



Chopstick Culture & The Success Of East Asian Economies

Carson Wen, Founder, Bank of Asia

Monday, 16 May 2022



A Word From Today's Chairman

Professor Michael Mainelli
Executive Chairman
Z/Yen Group





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Today's Agenda

- 10:00 – 10:05 Chairman's Introduction
- 10:05 – 10:25 Keynote Presentation – Carson Wen
- 10:25 – 10:45 Question & Answer



Today's Speaker

Cason Wen

Founder
Bank of Asia



CHOPSTICK CULTURE

the Success of East Asian Economies

Carson Wen

Founder, Bank of Asia

The Chopstick

- The chopstick, which is used by over 2 billion people in East Asia – China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Singapore – embodies the characteristics that enable them to succeed economically: sharing, caring for one another, offering food to others, courtesy, manners, punctuality, respect for elders, and coming clean to the table.
- This Webinar invites you to gain an understanding of the philosophical insights of the Chopstick Culture, as coined by the speaker.



GDP per Capita in Asia

● 25,000 or more ● 10,000 - 25,000 ● 2,500 - 10,000 ● 500 - 2,500 ● under 500 ● no data



Country/ Territory	2021 (in USD)
Cambodia	1,647.02
China	11,891.20
Hong Kong	49,485.08
India	2,116.44
Indonesia	4,224.98
Japan	40,704.30
Kazakhstan	10,144.68
South Korea	35,195.52
Lao	2,625.61
Malaysia	11,124.67
Mongolia	4,185.54
Myanmar	1,246.32
Philippines	3,492.07
Singapore	66,263.42
Taiwan	33,401.71
Thailand	7,808.66
Vietnam	3,742.86

Source: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD

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The Use of Chopsticks

The “use of chopsticks” involves:

- Sharing
- Mutual respect
- Self-discipline
- Punctuality
- Fraternity
- Decorum and a proper sense of shame if one does not go to the table clean



Interest of the Collective

People who are taken ill do not join the dinner table and eat alone. The interest of the collective, not to get others sick, is more important than that of the self, to enjoy the meal. Thus, the wide and voluntary use of masks to contain the Covid-19. These coincide with the Confucian values.

Confucius

The leading political philosophy in the chopstick using parts of East Asia, i.e.. China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and other parts of Indochina, as well as Singapore, is Confucianism.

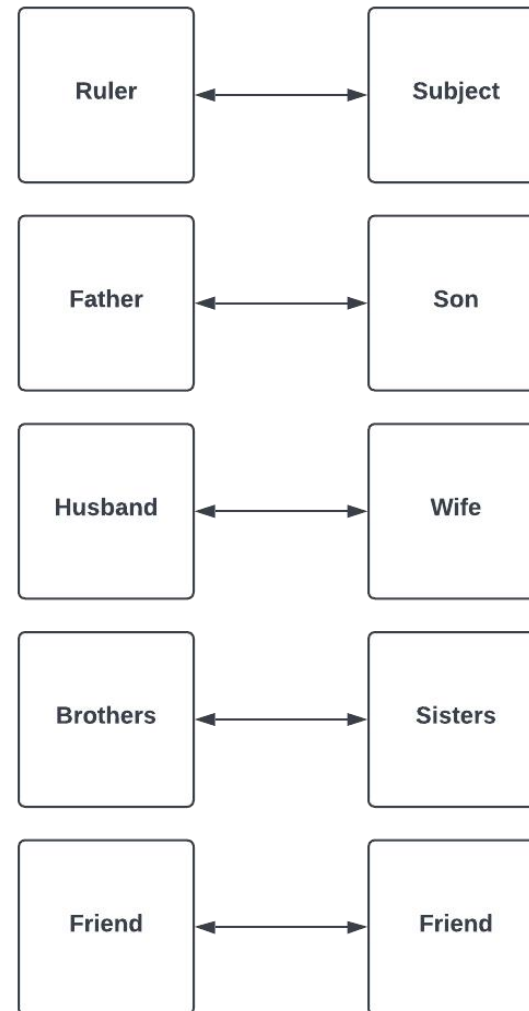
Confucius (孔子 “Kong Fuzhi” or “Master Kong”) (551-479 BC), was a Chinese philosopher and politician of the Spring and Autumn Period in Chinese history. That period showed the blossoming of different schools of thought, the adoption of philosophical and ethical teachings by rulers of the kingdoms and the Qin and succeeding dynasties as frameworks of governance, about a century earlier than the Classical Period of Ancient Greece.

