

# THE INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIANISM FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN FAR EAST

Uzak Doğu'da Konfüçyanizmin Kamu Yönetimine Etkisi

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## ABSTRACT

Confucius, who developed a unique philosophy of life, is considered one of the main elements of Chinese culture, one of the oldest and richest cultures in the world. His main aim was to find a solution to the social and political turmoil of his time. It is a legacy of Confucianism shared by more than one state, and data sources from a single country are insufficient to understand his teaching. The effects of Confucianism varied from state to state. The reason for this is the influence of the existing institutional structure and traditions in that country, and the effects of Confucianism can vary depending on when Confucianism is used. Although this doctrine predominates in moral terms, it has influenced the country in which it exists in public administration, state administration, education and many other issues. Especially in this article, the effects of Confucianism on public administration will be examined. It presents Confucius's public administration philosophy on five principles: respect for rules, being virtuous and moral, being an exemplary son, behaving in accordance with duty and position, and being honest. These principles interact closely with each other. Confucius believes that the public administration system that work within the framework of these principles becomes effective and successful. Apart from these features, there are other principles of Confucianism. For example, submission to authority, one of the Confucian teachings, is closely related to public administration. Obedience to authority is important to maintain discipline because it is consistent with the hierarchy of command in bureaucracies.

**Keywords:** Confucianism, Public Administration, Confucian Teachings, Governance, China.

## Öz

Kendine özgü bir yaşam felsefesi geliştiren Konfüçyüs, dünyanın en eski ve en zengin kültürlerinden biri olan Çin kültürünün ana unsurlarından biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Temel amacı, zamanının sosyal ve politik kargaşasına çözüm bulmaktır. Konfüçyüsçülüğün birden fazla devlet tarafından paylaşılan bir mirastır ve tek bir ülkeden gelen veri kaynakları bu öğretinin anlaşılması bakımından yetersizdir. Konfüçyüsçülük kullandığı devletten devlete etkileri değişmiştir. Bunun nedeni o ülkedeki var olan kurumsal yapı ve geleneklerin etkisidir ve Konfüçyüsçülüğün bu etkileri kullandığı zamana göre değişebilir. Bu öğreti, ahlaki bakımdan ağır basmasına rağmen kamu yönetimi, devlet yönetimi, eğitim ve birçok konuda var olduğu ülkeyi etkilemiştir. Özellikle bu makalede Konfüçyüsçülüğün kamu yönetimine olan etkileri incelenecektir. Konfüçyüs, kamu yönetimi felsefesini kurallara saygılı olmak, erdemli ve ahlaki olmak, örnek evlat olmak, görev ve pozisyona uygun davranmak ve dürüst olmak üzere beş ilke üzerinden sunmaktadır. Bu ilkeler birbirleriyle yakın etkileşim içindedir. Konfüçyüs, bu ilkeler çerçevesinde çalışacak kamu yönetiminin etkili ve başarılı olacağına inanmaktadır. Bu özelliklerin dışında Konfüçyüsçülüğün başka ilkeleri de vardır. Örneğin Konfüçyüsçü öğretilerden biri olan otoriteye boyun eğme kamu yönetimini yakından ilgilendirmektedir. Otoriteye boyun eğmenin, bürokrasilerdeki komuta hiyerarşisi ile tutarlı olması nedeniyle disiplini sağlamak açısından önemlidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Konfüçyüsçülük, Kamu Yönetimi, Konfüçyüsçü Öğretiler, Yönetişim, Çin.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In 551 BCE, Confucius was born in Shadong in China, but his teachings have had a big influence on not only China but also Korea, Japan, Taiwan and other regions in the West and the East, and especially East Asian countries' cultures have been intensely influenced by Confucianism. Confucianism is considered as a unified system of beliefs and practices about life. That is not much concerned of after-death or humans' aims in the world by contrast with Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. This feature of Confucianism separates Confucianism from other religions. The aim of Confucianism is how human makes a better existence on the Earth. Confucius talked about five primary relationships between the people: son and father, husband and wife, subject and ruler, younger brother and older brother, friend and friend. If the relationships were constructed on kindness, there would be harmony and peace in a nation (Monteiro, 2014).

