ANALYSIS OF ZIXIA’S ROLE IN DEVELOPING CONFUCIANISM AND IN BRIDGING CONFUCIANISM AND LEGALISM

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Summary

Confucianism has gone through many changes throughout its long history. Tracing this long history back to the first generation disciples, one may gain a better sense of the original image of Confucianism and the evolution of Confucianism. In this paper we will focus on the life and work of Zixia 子夏, who, as a major disciple of Confucius, helped to nourish, transmit and build Confucianism at the junction of Chunqiu and the Warring States period. The life of Zixia serves as an exemplary case of transplantation and adaptation of Confucianism in a new land. Zixia belonged to the last and youngest group of students that followed and accompanied Confucius till his death. Confucius considered Zixia to be one of his ten most prominent students, particularly in the category of Literary Classics. Following a brief attempt to hold the remaining disciples together at Qufu after the death of Confucius, Zixia eventually left for his native land to start a long and distinguished teaching career in the mode of Confucian tradition and established the Xihe Xuepai 西河學派 (Xihe Academy or Xihe School). Critical analysis of the received texts revealed that Zixia played a pivotal role in transmitting major Confucian Classics and had tremendous influence on how Confucian classics were understood and perceived by future generations. In addition, Zixia played a key role in helping to create the Legalist School, which flourished in the Warring States period and significantly contributed to the success of the Qin unification of China. Among the Confucius’ disciples, Zixia’s impact may be unsurpassed.

Introduction

The teachings of Confucius, its interpretations, and reinterpretations cover a span of 2500 years and a huge spectrum of intellectual enquiries. As such, scholars constantly struggle to find the original and authentic image of Confucianism. In order to discern or rather re-synthesize the real image of original Confucianism, one approach is to orient attention to the life and work of Confucius’ key disciples, the first generation Ruists, similar to the approaches such as retro-synthesis or reverse genetics commonly used in science. This paper represents an initial effort in that direction.

Bu Zixia

Zixia is the style name of Bu Shang 卜商 (507-420 BCE), who was recorded in Shiji to be 44 years younger than Confucius. The origins of his family were murky, but his last name would suggest that his ancestors came from the profession of bu 卜, participating and performing ceremonial or religious divination in the temple or court. The character xia 夏 in his style name resonates with the character shang 商 in his given name, the
two words represent, respectively, the name of the first two dynasties of China and both also imply brightness and enlightening. Thus his family or whoever coined his name most likely came from a learned background, not just any common folks. In the received texts, the native place of Zixia was said to be either Wei State 魏國, Wen State 溫國, or Wey State 衛國. This could be due to the uncertainty of locating the place Wen 温 at the beginning of the Warring States period. It is probably appropriate to say that Zixia was a native of Wen at the State of Wey, which was later incorporated into the State of Wei. [1]

Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) has suggested that Zixia, together with other younger students such as Zizhang 子張, Zeng Zi 曾子, You Ruo 有若, Fan Chi 樊遲, Qidiao Kai 漆雕開, and Tantai Meiming 濟台滅明, joined Confucius' group after he returned from his fourteen years of self-imposed exile (497-484 BCE). However, there was evidence that actually Zixia joined Confucian school much earlier. For example, Confucius once said that those who accompanied him traveling and suffered at Chen 陳 and Cai 蔡 States were not around (LY11.2). In the next passage, Confucius mentioned the name of ten disciples who excelled in the following four fields: ethics, speech, administration and literary achievement. Zixia was the one mentioned in the category of literary achievement. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1190) thought that these two passages put together would imply that these ten students accompanied him during his exodus. Based on this and other analysis, Zixia most likely started to join Confucius' group when Confucius stayed in Wey State at the earlier time of his exodus. [2]

It is highly possible that Zixia, together with a small group of more senior students like Yan Hui 颜回, Zilu 子路, Zigong 子貢, accompanied Confucius then throughout the rest journey abroad. In between, Zixia had served as Wey Xingren 衛行人, diplomat for Wey State. After he accompanied Confucius back to Lu State, Zixia had served as Jufu Zai 菽父宰, Chief of Jufu County for a while. Zixia went back to Wey and held wake for three years for his deceased parents. After the death of Confucius in 479 BCE, many of his disciples, including Zixia, held a three-years mourning for their master. During this time it appeared that Zixia and several other students had tried to keep Confucius' group together by electing You Ruo as their leader, but ultimately failed. Zixia then left Lu State 魏國 for his native land, which by now became a part of Wei State. There he started his long teaching career. Throughout his life, he devoted most of his life to the learning and transmitting of what his Master had taught. Table 1 highlights the important dates of Zixia's life.

That many disciples of Confucius appeared to bear characteristics and mannerisms of their native states has been noted by some scholars. For example, students from Lu State, like Yan Hui 颜回, Min Zi Qian 閔子骞, Zhong Gong 仲弓, Zeng Zi 曾子, Yuan Xian 原憲, Ran Geng 冉耕, all seemed to be more reserved, experienced, and discreet in their actions and words, and not overly interested in government jobs. In contrast, students from Wey State were more open and active in pursuing their ideas and thoughts. Thus, Zixia, Zigong 子貢, Gao Chai 高柴 were all lively about talking about shi 仕 or li 利. Interestingly, famous founders of the Legalist School, Li Kui 李悝, Wu Qi 吳起 and Shang Yang 商鞅, were also from the region of Wey State [3]. It is likely that the local history, natural environment and resources that nurtured these intellectuals would have significant impact on their mind and their world view. In turn, their characteristics would also shape how they interpret and transmit the Confucian teachings.