Confucianism emphasizes personal and government morality or ethics, correctness of relationships, kindness, righteousness, justice, dutifulness and filial piety.



Confucius himself emphasized the qualities of:
kindness or compassion (仁 or “ren”)
righteousness (義 or “yi”)
ritual or courtesy (禮 or “li”).

- A Confucian society is very structured, built upon the Five Relationships between Ruler and Subject, Father and Son, Husband and Wife, Brothers and Sisters, and Friends.
- These are symbiotic relationships in which each side will provide value to the other. When everyone in such a structured society plays their respective roles and is at peace with himself, then there will be peace and harmony in society. The pursuit of Confucianism is accordingly good government and social stability.



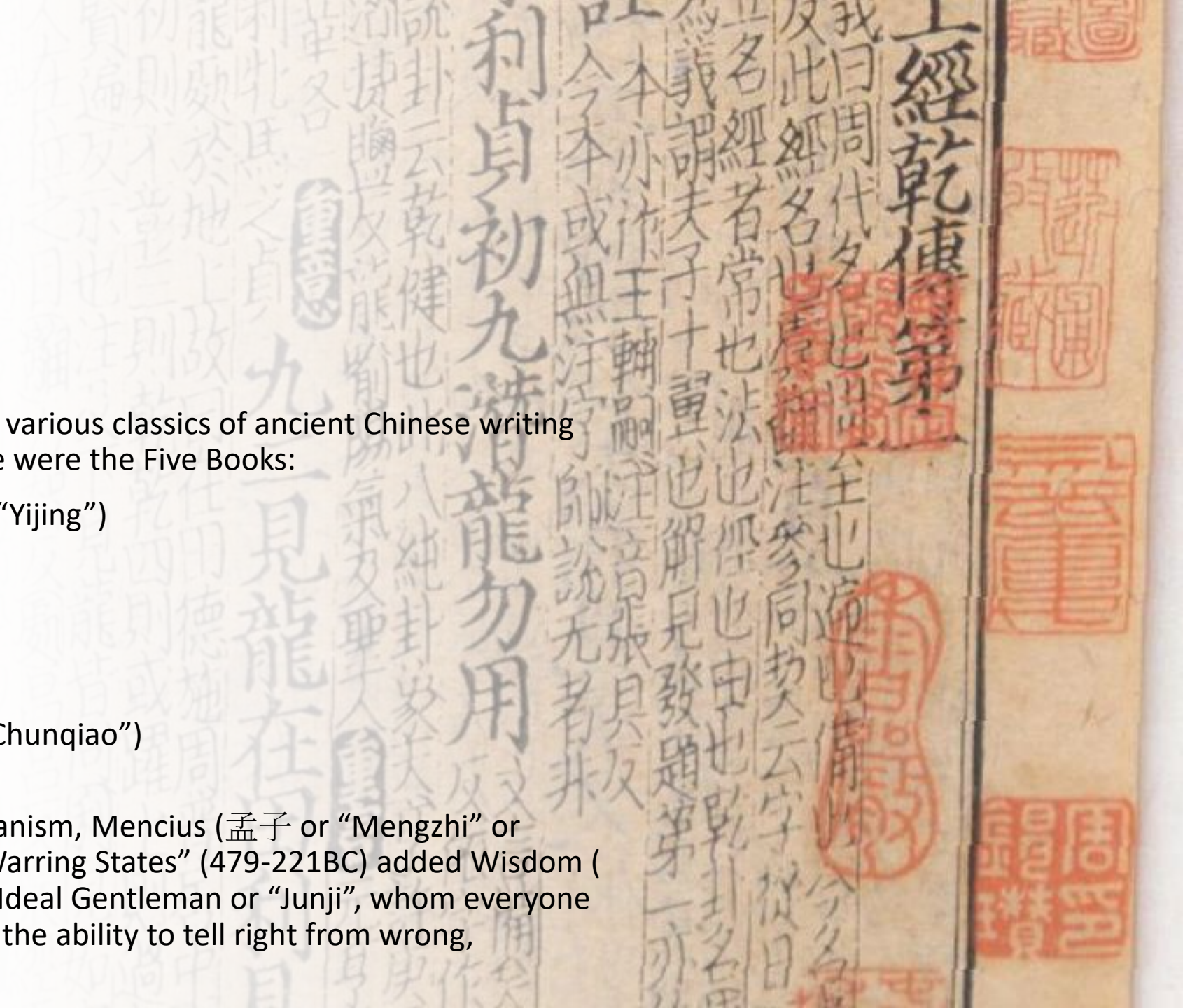


The Five Books and Mencius

Confucius was credited with editing the various classics of ancient Chinese writing that were written prior to his day. These were the Five Books:

1. The Book of Changes (“Iching” or “Yijing”)
2. The Book of History (“Shijing”)
3. The Book of Poetry (“Shijing”)
4. The Book of Rites (“Liji”)
5. The Spring and Autumn Annals (“Chunqiao”)

Another leading philosopher in Confucianism, Mencius (孟子 or “Mengzhi” or “Master Meng”) of the “Period of the Warring States” (479-221BC) added Wisdom (智 or “Ji”) as an essential quality of the Ideal Gentleman or “Junji”, whom everyone in the ruling class should be. Wisdom is the ability to tell right from wrong,





The Han Dynasty

