

Zhu Xi's Reading of the Analects: Canon, Commentary, and the Classical Tradition (Asian Studies)

Daniel K. Gardner



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The *Analects* is a compendium of the sayings of Confucius (551–479 b.c.e.), transcribed and passed down by his disciples. How it came to be transformed by Zhu Xi (1130–1200) into one of the most philosophically significant texts in the Confucian tradition is the subject of this book.

Scholarly attention in China had long been devoted to the *Analects*. By the time of Zhu Xi, a rich history of commentary had grown up around it. But Zhu, claiming that the *Analects* was one of the authoritative texts in the canon and should be read before all others, gave it a still more privileged status in the tradition. He spent decades preparing an extended interlinear commentary on it. Sustained by a newer, more elaborate language of metaphysics, Zhu's commentary on the *Analects* marked a significant shift in the philosophical orientation of Confucianism?a shift that redefined the Confucian tradition for the next eight centuries, not only in China, but in Japan and Korea well.

Gardner's translations and analysis of Zhu Xi's commentary on the *Analects* show one of China's great thinkers in an interesting and complex act of philosophical negotiation. Through an interlinear, line-by-line "dialogue" with Confucius, Zhu effected a reconciliation of the teachings of the Master, commentary by later exegetes, and contemporary philosophical concerns of Song-dynasty scholars. By comparing Zhu's reading of the *Analects* with the earlier standard reading by He Yan (190–249), Gardner illuminates what is dramatically new in Zhu Xi's interpretation of the *Analects*.

A pioneering study of Zhu Xi's reading of the *Analects*, this book demonstrates how commentary is both informed by a text and informs future readings, and highlights the importance of interlinear commentary as a genre in Chinese philosophy.

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