Firstly, this paper analyses the biography of Confucius and the Confucian philosophy which provides the mainstream traditional Chinese values nested during history with its morals and political principles having a big influence on nearly all ancient Chinese dynasties and effects of the Confucian philosophy which spread to all nations in Eastern Asia from China. Even today these values are very prominent in shaping the moral codes and viewpoints of Chinese people and Eastern people as well. This philosophy consists of social teachings, political teachings and Confucius teachings on education. In this paper, the main source is the Analects of Confucius which is an anthology of brief passages and were gathered by his students as Confucius words. It shows the words of Confucius and his disciples define Confucius as a human, and narrate some events in his life. Also, this paper benefits from the thoughts of Mencius and Xunzi which are great thinkers and philosophers of Confucianism.

## 2. CONFUCIUS AND CONFUCIANISM

His name is Kong Qiu, and he is generally known as Master Kong (Kongzi). Jesuit missionaries have latinised Kong Fuzi by seventh century, which is a more honorific variant of his name, as Confucius (Adler, 2011, p. 1). Confucius (551-479 BCE) was born of a very poor family of the noble descent in the state of Lu (Shadong) in China. In that time, China experienced a trouble time and clans were fighting with each other. He wanted to bring peace to China and his key point bringing peace to the nation was to behave with virtue and good characters. They mean concern for others and appropriate behaviours (Yang, 1993, p. 1-2).

His father who is a minor official in the government passed away when Confucius was three years old. Although Confucius was very poor, because of the fame of his clan, he could attend a school and his extraordinary talent was recognised by officials as a descendent of sages. Confucius started his career as a low ranked official and was appointed to the post of police commissioner, then to Minister of Public Work, later to the Minister of Justice. Finally, Confucius winning the approval of the rulers of Lu took the position of prime minister in the state of Lu. After a revolt occurred in Lu, Confucius had to quit his job and travelled for 14 years in China (497 – 484 BCE). Wherever he went, he granted advices to rulers and taught students. It was considered that he had 72 students who had a very good relationship with Confucius and more than three thousand students. He went to Lu where he was born, and in his final years he devoted himself to teaching and writing (Rainey, 2010, p. 12-13).

Although he was considered as a wise man, rulers did not take Confucian advices and Confucius was ignored. The texts give three reasons for this. Firstly, so as to obey advices from Confucius, rulers have to agree with the criticism of their behaviours from Confucius and reshape themselves. Also, they have to rule with care and restraint. Due to these reasons, rulers did not want to comply with his advices. Secondly, some government officials were jealous of Confucius and were afraid of his wisdom and power and they prevented his ideas from influencing rulers. They said that Confucius insulted their rulers, weakened a ruler`s authority, and they antagonized rulers against him. Confucius could not even find a job in those places. Thirdly, rulers in that time were unable to understand what Confucius was teaching. Before his time, education was possible only for government offices. Aristocrats` children took the civil and military education based on the `six arts`; archery, rites, calligraphy, chariot-driving, mathematics, and music. In the Confucius time a revolt occurred based on slave-ownership and this event converted into a feudal society. The aristocratic monopoly of the education fell apart and private academies were established, which was accessible to rich and poor. Confucius said that his teaching is open to everyone without any distinction. He started teaching students. Confucius dedicated his power to this task for almost half a century, and he died when he was seventy-two years old (Rainey, 2010, p. 13-14; Huanyin, 1993).

## 2.1. SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF CONFUCIANISM

Social teachings are about the appropriate behaviors of the person in society and to fellow men. Confucianism forms the basics of East Asian countries of Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and China. To understand the reflections and the implications of

Confucianism on societal, individual, organizational, and political culture, the basic philosophy of Confucianism needs to be provided. “Humanity, righteousness, harmony, courtesy, loyalty, honesty and cleanness” are the elements of Confucianism, which represent the value of maintaining the equal social advantages and the harmonious development of the whole society from the prospective of a whole society. Confucian cultural values are based on “family culture”, “relative feeling culture”, “mutual exchange culture” and “collective tropism” (Yao and Zhu, 2008, p. 58-59).

Confucius made five relationships as building blocks of the social order between son and father, husband and wife, subject and ruler, younger brother and older brother, friend and friend. The rulers were supposed to be kind and generous to his subjects, while his subjects, in return, were supposed to be loyal to the ruler. Similarly, fathers were expected to be generous and kind to their sons, while sons were expected to be dutiful and obedient to their fathers. In marriage, a husband was supposed to behave well to his wife, while a wife was supposed to be obedient to her husband. Elder brothers or friends were supposed to be thoughtful to their younger brothers or friends, who in turn were expected to be respectful of their elders or friends. Confucius thinks that the most important relationship is between parents and children. A country is like a big family. Just as a son was supposed to be loyal to his father, a subject was expected to be loyal to the king. Provided that families are in harmony, government and society function properly (Creel, 1929, p. 553-554).