“性善說”曰－「側隱之心，人皆有之、羞惡之心，人皆有之、恭敬之心，人皆有之、是非之心，人皆有之。側隱之心，仁也、羞惡之心，義也、恭敬之心，禮也、是非之心，皆也。仁義禮智，非由外鍊我也，我固有之也，弗思耳矣」《孟子告子上》

In the Han Dynasty , when Confucianism became first adopted by Emperor Han Wuti (漢武帝) as the ruling ideology, the then philosopher Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) added “Trust” (信 or “Xin”) as an essential quality. Kindness or compassion (仁 or “ren”), Righteousness (義 or “Yi”), Ritual or Courtesy (禮 or “li”), Wisdom (智 or “ji”) and Trust (信 or “Xin”) then became known as the “Five Virtues” (五常), being what is required for lasting harmony (天長地久的經常法則). See Dong Zong Zhu’s 〈賢良對策〉 or “strategies for Good Qualities”.

The Ideal Gentleman



An Ideal Gentleman or Junji (君子) is as such refined, embodies benevolence, maintains tradition, dutiful and has filial piety towards his ancestors and family.

The ruler in a Confucian society must provide a stable government and set a good example for his subjects and his subjects in return must respect the ruler and be loyal to him.

A stable society can only be achieved when people accept their places in society and fulfils the duties that accompany his position while addressing his own desires. Confucianism does not ask for sacrifice. It asks that everyone play his respective role in society.

Goals of Confucian Society

The main goals of Confucianism is to have a good government and a stable society.

A good government is achieved through a good ruler.

A stable society is attained when the people of that society are at peace with themselves and with each other.

