

**Title: Conversations**

**Subtitle: Confucianism**

**Second Subtitle: Confucianism**

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Quote:

History:

K'ung Fu Tzu (commonly pronounced Confucius in English) was born in 551 BCE in the state of Lu (modern day Shantung Province). He lived during the Chou dynasty, an era known for its moral laxity. Later in life, he wandered through many states of China, giving advice to their rulers. He accumulated a small band of students during this time. The last years of his life were spent back in Lu, where he devoted himself to teaching.

His writings deal primarily with individual morality and ethics, and the proper exercise of political power by the rulers.

In China, and some other areas in Asia, the social ethics and moral teachings of Confucius are blended with the Taoist communion with nature and Buddhist concepts of the afterlife, to form a set of complementary, peacefully co-existent and ecumenical religions.

There are approximately 6 million Confucians in the world. About 26,000 live in North America; almost all of the remainder are found throughout China and the rest of Asia.

Beliefs:

Confucian ethical teachings include the following values:

Li: includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.

Hsiao: love within the family: love of parents for their children and of children for their parents

Yi: righteousness

Xin: honesty and trustworthiness

Jen: benevolence, humaneness towards others; the highest Confucian virtue

Chung: loyalty to the state, etc.

Practices:

Confucianism does not contain all of the elements of some other religions, like Christianity and Islam. It is primarily an ethical system to which rituals at important times during one's lifetime have been added.

Since the time of the Han dynasty (206 CE) four life passages have been recognized and regulated by Confucian tradition:

birth: The T'ai-shen (spirit of the fetus) protects the expectant woman and deals harshly with anyone who harasses the mother to be. A special procedure is followed when the placenta is disposed of. The mother is given a special diet and is allowed rest for a month after delivery. The mother's family of origin supplies all the items required by the baby on the first, fourth and twelfth monthly anniversary of the birth.

reaching maturity: This life passage is no longer being celebrated, except in traditional families. It takes the form of a group meal in which the young adult is served chicken.

marriage: This is performed in six stages: Proposal: the couple exchange the eight characters: the year, month, day and hour of each of their births. If any unpropitious event occurs within the bride-to-be's family during the next three days, then the woman is believed to have rejected the proposal.

Engagement: after the wedding day is chosen, the bride announces the wedding with invitations and a gift of cookies made in the shape of the moon.

Dowry: This is carried to the groom's home in a solemn procession. The bride-price is then sent to the bride by the groom's parents. Gifts by the groom to the bride, equal in value to the dowry, are sent to her.

Procession: The groom visits the bride's home and brings her back to his place, with much fanfare.

Marriage and Reception: The couple recite their vows, toast each other with wine, and then take center stage at a banquet.

Morning after: The bride serves breakfast to the groom's parents, who then reciprocate.

death: At death, the relatives cry out aloud to inform the neighbors. The family starts mourning and puts on clothes made of a coarse material. The corpse is washed and placed in a coffin. Mourners bring incense and money to offset the cost of the funeral. Food and significant objects of the deceased are placed into the coffin. A Buddhist or Taoist priest (or even a Christian minister) performs the burial ritual. Friends and family follow the coffin to the cemetery, along with a willow branch which symbolizes the soul of the person who has died. The latter is carried back to the family altar where it is used to "install" the spirit of the deceased. Liturgies are performed on the 7th, 9th, 49th day after the burial and on the first and third anniversaries of the death.

#### Schools of Confucianism

There are six schools: Han Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, Korean Confucianism, Japanese Confucianism and Singapore Confucianism.

#### Sacred Texts

These were assembled by Chu Hsi (1130-1200 CE) during the Sung dynasty. They include:

The Si Shu or Four Books: The Lun Yu the Analects of Confucius

The Chung Yung or the Doctrine of the Mean

The Ta Hsueh or the Great Learning

The Meng Tzu the writings of Meng Tzu (371-289 BCE) a philosopher who, like Confucius, traveled from state to state conversing with the government rulers

The Wu Jing or Five Classics: Shu Ching or Classic of History: writings and speeches from ancient Chinese rulers

The Shih Ching or Classic of Odes: 300 poems and songs

The I Ching or Classic of Changes: the description of a divinitory system involving 64 hexagrams.

The hexagrams are symbols composed of broken and continuous lines; one is selected to foretell the future based on the casting of 49 sticks.

The Ch'un Ch'iu or Spring and Autumn Annals: a history of the state of Lu from 722 to 484 BCE.

The Li Ching or Classic of Rites: a group of three books on the LI the rites of propriety