In addition to upholding harmony through the relationships, Confucianism promotes five virtues: ren, or benevolence; yi, or righteousness; li, propriety; zhi, or wisdom; and xin, or trustworthiness. Confucian people are supposed to be caring, moral, maintain their dignity, have wisdom, and be true to their word (Rarick, 2008). By the help of five virtues, Confucius tries to reach a gentleman who is described as an ideal person. The “gentleman” (ideal person) of Confucius is supposed to achieve a higher standard (Rarick, 2007, p. 22) and the ideal person in Confucianism is the gentleman who is a gentleman-scholar, faithful to other people, sincere in deeds, and never gives up in his efforts of self-cultivation (Eno, 2015).

Unlike China, Confucian ethics contributed to the fast growth in Japan, Taiwan and Korea where Confucian teachings have more influence. Confucianism establishes others for the sake of establishing oneself, to expand others for the sake of expanding oneself and in this way, the group solidarity can reduce struggles in the group (Tu, 1991). The society cannot be a system which consists of pressure groups in Confucianism. In Confucianism, the society is a system centered on trust (Tu, 1989, p. 48).

### 3. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN CONFUCIANISM

Confucius's teachings mainly lay the emphasis on the art of administration and how an administrator should act and how public administration should be ruled. He experienced a lot in politics when he worked in the government. In addition, he travelled a lot of Chinese cities and saw their weaknesses and strengths.

#### 3.1. THE CONFUCIAN GOVERNMENT

Confucianism was officially manifested as the guiding practice for the government in China in 121 BCE. It has had a big impact on the government for over 2000 years. In world history, imperial China has had one of the most stable forms of government which were established in 221 BCE. This government was Qin Dynasty (221-207 BCE) but it did not live long. However, this type of government forms continued from 221 BCE to 1911. This kind of government had a centralized bureaucracy, it was headed by a king, and was operated by a bureaucracy. The survival of group and solidarity had precedence. Harmonious working environment was promoted. Confucianism provided the basis for social order and hierarchy. Confucius argued: *“Good government consists in the ruler being a ruler, the minister being a minister, the father being a father, and the son being a son.”* (Analects 12.11) Confucianism includes responsibility, respect for authority, morality, devotion and harmony. Confucianism believes that one cannot be considered as an individual independently or in and of oneself but develops into one just in a group (Bockover, 2010).

The Confucian tradition does not embrace democracy but adopt the centralization of power. The tradition is hierarchical, dictatorial and monolithic. But some countries with the Confucian tradition have been changed in time. For instance, South Korea owns some government institutions centred on the separation of power such as Western countries. This change come from the influence of the USA and Western Countries helping South Koreans in the Korean War. However, the influence of Confucianism shows itself with a greater political harmony than Western states. Also, people who have the Confucian tradition take care of ethics and norms with the strong moral discipline and virtue. The role of the public administration is to serve subjects, increasing their prosperity, and educating subjects with the strong morality (Önder and Ulaşan, 2016, p. 27).

However, in their greed for money, for instance, rulers can overtax subjects severely. The taxes could be not only on farmers' yield but also on basic necessities. Cruel rulers may charge custom duties on goods on trade and also charge sales in markets. In addition, they promote spying actions in enemy countries and carry out plots to

have much more power and stimulates revolts in other countries. In this way, they attempt to overthrow their leaders and make chaos and destruction. This kind of use of rudeness and bullying in social interactions triggers the lack of respect for others triggering the elderly living in poverty and at the end it causes a contentious society (Knoblock, 1988, p. 121). Xunzi who is one of most effective Confucian thinkers said that class divisions sometimes could be seen as a necessary thing to be a division of labour and for rituals to work. Everyone in a country cannot be a ruler. Also, there must be a division of labour so that people can be an expert in one skill and do not need to master in everything. Xunzi and followers think that the ruler is responsible for caring for all people and it does not matter what their classes are. Rulers has to be a good model for the public. Rulers should select honest and moral ministers who will be role models for the public (Knoblock, 1988).