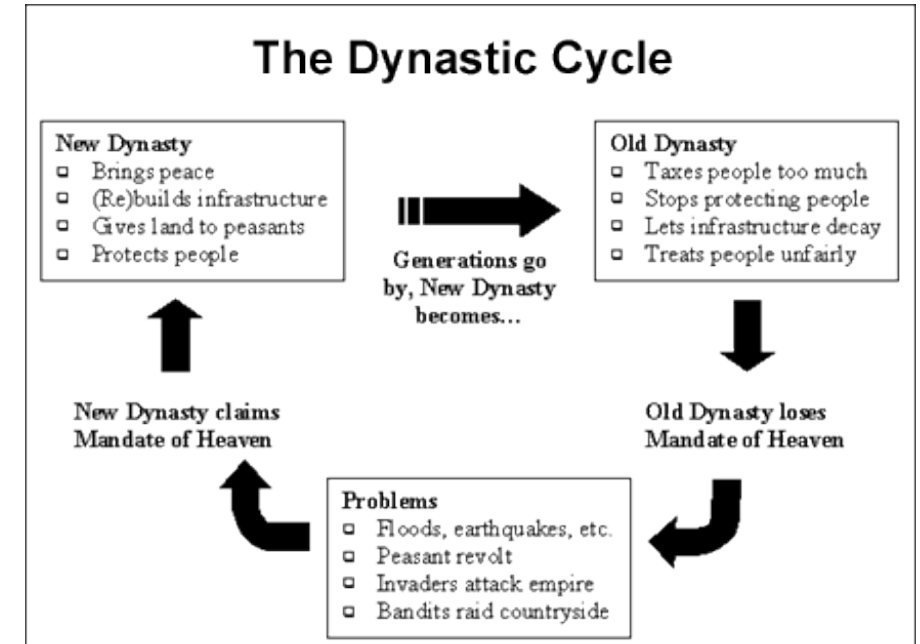
When people of society are at peace with themselves, they accept their position in society.

When all are in their place, then all are at peace with each other.

The Dynastic Cycle

If the ruler is honest, compassionate, and values the Confucius beliefs of non-violence and filial piety, then his subjects, who by the Five Relationships are meant to respect and honor the ruler, will also revere these values and wish to follow in the ruler's virtuous footsteps. If those of higher positions are moral, then those of lower positions will mimic that virtue, and soon the entire society will be principled on morals, from the bottom to the top.

Confucianism as such relies on the optimistic belief that humans are naturally compassionate and value filial piety, so they genuinely desire to aid others and the community.





A Good Ruler

A good ruler, according to Confucius, is virtuous, wise and humane. He must care for all his subjects and regard all their opinions (even if they are peasants) in accordance with the Ruler to Subject relationship.

Confucius said, “You may rob the Three Armies of their commander, but you cannot deny the humblest peasant of his opinion”, instilling the importance of allowing the people to have a say in their government.

Otherwise the Mandate of Heaven may be lost.

In this sense the structure of society must be democratic in nature, that even the lowest subject has the same right to be heard as the most senior one.

Mencius

Mencius (孟子), as the leading sage in the Period of the Warring States, advocates benevolent governance, and also that the ordinary citizen is weightier than the ruler (民為貴、君為輕), and that power cometh from the people (政在得民) and is against harsh government.

He even proposed that each peasant must be given an adequate piece of land, and that their working time must not be abused. He also advocated light sentences and minimal taxation (刑寬, 稅薄). These are thus not unlike the democratic values that were advocated during the European Period of Enlightenment and the Common Prosperity that the Chinese leadership is advocating today.



Painting of Mengzi by Kanō Sansetsu.
Japan, Edo period, 1632.

Mencius

Politically, Mencius defined a more aggressive and confrontational approach than evident in the Analects, which is the collection of teachings of Confucius as recorded by his disciples.

In one passage, Mencius suggests that when a ruler foresakes ethical behaviour and engages in extreme misrule, he can and should be removed, even executed.

In another instance, Mencius defines a more people-centred understanding of legitimacy, suggesting that crucial to acquiring legitimate rule is the ability to win the hearts-and-minds of the people.

Equally important was Mencius' affirmation that legitimate government consists of ethical and humane government, or 仁政.

The Period of the Warring States



If a ruler does not live up to the requirement of good and benevolent governance, then he might lose the Mandate from Heaven to govern.

During the Period of Warring States (480-221 BC) there were many schools of thought that were advocated. The phenomenon was described as A Hundred Schools of Thought Fighting to Get Heard (百家爭鳴).

Among the most prominent were the Confucians, the Legalists and the Daoists. Legalism was the ruling ideology of Emperor Qin, who united the country, set standard widths for the wheels of chariots and carts, and standardised the written Chinese language.

The Legalists and the Daoists

The Legalists, best known for the beliefs of Han Xin (韓信), practised rule by harsh laws and heavy sentences. After the death of Emperor Qin, his courtiers fought each other for power and the Qin Dynasty vanished in two generations.