Zixia’s Lifelong Contribution

After 2500 years, the blurred image of Zixia can only be resurrected by gleaning from the scattered sources, mainly in the received texts, although some of them may suffer from the issues of authenticity. From the received texts, John Knoblock has offered the following brief sketch about Zixia: [4]

He discusses rituals with Confucius and asks about the true meaning of the Odes (LY12.5, 3.8). He acts like teaching assistant and offers interpretations of the Master’s words, has numerous sayings of his own (LY1.7; 19.4 to 19.13), and is specifically credited with “disciples and scholars” (LY19.3, 19.12). Mo Di 墨翟 had a conversation with one of his disciples. It is apparent that he was very important in the formation of the Analects tradition and that he founded a school, though not the one of the eight mentioned by Han Feizi (《Xianxue》顯學 19.9a). Zixia was described by Confucius as "not going far enough", in contrast to Zizhang (LY11.16), and praised together with Ziyu for his culture and learning (LY11.3). Confucius once admonished him to be a gentleman Ru 君子儒 and not a common, petty Ru 小人儒 (LY6.13), which may have been the basis of Xunzi’s criticism of his followers.

Zixia was specifically praised by Confucius, notably in literary classics. Zixia applied this talent very well in establishing the tradition of commentary and annotation of most of Confucian classics and scriptures. This commentary tradition, started with Zixia, greatly influenced and shaped how Confucianism was perceived by future generations till modern time. Throughout his long teaching career, Zixia has trained over 300 students, known as Xihe School 西河學派, on a par with the Zhusi School 洙泗學派 founded by another prominent disciple Zeng Zi 曾子. Some of Zixia’s students figured prominently in the political arena at the early time of the Warring States period. Among them, Li Kui 李悝 was considered to be the forefather of the Legalist School, which became a dominant intellectual and political force in the Warring States period.

Xihe School

Following the tradition of three years of mourning with other disciples next to the bury site of Confucius, Zixia was invited back to Wei State by the Wei Ju 魏駒 and his son Wei Si 魏斯, who became Marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯, to Longmen Xihe 龍門西河 (Hejin, Shanxi 山西河津). Among his 300 or so students, several of them, including Marquis Wen of Wei, Li Kui, Tian Zifan 田子方, Duan Ganmu 段干木, and Wu Qi, became very prominent [5]. In a review article, Bu Rufei offers an interesting observation that that there are two types of Zixia’s students: the ones from Lu State, including Gongyang Gao 公羊高, Guliang Chi 段趙赤, and Zeng Shen 曾申, were more serious about studying classics, whereas those from Wei, including Li Kui, Wu Qi, and Ximen Bao 西門豹, were more inclined to be involved in politics. [5] The contribution of Zixia to the development of Confucianism, both in the area of Confucian classics and in the genesis of legalist school, was intimately linked to these students.
Zixia and Confucian scriptures

In the year of 102, Xu Fang 徐防, the Interior Minister 東漢和帝; in the letter he argued the need of establishing a national academy for Confucian classics. Xu said, “Classics including Odes 詩、Books 書、Rites 禮、Musics 樂 all finalized by Confucius; however, amplification, interpretation and annotation of sentences in the texts, started with Zixia.” In other word, Xu Fang credited Zixia with the establishment of hermeneutic tradition of Confucian classics. Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202), a high official of Song Dynasty, has succinctly elaborated Zixia’s contribution by saying, “Among all Confucius’ disciples, only Zixia was known to have commentaries to almost all classics. This feat really makes him standing out…” [6] The evidence from the received texts suggests that Zixia played a pivotal role in transmitting to the future generations all of the six major Confucius classics or scriptures. Here, we will confine our discussion to only two scriptures, the Book of Odes and the Annals of Spring and Autumn.

Book of Odes: It is generally agreed that Shixu 詩序 (Preliminary Remarks on the Book of Odes) has a huge influence on the study of the Book of Odes throughout the history. However, who wrote Shixu? Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) first credited the authorship of Shixu to Zixia. Although concrete evidence is lacking, a lot of circumstantial evidence would suggest that Zixia had a significant hand in editing and finalizing it, particularly in light of the recently discovered Shangbo Shilun 上博詩論, which most of scholars now agreed, was passed down directly from Confucius. In a fairly detailed recent review on the authorship of Shixu, Zhan Kan concluded that Shixu could only have come from the tradition of Xihe School. Another scholar Wang Qizhou also points out that Shixu draws out many political and moral lessons in a way that is highly reflective of the character of Zixia [7]. We will use the following examples to substantiate this notion:

The most famous conversation between Zixia and Confucius on Shijing went like this (LY3.8):

Zixia asked Confucius: “What is the meaning of these lines (a passage from the poem Shiren 碩人 (The Book of Odes 57): Oh, the nice dimples on her smile. Ah, the beautiful eyes, black and white. It is on plain silk that colors shine. “?

Confucius replied, “The business of laying on the colors follows (the preparation of) on the plain background.”

“Does the practice of the rites, in a like manner, come afterwards?” Zixia further asked.

Confucius said, “It is Shang who raises this interesting point. Now I feel I can talk about the odes with you.”

Obviously, the clever remark of Zixia in response to the straightforward comment of Confucius did find resonance with Confucius. This particular discourse also revealed one notable nature of Zixia. He liked to seek some deeper meaning from the textual reading. Just like what he said in the Analects: “There are learning extensively, and having a firm and sincere aim; inquiring with earnestness, and reflecting with self-application: virtue is
in such a course.” (LY19.6) Among all the Confucius’ disciples, Zixia was the one who most frequently asked about what was the true meaning of a particular sentence or passage in the scriptures (inquiring earnestly). It is also clear from this discourse that Zixia had a tendency to relate some seemingly innocuous words to something more profound or deeper. In this case, he related “hui shi hou su 繪事後素” to the relationship between li 禮 and ren 仁; a truly remarkable correlation. For this discourse, Chin Annping noted, “One can well imagine Zixia becoming an expert in the Odes or a didactic pedant using the Odes for moral instruction.” [8] Indeed Chinn’s comment matches perfectly with the notion that Zixia was the one, who would explore the moral value or political lesson from the poems in the Odes, just like what the author of Shixu attempted to do.