Xunzi thinks that people should fight against their own evil natures. Due to this, people require to strengthen ritual and morality with rewards and punishments. As incentives, punishments and rewards are considered to lead humans toward the understanding of morality. When Xunzi visited the state of Qin, he oversaw the government of Shang Yang carefully. He saw a prosperous and orderly country where people complied with and were afraid of their own government and where there were no corruption and no factions. The government of Qin achieved this success although they did not promote scholarship and did not use any of Confucian methods. He respected many things which he saw, but he reported that this type of country has no moral base and anticipated that its life would be short, especially because there were no Confucians in the government (Rainey, 2010, p. 113).

Xunzi talked about a dictatorial form of government(dictatorship). Even dictators which use force on the public could maintain order and grant their subjects with a basic standard of living. They can combine their states and make rules and regulations. Their failure was their incapability to win subject`s hearts. According to Xunzi, dictators sometimes are preferable to a lot of rulers in his time who care only for wealth, plot against their allies, and behave disloyally to everybody. A dictator, though, is not equal to a true ruler who behave with morality, cares about the subjects, and obeys Confucian methods (Rainey, 2010, p. 113).

### **3.2. THE CONFUCIAN ART OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The administration can be explained as the directives of the administrators within a certain limit. Effective administration should be linked with democracy and human rights by the help of transparency and the rule of law. If there is no benevo-

lence, an administrator loses the position of power attained through wisdom and ability. Provided that an administrator does not govern the multitude with conscience, the administrator does not have the support of the multitude. A well-balanced, comprehensive approach, consistent with ethics and values, is very essential for the appropriate administration. Confucianism also gives the particular importance to self-regulation, self-control and personal cultivation (Low and Ang, 2013, p. 33).

In China, Confucian Public Administration achieved to develop a centralised and uniform system of bureaucratic administration and governed an enormous population and land. Also, it created the modern bureaucracy which are impersonal, merit and ability-based rather than kinship relations. It continued to reform and adapt the system with performance pay and managerial autonomy by the help of a business-innovation-friendly hierarchical system (Drechsler, 2018, p. 27-28). The Qianlong Emperor stated that *“there is no governing by laws; there is only governing by people”* (Elliott, 2009, p. 152). It means that it is more essential to have virtuous humans in governments than to have appropriate systems of rules (Tan, 2011, p. 470). In Confucianism, humans have to do right things since they identify what right things are and due to this, they would like to do them, not because they have to do them owing to the force of law and the fear of punishment. After the fall of the Qing, Confucianism started losing its popularity until the Communism Era in China. In Communism, Confucianism lost its all power in the government. By the help of Deng Xiaoping’s modifications, Confucianism come back and started being effective. Officially, Confucianism has been openly embraced by the Chinese government in the time of President Xi.

Despite China, the Confucian heritage have been embraced by the other countries and has been used well for centuries. The Confucian heritage was deep-rooted and significantly affected a lot of states and civilizations in East Asia such China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and etc. Confucianism can be considered as an integral part of East Asia (Tu, 2000, p. 196).

Taiwan can be considered as a society rooted in Confucianism with Confucian teachings encompassing each part of humans’ and organizations’ lives. Taiwan did not experience any anti-Confucianism campaign (Chuang and Wang, 2018, p. 364). It firmly embraced the Confucian teachings such as the organisation of the government in yuans and a civil-service exam with a functionality close to the original one. Confucianism can be found on each level such as state, popular and intellectual. Togukawa Japan used Confucianism as a part of their state ideology. However, Confucianism was not very effective in the administration in Japan. Because Japan had its own system and culture and Confucian scholars were in temp-

les and academies not in the administration and government. In Japan, Confucian scholars were nearly free-floating intellectuals and they do not take care of the administration of the state. Also, they focussed on morality and kindness based on the samurai perception and were affected by Buddhism and Shinto. Now, Japan broke the connections with Confucianism especially in the administration of the state (Drechsler, 2017, p. 31). In Korea, the Joseon Kingdom (prior to 1948) was in power and Confucianism was the main dominant actor in the state administration. The king shared his power with the nobility which administered their own districts. In this period, the Confucianism was highly effective in the public administration of Korea. Korea embraced a total Confucian civil-service system based on the Confucian academy and civil-service exam. The Korean bureaucracy nearly involved in the Confucian culture. However, after the arrival of Christianity to Korea in 1884, traditional Confucian values started changing to Western education, the Western culture and Protestant ethics. This new Confucian ethic is a hybrid which has the collectively-oriented values of the East and the goal-oriented economic values of the West. South Korea highly benefited from this hybrid system (Önder and Ulaşan, 2016). Singapore can be called as a voluntarily Western and is willing to take its own way (Drechsler, 2015, p. 112). In Singapore, the public administration is rooted in British Colonial heritage. Any Chinese government did not take the power in Singapore before independence, but they continuously embraced the Confucian habitus (The Scholar as Gentleman, 2017).

