

THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF ANCIENT CHINA

群書治要360 (中英對照版)

Based on 360 passages
excerpted from the original
compilation of Qunshu Zhiyao



English Translation Group of Qunshu Zhiyao 360
Chung Hua Cultural Education Centre (M) Bhd



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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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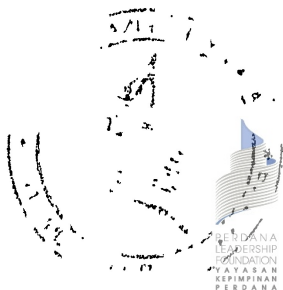


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Preface

At the beginning of the Zhenguan Era, Emperor Taizong (599-649) of the Tang dynasty decreed that *Qunshu Zhiyao* (*The Compilation of Books and Writings on the Important Governing Principles*) be compiled. At the tender age of sixteen, Taizong enlisted himself in the army, and joined his father's forces to try to stop the turmoil that was going on in the society. For more than ten years, he dwelt himself in military matters. After he ascended to the throne at the age of twenty-seven, he laid down his armor and began to promote culture and education, paying particular attention to the principles of governing, and bringing peace to the country. He sought to rejuvenate the nation from the aftermath of civil strife by restoring order to life, lessening the burdens of ordinary people, and increasing prosperity.

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Although Taizong was an intelligent, brave, and eloquent man, he regretted that his earlier military

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expeditions had prevented him from obtaining much formal education. He also learned from the mistakes made by the fallen Sui dynasty and realized that to start a new dynasty was no easy task, and to sustain it would be even harder. Hence during his reign, he encouraged his ministers to point out his mistakes and to candidly criticize his imperial policies. To make up for lost time, Taizong ordered two advisors, the honorable Wei Zheng and Yu Shinan, to comb through all the historical records on imperial governing principles from the *Six Classics*, the *Four Collections of History* and the *Hundreds of Schools*¹; and to extract the most important lessons related to the cultivation of oneself, management of family, good government, and ways to bring about peace in the world. The result was a collection, titled *Qunshu Zhiyao*, carefully excerpted from 14,000 books and 89,000

¹ The *Six Classics* are: *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Odes*), *Shangshu* 尚書 (*History of Antiquities*), *Yili* 儀禮 (*Etiquettes and Ceremonies*), *Yuejing* 樂經 (*Book of Music*), *Yi-Jing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*), and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Sishi* 四史 (*The Four Collections of History*) are: *Shiji* 史記 (*The Records of History*), *Hanshu* 漢書 (*The Book of Han*), *Houhanshu* 後漢書 (*The Book of Later Han*), and *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (*Records of the Three Kingdoms*). ² *Zhuzi-Baijia* 諸子百家 (*The Hundreds of Schools*) are schools of philosophies that sprang up during the Spring and Autumn, and Warring States periods, circa 770 -221 BC.

scrolls of ancient writings—500,000 words in all, and covering sixty-five book categories—dating from the era of the Five Legendary Emperors² to the Jin dynasty.³

This truly is a treasured compilation on governing principles that can bring about peace and order, which “when used in the present, allows us to examine and learn from our ancient history; when passed down to our descendants, will help them learn valuable lessons in life.” Those were the words written by Advisor Wei Zheng in the preface of the completed compilation. Emperor Taizong was extremely pleased with the broad yet concise compilation and would not let the books out of his sight. He said: “The collection has helped me learn from the ancients. When confronted with issues, I am very certain of knowing what to do. This is all due to your efforts, my advisors.” From here we can see that the subsequent peace and prosperity

2 The Five Emperors of antiquity (circa 2600 BC) are: Emperor Huang 黄帝, Emperor Zhuangxi 颛项, Emperor Diku 帝喾, Emperor Yao 尧, and Emperor Shun 舜.

3 Jin dynasty (265-420)

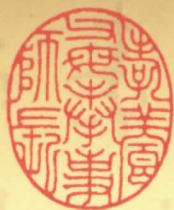
of the Zhenguan Era was attributed greatly to this compilation! This treasure is truly a must-read for all politicians.

However, by the beginning of the Song dynasty, *Qunshu Zhiyao* disappeared from circulation. This is due to the fact that Chinese woodblock printing was not well developed at that time. The *History of Song* also did not show any record of this compilation. Fortunately, the Japanese Kanazawa Bunko' museum collection had a complete manuscript hand-copied by Japanese monks during the Kamakura period (1192-1330). The Japanese returned the books to China in the 60th year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong, and they became the master copy for the *Four Series Books* published by the Commercial Press (Shanghai) as well as publications used by Taiwan.

At the end of 2010, I was fortunate to obtain a copy of *Qunshu Zhiyao*. I read the work repeatedly, and I was filled with immense joy that eternal

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stability and peace to the entire world can be brought about by the cultural teachings of our ancient saints and sages. I deeply feel this is so. The most important thing is that the Chinese people themselves must truly comprehend and embrace this traditional culture, to stop doubting and start believing. The teachings of the saints and sages constitute an embodiment of the true self-nature of all beings that transcends time and space. Even now, they still hold true. The key learning point hinges on two words “sincerity and respect.” The article “Summary of the Rules of Propriety” says: “Always and in everything let there be reverence.” Emperor Kangxi of the Qing dynasty said: “When a ruler interacts with his people, the element of respect is fundamental.” He also said: “All the teachings that have been passed down through thousands of years is no more than sincerity and respect.” The prominent Song scholar Chengzi said: “Respect triumphs over all evils.” These sayings illuminate the fact that in order to cultivate ourselves, advance our virtues, help people, and

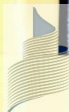


孝養父母
奉事師長

Be filial and care for parents,
be respectful to and serve teachers.

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