There is also a long passage in Li Ji 祭記, in which Confucius and Zixia discussed the poem Jiong Zhuo 洞酌 (The Book of Odes 251). The discussion apparently became serious and quite abstract. In the end, Confucius cited Jiang Han 江漢 (The Book of Odes 262) from the Odes, indicating that only if a sovereign behaves like the ancient sage will he forever earn true affection from the people. Zixia was so moved by this comment that he rose up with great excitement and exclaimed, “Your disciple dares not but receives your instructions with reverence.” Zixia also asked Confucius why Guanju 關雎 was listed as the first poem in the Odes. Again, it shows that Zixia had the strong tendency to draw lessons from the scriptures. Overall, the impression one gets from the received texts vividly revealed an image of engaging Zixia trying hard to learn from Confucius what the Book of Odes could impart. In the Analects, the word shi 詩 was mentioned nine times, but only in two occasions did it involve the discussion of shi 詩 between Confucius and his disciples, one with Zigong (LY1.15) and other with Zixia (LY3.8). Zixia’s analytical reading of the Book of Odes was quite consistent with the way how Shixu was presented. There is no doubt that Zixia, being a lifelong educator like his Master would continue the study and teaching of the Odes and feel a special responsibility in transmitting his understanding of Shi to his own students. [9]

Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋): Confucius was known to be proud of his work with Chunqiu or Spring and Autumn Annals and considered it one of his major legacies. He said, “Future generations will know me through Spring and Autumn Annals and will judge me because of Spring and Autumn Annals.” The grand historian Sima Qian noted, “While Confucius wrote (or compiled or edited) Spring and Autumn Annals, he put down whatever needed to be written, deleted whatever needed to be cut, and (therefore in the end), Zixia and his cohorts could not make any change.” [13] This paragraph revealed several interesting points: (i) it is likely that a small group of disciples, probably led by Zixia, assisted Confucius in his work on Spring and Autumn Annals, (ii) it is also likely that Zixia and other disciples helped Confucius in editing other classics. Kong Xianghua has recently marshaled considerable evidence to suggest that Confucius specifically passed the teaching of Chunqiu to Zixia. [10]

There were five versions of zhuan 傳 (commentary), a series of illustrative elucidations and commentaries known to be written for Spring and Autumn Annals: Zuo Zhuan 左傳, Gongyang Zhuan 公羊傳, Guliang Zhuan 殼梁傳, Zhou Zhuan 邹傳, and Jia Zhuan 戉傳. [11] Only the first three commentaries exist today. Evidence presented below suggests that these remaining three commentaries can be traced to Zixia and his students.
(i) Xu Yan 徐彦 of Tang Dynasty quoted Min Yinxu 閔因敘 in his book Gongyang Shu 公羊疏 (Annotation of Gongyang Commentary) that Confucius had sent Zixia and others to Luoyang 洛陽, the then Zhou Capital, for the historical archives kept by the Zhou Grand Historian. These records formed the primary source materials for Confucius to write Spring and Autumn Annals. [12]

(ii) As noted in Shiji 史記, Confucius was so careful and meticulous about the words used in editing Chunqiu 春秋, to the degree that his chief assistant Zixia could not even change a single word. This widely cited passage suggests that Zixia and other disciples were involved in helping Confucius in his editing of the six major scriptures. [13]

(iii) A passage in Han Feizi 韩非子 quoted a saying of Zixia about the lesson that could be learned by a ruler from Chunqiu 春秋. Zixia urged the ruler to use his position to prevent and weed out any potential danger coming from his subordinates. Similar comment by Zixia was also mentioned by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE) in his Chunqiu Fanglu 春秋繁露: “Thus, Wey Zixia said, “A ruler cannot afford not to study Chunqiu. Otherwise he will not be able to discern imminent danger and opportunity, and cannot appreciate that the power of authority associated with the ruler only signifies a heavy responsibility.” [14] Having been heavily involved in organizing and editing the classics with Confucius, Zixia would certainly be in position to make this kind of comments.

(iv) Both Gongyang Zhuan and Guliang Zhuan were credited respectively to Gongyang Gao and Guliang Chi, the two disciples of Zixia. The styles of these two commentaries are similar in that both extensively used the question and answer format, reminding one of the discussions between Zixia and Confucius. Again, from reading these commentaries, one cannot but be reminded of what Zixia had once said, “There are learning extensively, and having a firm and sincere aim; inquiring with earnestness, and reflecting with self-application; virtue is in such a course.”(LY19.6)

(v) The more influential commentary Zuo Zhuan is thought to have been written by Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, a Lu historian coeval with Confucius and was praised by Confucius in the Analects. However, some of the events recorded in Zuo Zhuan actually occurred in the Warring States period, raising some doubt about the authorship of Zuo Qiuming. Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1731-1815) first suggested that Zuo Zhuan was actually compiled and written by a scholar from a place named Zuo Shi 左氏 in Wey State. He further suggested that with all the likelihood, this scholar was Wu Qi, one of Zixia’s students, who later became a prime minister in Chu State 楚国. Yao’s argument was based on the following facts: (1) Zuo Zhuan was originally called “Zuo Shi Chunqiu”. (2) Wu Qi was a native of Zuo Shi 左氏 of Wey State, which later became part of Jin State 晉國. (3) The events occurred in Jing State figured more prominently in Zuo Zhuan. Qian Mu even suspected that the story of Zuo Qiuming being a blind could be a mistaken identity by confusing Zixia for Zuo Qiuming, since Zixia became blind in his old age. [15] Taken together, a case can be made that Zixia did contribute significantly to the transmission and interpretation of Chunqiu to future generation. Indeed, as Qian Mu said, Zixia’s role as the founding father of Confucianism at San Jin 三晉 (The Three Jins) was related to his role in the transmission of Chunqiu. [15]
Zixia and the development of Legalist School

