

Descendants and Portraits of Confucius in the Early Southern Song

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Some of the best-known portrayals of Confucius 孔子 in modern times have their origins in the early Southern Song era of dynastic revival. The Jin invasion and conquest of North China, which devastated the Song royal house, also disrupted the ancestral cult of Confucius maintained by the Kong lineage of his descendants in Qufu 曲阜 (Shandong). Song Gaozong 宋高宗 used the visual arts to demonstrate his endorsement of Confucian learning and morality, as well as his veneration for Confucius to enhance the restoration's legitimacy in the eyes of the literati elite, whose allegiance was essential for governing the realm. In addition, Gaozong provided material support and official positions to the descendants of Confucius who had followed him to the South. Chief among them was Kong Duanyou 孔端友, the senior member of the 48th-generation of the Kong lineage and bearer of the hereditary noble title, Duke for Perpetuating the Sage (Yansheng gong 衍聖公).

Over the centuries, people surnamed Kong 孔 and identified as descendants of Confucius have played important roles in creating, preserving, publicizing, and reproducing images of their revered ancestor. Texts compiled by members of the Kong lineage in Qufu recorded accounts of auspicious supernatural events associated with Confucius's birth and descriptions of his unusual physical appearance and abilities. In the late Northern Song period, Kong family genealogies had also begun to include a section on paintings of Confucius, which typically represented him in the company of one or more of his disciples. In 1095, before becoming duke, Kong Duanyou had sponsored the carving of a stone stele in Qufu to reproduce and preserve the "most genuine" (*zui zhen* 最真) of these portrayals, a painting known simply as the *Small Portrait* 小影, which featured the standing figures of Confucius and his disciple Yan Hui 顏回.

After fleeing to the South, Duke Kong Duanyou and other Kong refugees settled in Quzhou 衢州 (Zhejiang), where Gaozong bestowed lands to support them and maintain their sacrifices to Confucius. There the Duke erected another portrait stele based on the same pictorial model, but portraying Confucius standing alone and much larger in size.

The stele was co-sponsored by Kong Chuan 孔傳, an eminent 47th-generation descendant, who also compiled a genealogy incorporating an earlier edition's descriptions of four paintings of Confucius handed down as family treasures.

In addition to the *Small Portrait*, the recorded paintings included one in which a seated Confucius faced the standing figures of seventy-two disciples arranged in one long row, some of them holding a bow, arrow, or handscroll. This composition (or its verbal description) became the model for a set of images incised on stone tablets to accompany Gaozong's eulogies and brief biographies of Confucius and each of the disciples. After their completion in the twelfth lunar month of 1156, the tablets were put on display in the re-established imperial university, joining an earlier set of stones containing the official texts of the Confucian classics in Gaozong's calligraphy. The images became so closely identified with the Southern Song regime that a century later, when a rival branch of Kongs who had remained in Jin-controlled Qufu published a genealogy that included line-drawings, *Confucius and 72 Disciples* was the only composition described in the section on portraits that was not illustrated.

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