## 4. CONFUCIUS TEACHINGS ON EDUCATION

Confucius focused on education and work ethic to achieve appropriate behaviours in communities and governments. It can be said that Confucian teaching method is based on an axis that reflects the structure of Chinese society. Although values close to today's understanding of adult education draw attention, in fact, there is a learning environment in which the authority of the teacher-king-father trio is dominant by approving and constructing the sovereignty of a king with a familial hierarchy under the authority of the father (Komşu, 2011, p. 34).

### 4.1. EDUCATION IN CONFUCIANISM

Education is vital for Confucius teachings since it includes important sections offering each individual an equal chance. Education is considered as a vital instrument which maintains the community's morality to build good characters and transfer morality to next generations. Confucius teachings improve the cultivation and the growth of characters in a peaceful and wise manner. Education is about

the moral development for Confucianism. Confucius says that people must learn what duty means in social contexts and how ritual is expressed in specific times in the best way (Önder and Ulaşan, 2016, p. 27-28). Confucianism is a code of ethics to guide the relationship between human beings and has long influenced the mentality and the behaviour of people. Moreover, Confucianism aims at the highest moral and intellectual standards including hard work, diligence and reverential attitudes toward education (List-Jensen, 2008, p. 11).

## 4.2. THE CONFUCIAN WORK ETHIC

Confucian principles are nested in national cultures in East Asia and they foster respect for work, thrift, order relationships, hard work duty to family, and economic egalitarianism, persistence, frugality, having a sense of shame, diligence, a strong sense of discipline (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). Rarick (2007) considers that the Confucian work ethics, similar to Weberian Protestant work ethic, includes hard working, loyalty to organizations, a love of education and job, dedication, wisdom, thrift, respect for etiquette. Also, Confucius and Protestant work ethics do not lay emphasis on the spirits and salvation in the next life and, unlike Islam and Catholicism, focus on achievements in this life. Although there are many similarities between the two work ethics, there are some differences. For example, whereas the Protestant work ethic focusses on individual achievement, the Confucian work ethic gives importance to the group achievement and the social harmony. Confucianism attaches importance to relationships such as managers, seniors, parents, family members and friends. Confucianism determines appropriate behaviours for each position and supports a strong social hierarchy. This hierarchy can be controlled and administrated via benevolent managers or administrators acting in the best interests of workers. Managers and administrators expect loyalty from workers and ranks and hierarchy are very important in Confucianism, especially in China. Basically, decisions are made by managers and administrators and everyone who are in charge and directives are expected to be completed by workers without question (Kuranovic, 2016, p. 73).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Over 2,500 years ago, Confucius lived in a world where values were deteriorating, corruption and malpractice were everywhere, and nearly all people were acting badly. The Confucian answer to the problems of his time was twofold; reforms in the society and reforms in each person. He focused on honesty, sympathy for others, sincerity, rightness, wisdom, moral and courage. People should promote these

virtues and reach the general moral attitude of the humanity. It permits people to act appropriately in the world. Also in this way people can transform the society by ensuring that government behaves for the benefit of the people, and by becoming a role model for others. Confucius argues that, in politics, subjects should be thought as the fundamental concern and the prosperity of subjects is one of the most essential things. In the social and individual morality, the key elements are personal integrity, benevolence and personal integrity. In education, Confucius laid the emphasis on equal opportunity and self-enlightenment and the purpose is to achieve the cultivation of the moral character. The reason why Confucius created his philosophy is to bring peace to the nation with virtue and good characters.

The states embracing the Confucian path were very successful to serve their own people, maintained the public administration well and became economically prosperous. Confucianism is still an important factor in East Asia. The Confucian public administration is one of the two or three main systems in the history working well and with the civilisational impact. It became distinctive overall within East Asian states defining expressively how other spheres of life were structured together with religion and art. The morality of Confucianism can complement bureaucratic ethics mainly connected with rules and laws. Nowadays, it seems that there is a harsh decline in the trust of government workers and a reduced respect for governmental institutions in the world. Especially, the governmental capacity to deal with complicated and growing social problems by rules and laws is reducing. There are relentless calls for higher ethics and kindness among public administrators. The ethics of the Confucianist workers can be used to practice moral conventions in order to earn the trust and respect of the public.

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