It was recorded in 《Yiwenzi》艺文志 (the Literary Records) of 《Han Shu》汉书 the publications of major scholars of various popular pre-Qin schools. The first one mentioned in the Legalist School was the work of Master Li, 《Lizi Sanshi Er Pian》李子三十二篇. According to the annotation, Master Li was Li Kui 李悝, the prime minister of Marquis Wen of Wei. However, in the same chapter there was another name Li Ke 李克 listed under the category of Confucian School. Li Ke was not only mentioned as a disciple of Zixia but also served as the prime minister of Wei State. The life of Li Kui described in the received texts was almost identical to that of Li Ke. For example, in 《Mengzi Xunqin Liezhuan》of Shiji (史記，孟子荀卿列傳) it stated that “Li Kui of Wei worked hard to ensure that land would be fertile and productive” , whereas in 《Pingzhunshu》 of Shiji (史記, 平準書) “Wei (Lord) employed Li Ke to develop land and thus Wei became powerful”. In addition, in 《Hanshu Shihuozhi》漢書食貨志 it mentioned in one section that Li Kui worked hard for Wei Wen Hou to develop agricultural land and in another section stated that at the time of Lord Wei Wen Hou, Li Ke made great strife to ensure good harvest. It is now a general consensus that Li Ke and Li Kui indeed referred to the same person as Cui Shi 崔述 (1740-1817) pointed out before. The fact that Li Kui was listed as a scholar in both Legalist School and Confucian School suggested that he was a bridging person for these two schools of thoughts, similar to the situation for Shang Yang, who was listed in 《Yiwenzi》, both under the category of Legalist School as well as Militarist School. [16]

Li Kui was well known for two achievements: one, the elaboration of a theory on the optimal use of land and two, the writing of the Fajing 法經 (Classic of Law). Fajing is an extended code devoted to using appropriate penal measures for controlling and dealing with civil matters. It was divided into six sections: bandits, brigands, prisons, arrests, miscellaneous punishments, and special circumstances. Fajing was likely to be brought into Qin State by Shang Yang and hence was incorporated into the Qin legal code and thereafter into the legal system of Han dynasty. Thus, to a large degree, Fajing provided the political foundation in forming the Warring States polity. [17] Li Kui was also credited with a series of new economic policies that helped to ease the taxation burden of farmers and boost agricultural productivity. His theory of small-scale farming and optimal land use has thus formed the economic foundation of the Warring States polity. [17]

Legalists in general considered that poverty was the cause of crime which leads to penalty. An interesting conversation between Wei Wen Hou and Li Kui went as follows [16]:

The lord asked Li Kui, what is the ultimate source or cause for the existence of penalty. Li answered, there is a reason for the existence of penalty; if the ruler does not look at the cause, but just focusing on applying penalty, and he can do no more harm to the country. The existence of fa 罰 (penalty) is because of the crime committed by people. Hunger and without sheltering due to extreme poverty were causes for people to commit crime. Greediness due to rampant extravagance was another reason that gets people to commit crime. Without elimination of the causes that brew crime, but only applying fa 罰 (penalty), the lord is driving his people to hell.
This passage bears a striking similarity to the discourse between Mencius and Qi Xuan Wang 齊宣王 (King Xun of Qi). In that discourse, Mencius explained to the King:

“...As to the commoners, if they have not a certain livelihood, it follows that they will not have a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do, in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they thus have been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them;-- this is to entrap the people. How can such a thing as entrapping the people be done under the rule of a benevolent man? 'Therefore an intelligent ruler will regulate the livelihood of the people, so as to make sure that, for those above them, they shall have sufficient wherewith to serve their parents, and, for those below them, sufficient wherewith to support their wives and children; that in good years they shall always be abundantly satisfied, and that in bad years they shall escape the danger of perishing. After this he may urge them, and they will proceed to what is good, for in this case the people will follow after it with ease.” (Menius I.7)

Li Kui, the forefather of Legalist School, emphasized the importance of economics in governing in a way just like Mencius, the most prominent Ruist in the period of Warring States.

The word fa 法 used in fa jia 法家 (Legalist School) means “model”. When the model is a description of desired human behavior in certain situations, announced by the state with prescribed punishments for failure to abide by it, it is obviously a law. [18] The reformist policy promulgated by Shang Yang (ca 390-338 BCE) helped to establish Qin as a powerful state and paved the way for the unification of China under Shi Huang Di 始皇帝. The so-called Shang Yang Fa 商鞅法 (Law of Shang Yang) was from Fajing. Since Fajing was written based on the compilation of the law from various states, which some scholars argued were influenced by the law from the distant San Dai 三代 period (the Three Dynasties). As such, the core of Legalist School and Confucianism may indeed share a common origin, namely the governing philosophy of San Dai. [19] In any event, as suggested by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), the origin of Legalist School should be traced to Li Kui, the chief minister in Wei State sometime after 445 BCE. Li Kui, the author of Fajing 法經 (Classic of Law), can be considered to be the forefather of Legalist School through his direct influence on Shang Yang, one of the most famous politicians in pre-Qin period. It is therefore quite appropriate that Qian Mu stated, “People praised the new policy of (Shang) Yang, not knowing that it all came from Li (Kui) and Wu (Qi); people thought that the Legalist idea came from dao 道 and de 德, without knowing that it actually was derived from Confucianism. [16]

