu* Kongzi sayings and also quote the *Lunyu* explicitly.

But these numbers can only take us so far. As we will see below, post-*Lunyu* authors did not just quote the *Lunyu* more often than pre-*Lunyu* authors, they also treated it as if it was an authoritative and recognizable text. The *Lunyu*'s absence in the pre-Han era is felt just as keenly in the way that pre-Han authors handled Kongzi sayings compared to post-*Lunyu* authors.

The Eastern Han (25–220 CE)

• Edicts

Let us begin with the event that formally ended the Eastern Han period, Cao Pi 曹丕's (187–226) accession in 220 CE as Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty 魏文帝 (r. 220–226). Even though the Liu 劉 clan had long since lost de facto control of the empire, declaring an end to the Han dynasty was no trivial matter. Cao Pi's father, the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), had begun laying the groundwork for this transition in the years leading up to his death on March 15, 220. Having already seized the nominal Han Emperor Xian 漢獻帝 (r. 189–220) in 196, in 216 he declared himself King of Wei 魏王 besides assuming a number of other imperial prerogatives.²⁹² Cao Pi's official accession on December 11th, 220, was preceded by a month-long rhetorical ex-

291. The dating of this particular text is extremely problematic. See Loewe (ed.) 1993, pp. 171–177, for critiques of its authenticity.

292. Goodman 1998, p. 56, has a useful summary of these steps.

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