During the intervening period until Emperor Han Wuti, 玄學 ("Xuan Xue"), a combination of IChing (易經) and the Daoists philosophies of Lao Ji (老子) and Quang Ji (莊子) were used by the rulers to govern, using a minimalist approach of governance, letting the forces in society to set the balance. In some ways, this is a manifestation of non-interventionist capitalism that Adam Smith made a name for himself when writing "The Wealth of Nations".



Confucianism under Emperor Han Wuti

Under Emperor Han Wuti, who was a strong ruler, Confucianism with its emphasis on duty, loyalty and stability, became his choice of ruling ideology, and Confucianism has since then, save for short periods when other philosophies, such as Buddhism, were adopted by the rulers, been the fundamental philosophy of governance, until the May Fourth Movement of 1919, when intellectuals yearned for democracy and science.

During the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism and its manifestations, such as formal education, became one of the main targets of the Red Guards for destruction.

Yet again today much of what Confucianism preaches is adopted by the Chinese Government.



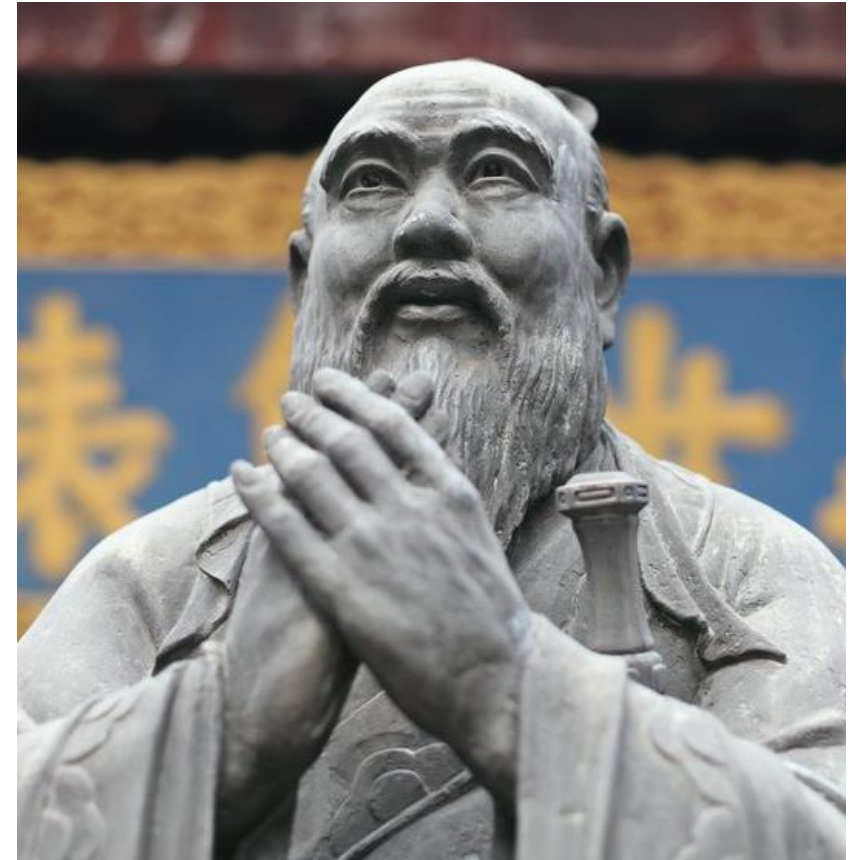
Neo-Confucianism

During the Song Dynasty, the philosopher Zhu Xi (AD 1130-1200) added ideas from Daoism and Buddhism into Confucianism, creating “Neo Confucianism”, which held sway in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam until the last century. By the 14th Century Zhu Xi’s version of Confucianism, known as Daoxue (teaching of the Way) or Lixue (the teaching of principle) became the standard curriculum for the imperial civil service or Mandarin Scholar examination system. The Neo-Confucian domination of the civil service prevailed until the whole system was abolished in 1905.

Zhu Xi framed Daoxue philosophy through the cosmological interaction of principle/li and vita force/qi. By unification of the principle and vital force, a state of harmony or balance would be achieved.