According to Shiji, Li Kui and another prominent reformist Wu Qi, both natives of Wey, were Zixia’s disciples. How could Zixia’s teaching at Wei lead to the genesis of Legalist School, a school of thought that throughout Chinese history appeared to be antagonistic to Confucianism? The question deserves serious research. There is no doubt that, in addition to the unique local culture of the three Jins, the teaching of Zixia and the tradition of Xihe School must have been the major contributing factor in fostering and nurturing the growth of legalist ideas in some of his students. Indeed, from the reading of received texts one can detect some of the key ingredients of legalist thinking, some may be in embryonic stage, were already evident in Zixia’s teaching. Recently, Xie Yaoting has argued that the westward transmission of Ruisim or Confucianism, from Shangdong to Shanxi, provided the necessary political backdrop for consolidating the legalist
ingredients in Zixia’s thought and helped to train students like Li Kui and Wu Qi as the first generation political reformists. [20]

According to the analysis of Xie [20], some of Zixia’s thinking and ideas could be considered as a prelude to the full bloom of Legalist thought. Indeed, the following examples demonstrated that many of the pre-legalist elements could be uncovered from Zixia’s sayings or teachings:

(1) A practical scholar with utilitarian trait
Among Confucius’ disciples, Zixia could be considered to be a utilitarian who would not be shy to be associated with  
. Zixia was practical and he was, above all, interested in seeing the results, particularly political results. In many of his comments and in his interaction with Confucius, this trait bore out. For example, when he served as County Chief of Jufu, Confucius advised him: “Do not be desirous to have things done quickly; do not look at small advantages. Desire to have things done quickly prevents their being done thoroughly. Looking at small advantages prevents great affairs from being accomplished.” (無欲速; 無見小利。欲速則不達; 見小利則大事不成。LY13.17) Confucius also advised Zixia: “Be a scholar after the style of the superior gentleman Ru, but not a common and petty Ru, focusing on  
.” (女為君子儒!無為小人儒! LY6.13) One interesting exchange between Ziyou and Zixia also underscored this utilitarian tendency of Zixia (LY19.12). Zixia obviously liked to see measurable results. Thus his students were apparently first trained in “sprinkling and sweeping the ground, in answering and replying, in advancing and receding,” and were “sufficiently accomplished”. However, his classmate Ziyou commented, “This is hardly a serious learning.” Zixia responded by saying that this was part of the learning and, although menial, should not be ignored”. This episode also reminds one of Xunzi’s comments on the demeanor of Zixia’s students. [21] On other occasions, Zixia said, “When a person does not transgress the boundary line in the great virtues, he may pass and re-pass it in the small virtues.” (大德不踰閭; 小德出入可也。LY19.11) Again, showing that he focused more on the results and as long as the core is intact, he can allow room for some small expediency.

The following passages from the Analects are even more revealing:

Zixia said, “Mechanics have their shops to dwell in, in order to accomplish their works. The superior man learns in order to reach to the utmost of his principles. (百工居肆以成其事; 君子學以致其道。LY19.7)” The implication here is that even a superior man or grand nobleman 君子 should be measured by the product that he produced, just like mechanics or other menial laborers.

Zixia said, “Even in inferior studies and employments there is something worth being looked at; but if it be attempted to carry them out to what is too remote, there is a danger of their proving inapplicable. Therefore, the superior man does not practice them (雖小道，必有可觀者焉; 致遠恐泥，是以君子不為也。LY19.4).” Again, Zixia compared the mundane menial jobs with what a superior person wishes to accomplish.

Zixia said, “The official, having discharged all his duties, should devote his leisure to learning. The student, having completed his learning, should apply himself to be an official (仕而優則學; 學而優則仕。LY19.13).” Zixia was the one who was not shy about connecting the learning with government service. For him, to learn and to serve are two sides of a coin.
(2) His view of “fa” 法 in governing
The word fa, understood as law or legality, also means “model” or “to model after”. The tradition of law was originally derived from the setting of model for human behavior. In this regard, Confucian scholars first proposed to model after the ancient sage. In 《Han Shi Waizhuan》 韓詩外傳 (Outer Commentary to the Han Odes) and in 《Shangshu Dazhuan》 尚書大傳 (Greater Commentary to Shangshu), Zixia talked about the model of Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 and three sage Kings and considered the building of ideal and harmonious society as the ultimate political goal. To achieve this goal, rites and music were considered to be the tools. [22] In his discussion of music with Wei Wen Hou, Zixia offered: Rites or rituals are what needed to run a state, to stabilize a society, to align the people, and to benefit the future generations. Music is what sages made to align and to order the relationship between father and son, lord and subordinate. Only then, there is peace and stability under heaven. [23] Li 禮 (rites, rituals) contains the elements of fa 法, but in itself, it is not equivalent to fa, because there is also component of ethics and moral dimension. On the other hand, the fa component of li 禮 can be made into law and used as tools of governing. In this regard, Zixia considered that both rites and music could serve as tools for ordering hierarchy in human society.

