

Zhu Xi

a.k.a. Chu Hsi

The most influential rationalist Neo-Confucian in China

Aren't you impressed?

Greetings

See that attractive guy
right there? Yep, that's
me.



Neo-Confucianism

- A revival of some thoughts in Confucianism
- Those who taught Neo-Confucianism taught personal moral self-cultivation.
- I, Zhu Xi, taught that we needed to go back to the belief of innate human goodness.
- Spread also to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam
- In the 20th century there's been yet again a revival of Confucianism that is commonly called New Confucianism, which is influenced by Neo-Confucianism.

My growing up

I grew up in the Wuyuan County, Hui prefecture where my father worked as sub prefectural sheriff.

In 1140 my dad was forced from office because he opposed the government, which actually turned out well for me because I was then able to study at home with my father and some of his friends.



Education



In 1148 when I was 18 or 19 years old, I passed the Imperial Examination, making me a presented scholar. I may be wrong, but I believe I was one of the youngest to pass this exam. The average age was 35. Most did not pass their first time.

The Imperial Examination

There were a number of degrees offered:

Shēngyuán (生员/生員), also called **xiùcái** (秀才), licentiate; administered at exams held in the county level each year.

- **Ànshǒu** (案首), a shēngyuán who ranked #1

Jǔrén (举人/舉人) or "recommended man", a provincial graduate, administered at the provincial level every three years

- **Jièyuán** (解元), jǔrén who ranked #1.
- **Huìyuán** (会员/會元), jǔrén who ranked #1 in prequalification

Gòngshì (贡士/貢士), a national degree "tribute personnel"

Jìnshì (进士/進士) or "presented scholar", a graduate of the palace examination, administered in the capital immediately after the metropolitan examination every three years

Positions

My first official position was as Subprefectural Registrar of Tong'an where I served for 3 years. During this time I started studying under Li Tong.

From 1156 to 1179 I didn't accept any official positions. However, in 1179 I was appointed Prefect of Nankang Military District. I was only there for 3 years. I was demoted for attacking the incompetence and corruption of some influential officials. Actually, there are many cases of my getting positions and then being demoted. I have a tendency to speak my mind.

Teachings

Again, I was considered to be unorthodox and maybe a little outspoken.

Part of the reasoning is because I focused on the the Four Books, the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Analects of Confucius*, and *Mencius* instead of the *I Ching* like other Neo-Confucians did.

Commentaries

I wrote extensive commentaries on the Four Books, which at first were not recognized but are now accepted as the standard commentaries.



Qi and Li

I believe that all things are brought into being by the union of *qi* and *li*.

Qi, depending on which definition you look at it, is the circulating life force, vital energy believed to circulate round the body in currents.

li is sometimes translated as rational principle or law. The source and sum of *li* is *Tai ji*, which means the Great Ultimate.

The Tai Ji causes *qi* to move and change in the physical world causing the division of yin and yang and the five elements (earth, fire, water, metal, and wood).

Heaven and God

I don't actually believe in heaven or God.

I taught that ancestor worship is merely a form of gratitude and praise. The souls of people do not continue to exist after death.

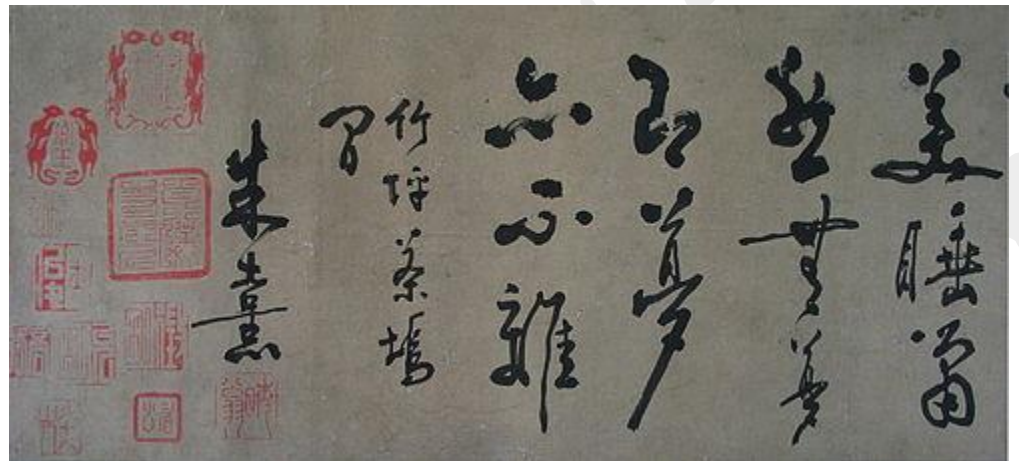


Calligraphy

I loved calligraphy and learned a lot from my father about the art of calligraphy. I practiced my whole life and reached a high level of art with it.

My characters were well-balanced and natural.

Thatched Hut Hand
Scroll - one of my
masterpieces



My death

Tragically, after I was dismissed from my last assignment, a petition was made for my execution. Surprisingly, it's reported that about 1000 brave people attended despite my standing with the government.

Posthumously I was elevated to Confucian sainthood. Today, I am one of the Twelf Philosophers of Confucianism.



Life magazine has ranked me as number 45 of
the most important people in the last millenium

Spring Day

In a good day
I enjoy the nature
By the river of Si Shui

Limitless great view
Is suddenly renewed
At once.

Everyone notices
The kind face
Of the east wind,

Myriad purple
And thousands red
Are all colors of spring

On Reading:

The half-mu square pond lies open to the eye,
Therein move the light and clouds of the sky.
If you wonder why it is so clear within,
That is because fresh water is ever flowing in