Another leading philosopher in Neo-Confucianism was Wang Yangming (AD 1472-1529) of the Ming Dynasty, who was also a poet, general and government official. Wang Yang Ming’s Xinxue emphasizes on the cultivation of the mind-heart, in contrast to Zhu Xi’s emphasis on principle.

In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) the major school of thought in Neo-Confucianism was known as Hanxue, which was also known as the School of Evidential Research for its commitment to historical research to rediscover the true teachings of the classical sages in contradiction to the Song and Ming focus on personal moral self-cultivation and speculative metaphysics.



Confucianism in Korea

In Korea, Confucianism and Buddhism were both fundamental elements of the culture. In 109 BC, the Emperor Han Wuti of China overwhelmed the Gojoseon Dynasty by both land and sea and established four bases, or “Four Commanderies of Han” in the region as a way to stabilize the area for trade.

Centuries later the Goryeo Dynasty saw the spread of Neo-Confucianism, in which the teachings of Confucius had been melted with Daoism and Buddhism. In Goryeo, King Gwang Jong (949-975) had created the national civil service examinations, and King Seongjong (1083-1094) was a key advocate for Confucianism by establishing the Gukjagam, the highest educational institution of the Goryeo Dynasty. This was enhanced, in 1398, by the Sunggyungwan – an academy with a Neo-Confucian curriculum.

Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism was further developed by Korean philosophers such as Yi T’oegye (1501-1570) and Yi Yulgok (1536-1583), both of whom took part in the Four-Seven Debate about the role of emotions within Zhu Xi’s cosmology.

With the fall of the Joseon Dynasty in 1910, Neo-Confucianism lost a lot of its influence. In contemporary South Korea, very few people identify themselves as Confucian, although there are a lot of Confucian ideas and practices that still permeate South Korean culture and daily life.



Confucianism in Japan

In Japan, Confucianism stands, along with Buddhism, as a major religious-philosophical teaching introduced from China roughly around the mid-sixth century.

The most commonly used references to Confucianism in Japanese history, traditional and modern, are the terms *Jugaku* (the learning of the scholars) and *Jukyo* (the teachings of the scholars). Also used are *Seigaku* (the learning of the sages) and *Shingata* (the learning of the mind).



Confucianism in South East Asia

In Vietnam, Confucianism entered and was later reinforced in the four Bac Thuoc periods of Chinese domination, beginning with the first Chinese domination of Vietnam from 111 BC. Confucianism was reinforced in government by the Confucian court examinations system in Vietnam, as well as the way parents formally raised and taught children toward filial piety and obedience.

The influence of Confucianism in Singapore can be best illustrated by Lee Kuan Yew's statement that "My experience in governing Singapore, especially the difficult early days from 1959 to 1969, convinced me that we would not have surmounted our difficulties and setbacks if a large part of the population of Singapore were not imbued with Confucian values. The people had a group cohesion and a pragmatic approach to government and to the problems in society. Confucianist traditions have made Chinese Singaporeans revere scholarship and academic excellence, and also respect officials when they are chosen on the basis of their scholarship."

Confucianism is very much one of meritocracy and as such a political ideology that was useful to Lee Kuan Yew in building the national culture of Singapore which he founded in 1965.



Conclusion



In this short presentation I try to introduce the philosophical and cultural underpinnings of the chopstick using countries of East Asia which, with the exception of Vietnam, rank the top six in Asia in GDP per capita, which would be a fair measure of the economic well being and standard of living of its people. The over-riding interest of the collective, the respect for even the humblest member of society (per Confucius and Mencius), compassion for others, importance of doing the right thing, loyalty to one's country, quest for self-cultivation (per Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming and other Neo-Confucians) , primacy of the "Middle Way" (per Confucius and the Neo-Confucians) , pursuit of harmony, filial piety all contribute to relatively stable environments of the East Asian chopstick countries, with the exception of the social unrests in Hong Kong in 2019, which is worthy of much conversation and analysis.



Comments, Questions & Answers





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- Tue, 24 May (09:00-09:45) Launch Of The Smart Centres Index 5
- Thu, 26 May (16:00-16:45) How Can Digital Funds Benefit The Markets
- Mon, 30 May (11:00-11:45) Britain's Growing Role In World Trade

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