(3) His view of “xuanju” 選舉 (selection or election) in meritorious governing
In the Analects (LY12.22), Zixia said, “Shun 舜, being in possession of the kingdom, selected from among all the people, and employed Gaoyao 皋陶 on which all who were devoid of virtue disappeared. Tang 湯, being in possession of the kingdom, selected from among all the people, and employed Yi Yin 伊尹 and those who were devoid of virtue disappeared.” This is consistent with what Confucius talked about wei zheng zai ren 為政在人 (the need to have capable and meritorious person to be in charge of governing). However, neither Confucius nor Zixia touched the issue on whether 人 ren or fa 法 was more crucial in governing, a subject viewed as the diverging point between Confucianism and Legalist School. [24] Fa 法, the code of behavior or law, goes hand-in-hand with fa 罰 (the penal system). Zixia has been cited in Shangshu Dazhuan 尚書大傳 discussing his view about the practice of penalty ruling. He emphasized that the ancient sage kings were extremely careful in assigning penalty and always tried to be as fair as possible. Together, one can argue that Zixia had given serious thoughts about issues that later became the key ingredients of the Legalist School. [25]

(4) His view of “shi” 勢 (trend and tendency) in governing
When Zixia commented on Annals of Spring and Autumn, he highlighted the concept of “shi”, which is considered one of the three key components of Legalist ideology. The other two are fa 法 and shu 術. Zixia said, “...it has been recorded in Chunqiu cases after cases of assassination, subordinates against lords, sons against fathers. This is not something happened all of a sudden, it is a result precipitated from an accumulation of events... Hence, it is quite important (for the superiors or rulers) to be good at holding shi (using their position) to discern any trends of potential evil or mischief and weed out any imminent dangerous wickedness.” Traditional Legalist School extensively emphasizes that the ruler should ensure that he is in a better and more aloof position (shi) to discern and prepare for what could happen. [14]

(5) His view of “xin” 信 (trust) in governing
The law can only function with the trust of people; trust is the guarantee for the success of the law issued from the king. The two passages in the Analects cited below clearly show that there is no doubt that Zixia was well aware of this point:

Zixia said, “If a man withdraws his mind from the love of beauty, and applies it as sincerely to the love of the virtuous; if, in serving his parents, he can exert his utmost strength; if, in serving his prince, he can devote his life; if, in his interaction with his friends, his words are sincere; although men say that he has not learned, I will certainly say that he has.” (LY1.7)

Zixia said, “The superior man, having obtained their confidence, may then impose labors on his people. If he has not gained their confidence, they will think that he is oppressing them. Having obtained the confidence of his prince, one may then remonstrate with him. If he has not gained his confidence, the prince will think that he is vilifying him.” (LY19.10) [26]

Thus, Zixia’s view on 法, 罰, 勢, and 信, together with his belief in using rites and music as governing tools and his utilitarian inclination, must have greatly influenced his students. While Zixia retained many of his core Confucian values, one can imagine his earnest desire to make concrete and measurable contributions to improving the chaotic situation of the time. With mentoring from Zixia and the support of Wei Wen Hou, both Li Kui and Wu Qi began reformist political careers in the Wei and Chu states respectively. Their success and political accomplishments paved the way for the establishment of the Legalist School, which had a long lasting impact on China’s political arena.

The impact of Zixia to Confucianism

Confucianism and Legalism, the two major governing philosophies have an active and confrontational debate throughout the past 2000 years. However, most of the time, the real imperial governing philosophy was yang ru yin fa 陽儒陰法, meaning roughly: ostensibly, Confucianism was considered to be the state ideology but in practice, legalistic principles were applied. With the collapse of Qing Dynasty and the upheavals that accompanied the invasion of the Western and Japanese power and ensuing civil wars, most Chinese intellectuals blamed the weakness, the corruption and incompetence of the government and general populace on the supposed backwardness of Confucian teachings. Faces with modern foreign powers Chinese intellectuals openly questioned the validity and usefulness of Confucianism. This trend has continued since the founding of People’s Republic of China, and actually peaked during the Culture Revolution. With the rise of anti-Confucianism sentiment came also the glorification of Fa Jia 法家 Legalist School, as symbolized by the so-called Movement of Pi Kong Yang Qin 批孔楊秦, criticizing Confucius and glorifying Qin (Qin Shihuang 秦始皇) and the “Anti-Lin Biao, Anti-Confucius” Campaign 批林批孔運動. With the Culture Revolution on the wane, the Confucian scholarship and classical learning slowly recovered from the political abuse. A genuine and penetrating examination of the past of China also slowly resumed. In this context, there has been a surge in recent years on the study of Zixia in mainland China. There are already several theses and numerous papers focusing on Zixia, his life and his contribution. This is an interesting phenomenon, especially viewed from the perspective of the past confrontation between Confucianism and Legalism, particularly at the height of the Culture Revolution and the similar struggle that occurred
In Japan during Tokugawa period before Japan’s opening to the West under Meiji Emperor. [27]

In *Mencius*, a conversation between Mencius and his student Gongsun Chou 公孫丑 is noteworthy:

Gongsun Chou asked Mencius, “I have been told that Zixia, Ziyou and Zizhang, all embody part of the Sage, whereas, Ran Niu, Ming Zi, and Yan Yuan, they resembled the Sage, but in a miniature scale. So, I venture to ask which category do you fit in?” (*Mencius* 3.2)

Mencius did not answer this question for obvious reasons because he perceived himself as someone who would like to be able to imitate the Master as a whole, not just a certain part of the Master. Nonetheless, it is so clear that even only a century after the death of Confucius, people were already concerned about the completeness of Confucius' teaching and tried to find the original image of Confucius. What Zixia has done and said, as a teacher, as a scholar, and as a conscientious intellectual who harbored earnest desire to accomplish something significant and real in political arena, was truly in the mode of his Master. The study of Zixia should indeed provide a glimpse of a part of Confucius' image. It is in Zixia that one sees the seed of legalistic ideas imbedded in his Confucian teaching, which later blossomed to Legalist School. One also sees that the Legalist School, which always cherishes a more practical and reformist approach in governing needs not be on the opposite side of Confucianism.
Table 1: Major Events in Zixia’s Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BCE</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>507</td>
<td></td>
<td>born at State Wen (modern Henan Wen Xian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>493</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>joined Confucius school at Wei State; Confucius 59 yrs old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>492</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>with Confucius at Chen State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>489</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>with Confucius at Chen and Cai State, run out of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>488</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>as a diplomat at Wey State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>484</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>with Confucius back to Lu State, served as County chief at Jufu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>483</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>parent died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>482</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>held wake for his deceased parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>481</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>went to Zhou for historical archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>479</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Confucius died, held wake for him for three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>473</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>with Zi Zhang elected You Rou as the leader of Kong School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>472</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>left Lu State, went back to Wei State, stated teaching career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>420</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>deceased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Wang, 2006 [2]
Notes

[1] For the State of Wey 衛 the conventional spelling is used instead of pinyin in order to differentiate it from the State of Wei 魏. For the age of Zixia, it was recorded in 《Zhongni Dizi Liezhuan》仲尼弟子列傳 of Shiji 史記 that Zixia was 44 years younger than Confucius. Some scholars thought that it should be 34 years, not 44 years, see Yuan Jinshu 袁金書 《Kongzi ji di zhi shiji kaozheng》孔子及其弟子事蹟考證 1991, p.289. The native of Zixia was cited as Wei State, Wey State, or Wen State in the received texts. This has a lot to do with the history of the place Wen, located in the modern day Wen County 溫縣, Henan. Wen was originally the fief of Chief Attorney General Su Fen Sheng 蘇忿生 of Zhou Wu Wang 周文王. Wen was overtaken by Di 狄 in about 650 BCE and the Lord Su of Wen run his life to Wey State. In 636 BCE, Zhou Xiang Wang 周襄王 bestowed part of Wen to Lord Wen of Jin 晉文公, thanking him for claming down a revolt instigated by Wang Zidai 王子帶. Thus for a long period of time, part of Wen was controlled by Wey. The evidence that Zixia came from Wey State has been extensively discussed by Bu Rufei 步如飛 in 《Zixia liji kao》子夏里籍考, 《Guanzi Xuekan》管子學刊, 2006.

[2] With regard to the date that Zixia joined the Confucius’ group, there are two theories: one is after Confucius came back to Lu from his exodus; the other is during his exodus. The disagreement seems to stem from how to read the following two sentences: (i) The Master said, “Of those who were with me in Chen and Cai, there are none to enter my door.” (子曰:“從我于陳、蔡者,皆不及門也) and (ii) “distinguished for their virtuous principles and practice, there were Yan Yuan, Min Ziqian, Ran Boniu, and Zhong Gong; for their ability in speech, Zai Wo and Zigong; for their administrative talents, Ran You and Ji Lu; for their literary acquirements, Ziyou and Zixia.” (德行: 顏淵、閔子騫、冉伯牛、仲弓; 言語: 宰我、子貢; 政事: 冉有、季路; 文學: 子游、子夏) If one read these two parts together, it would imply that Zixia, like the rest nine disciples, was with Confucius during the exodus. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1120) preferred combined reading (see 《Sishu Jizhu》四書集注 (Collected Commentaries on the Four Classics), whereas Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 disagreed (see his 《Luyu Yizhu》論語譯注). Qian Mu in 《Kongzi Dizi Tongkao》孔子弟子通考, 《Xianqin Zhuzi Xinian》先秦諸子繫年 pp 94-95 categorized Confucius’ disciples into two groups, one before and one after exodus and that Zixia belonged to the later group. For more discussion on this issue see Gao Peihua 高培華, 《Zixia de Kongmen qiuxue shiqi》子夏的孔門求學時期 《Shixue Monthly》史學月刊(9) 2004. For a detailed review of Zixia’s life, see Wang Hongxia 王紅霞 《The Life Of Zixia》子夏生平考述, Ph.D. Thesis, 2006.

[3] Some scholars have noticed that the difference in the dispositions of Confucius’ disciples can, in some cases, be correlated with the native lands they came from. See Li Qiqian 李啟謙, 《孔門弟子研究·前言, 對孔門弟子研究的幾點認識》, 《Kongzi Yanjiu》孔子研究 (2) 74, 1986.

[4] The passages cited from Analects are indicated with LYA.B., LY for Lunyu, A refers to chapter, and B refers to the passage number in that chapter. Three Ru or Confucian schools were singled out for condemnation in 《Xunzi》. One of them is Zixia’s Ru school. Xunzi described the demeanor of Zixia’s students in this way: “Wearing their caps in perfectly correct form, maintaining their expression in perfect equanimity, they sit
there all day long as though they were about to gag on a bit, but say nothing-such are the lowly Ru of the school of Zixia." 正其衣冠，齊其顏色，嗛然而終 日不言，是子夏氏之賤儒也。See John Knoblock, Xunzi vol 1 Book 1-6, pp 219-220.

[5] The duration of Zixia’s stay in Lu State before his departure for Wei State is unclear. It is thus unclear whether students like Gongyang Gao 公羊高, Guliang Chi 殳梁赤, and Zeng Shen 曾申 went to Wei with Zixia or stayed in Lu. It is also unclear, for example, the incidence, described in following passage from Xunzi, occurred before or after he went back to Wei: Zixia was poor, dressed like a beggar. People said, why don’t you find a lord to work with? Answered, I will not work for the duke who sounds condescending, I will never see any lord who behaves condescending. “(子夏貧，衣若懸鶉。人曰：「子何不仕?」曰：「諸侯之驕我者吾不為臣,大夫之驕我者吾不復見。」)

[6] For the comment of Xu Fang, see 《Biography of Xu Fang》 in 《Hou Han Shu》後漢書徐防傳 For the comment of Hong Mai 洪邁 see his book 《Rong Zhai Sui Bi》容齋隨筆.


[9] The long discussion on Jiong Zhuo 洞酌 was recorded in Li Ji 禮記, 《Kongzi Xian Ju》孔子閑居. The long passage started with the question from Zixia on the meaning of kai di junzi, min zhi fumu 恵弟君子，民之父母 (The happy and courteous sovereign, (is) the father and mother of the people). Zixia’s question on why Guanju 關雎 was listed as the first poem in the Book of Odes was recorded in 《Hanshi Waizhuan 》韓詩外傳 (Outer Commentary to the Han Odes).


[11] A detailed review on the authorship of these commentaries can be found in the thesis of Bu Rufei 步如飛, 《Zixia ji qi xuepai yanjiu》子夏及其學派研究, 2007.

[12] 《Annotation of Gong Yang Commentary to Chunqiu》春秋公羊傳疏 was credited to Xu Yan of Tang Dynasty according to Song scholars. However, the identity of Xu Yan was unclear. The passage cited from Ming Yinxu 閔因敘 was: “In the past, Confucius obliged the order of royal house and sent Zixia and other thirteen people to Zhou for the
historical archives; (they) obtained the archives of hundred and twenty states.” (昔孔子受端門之命，制《春秋》之義，使子夏等十四人求周史記，得百二十國寶書。) It is interesting to note also in Mo Zi 墨子, Mozi said that he has seen the archives of the hundred states. （墨子云：吾見百國春秋。）

[13] The passage appears in the chapter of 《Kong Zi Shijia》孔子世家 in Shiji. The passage implies that under most of the situations, Confucius had no problem working with others to edit his own writings, except the case with Chunqiu. It also implies that Zixia and others probably commented on many of Confucius’ writings. However, with regard to Chunqiu, they were speechless. One can imagine that Confucius would need all the help from his disciples to perform the large amount of work in organizing and editing the six classics in his waning years.

[14] Han Feizi discussed the term “shi” 勢 extensively. The ruler’s shi was his ‘position’ or status and the power that comes with that status.


[16] For the discussion on the identity of Li Kui and Li Ke, see Yang Ling 楊玲, 《Xianqin Fajia sixiang bijiao yanjiu》先秦法家思想比較研究 Ph.D. Thesis, 2005; Guo Moruo 郭沫若, 《Shi pipan sh, qianqi fajia de pipan》十批判書. 前期法家的批判; Qian Mu 錢穆, 《Xianqin zhuzi xinian》先秦諸子系年.


[18] The origin of fa 法 was discussed by David S Nivison, 《The classical philosophical writings》 in 《The Cambridge History of Ancient China》, 1999, p806.


[21] The incidence started with the somewhat condescending comment by Ziyou on Zixia’s teaching method. Ziyou said, “The disciples and followers of Zixia, in sprinkling and sweeping the ground, in answering and replying, in advancing and receding, are sufficiently accomplished. But these are only the branches of learning, and they are left ignorant of what is essential. -How can they be acknowledged as sufficiently taught?” Zixia heard of the remark and said, “Alas! Yen You is wrong. According to the way of the
superior man in teaching, what departments are there which he considers of prime importance, and delivers? What are there which he considers of secondary importance, and allows himself to be idle about? But as in the case of plants, which are assorted according to their classes, so he deals with his disciples. How can the way of a superior man be such as to make fools of any of them? Is it not the sage alone, who can unite in one the beginning and the consummation of learning?” (LY19.12)

[22] In both Hanshi Waizhuan and Shangshu Dazhuan, Zixia mentioned the dao 道 (way) of Yao and Shun and yi 義 (virtue and righteousness) of three Kings (the founding king of Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasty) as the models. The two passages are almost identical, but one refers to Shi and the other refers to Shu. Hanshi Waizhuan was written by Han Ying 韓嬰 at about 150 BCE, and Shangshu Dazhuan was written by Fu Sheng 伏生 also at about 150 BCE. We would never know whether the discourse between Confucius and Zixia as described did occur or not, but the fact that similar story was recorded by two coeval authors would suggest that the memory of such discourse was prevalent at that time.

[23] For the discourse between Zixia and Wei Wen Hou on the role of yue 樂 in governing see 《Shiji Yueshu》史記樂書 (The Chapter of Music in Shiji).

[24] In an interesting exchange between Zixia and his fellow disciple Fan Chi 樊遲, Zixia explained why it is crucial for the rulers to select or elect meritorious ministers. Confucius mentioned juzhi 舉直, meaning to recommend the talent and honest, but Zixia expanded on that and included 選於眾. The passage in the Analects (LY12.22) went as: Fan Chi retired, and, seeing Zixia, he said to him, “A little while ago, I had an interview with our Master, and asked him about knowledge. He said, ‘Employ the upright, and put aside all the crooked; in this way, the crooked will be made to be upright.’ What did he mean?” Zixia said, “Truly rich is the Master’s saying! Shun, being in possession of the kingdom, selected from among all the people, and employed Gaoyao 皐陶 on which all who were devoid of virtue disappeared. Tang, being in possession of the kingdom, selected from among all the people, and employed I Yin 伊尹 and an who were devoid of virtue disappeared.”

[25] The passage on Zixia’s discussion of applying penalty with extreme carefulness appeared in Shangshu Dazhuan volume 3, wherein Zixia advised that at the time of three sages, the fairness for each penalty assignment was carefully balanced and evaluated for at least three times.

[26] Xin 信 is a major element in Confucius’ teaching and is figured prominently in the Analects. Among 32 paragraphs dealing with xin, twenty four of them were comments made by Confucius. Zixia, Zengzi, and Zizhang each had two comments, and Youruo had one. Zixia’s comment, however, was most relevant to the importance of xin in governing.

[27] With regard to the relationship between Ru-Fa struggles and the modernization of Japan, see Han Dongyu 韓東育, 《Tokugawa Japan and the Real Ru-Fa struggles》 江戸日本與真正的儒法之爭, 《Dushu》讀書（7）2003.