

Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture

Published in partnership between FLTRP and Palgrave Macmillan, the Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture offer a unique insight into Chinese culture, defining and contextualizing some of China's most fundamental and at times complex philosophical concepts. In a concise and reader-friendly manner, these short works define a variety of quintessentially Chinese terms such as harmony (hé/和) or association (xīng/兴)—and examine how they first appeared and developed in Chinese culture, the impact they had on Chinese thought and why they continue to have significant meaning in China today. At a time when the understanding of different histories, languages and cultures globally is at a premium, this series provides a valuable roadmap to the concepts which underpin 21st century Chinese society.

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Weigui Fang

Modern Notions of Civilization and Culture in China

Translated by Weidong Wang



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE FOR "KEY CONCEPTS
IN CHINESE THOUGHT AND CULTURE SERIES"
(ENGLISH EDITION)

In the course of human history, Chinese civilization has always been known for its long history and remarkable breadth and depth. In a unique geographical environment and thanks to a fascinating historical development, the Chinese nation has nurtured academic traditions, humanistic spirits, values, a way of thinking, ethics and customs unfound elsewhere in the world. All of this was expounded and sublimated by Confucius, Mozi, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mencius, Xunzi and other ancient sages and philosophers, and encapsulated into thousands of highly concise and profound key concepts underpinning the brilliant and rich Chinese culture. Reflective of the supreme wisdom and rational thinking of the Chinese nation, the concepts have come to be known as "key concepts in Chinese thought and culture." They are the brainchild fostered by the Chinese nation engaged for thousands of years in independently exploring and rationally thinking about the universe, the world, social norms and ethics, ways of thinking and values. They represent the unique and most significant hallmark of Chinese thought and civilization produced by the Chinese nation. They are the greatest intellectual legacy left by ancient Chinese philosophers to the contemporary Chinese and the most valuable intellectual wealth contributed by the Chinese nation to world civilization.

The past four decades of reform and opening up have witnessed continued growth of the Chinese economy and its comprehensive strength. As an active participant and contributor to globalization, China has been increasingly admired in the international community for its national

conditions, history, thoughts and culture. On the other hand, its basic research has fallen behind with the development of the times. So far there exists no comprehensive and systematic collation and interpretation of the concepts that reflect its thought and culture, for introduction to overseas readers. There is no unified comprehension and interpretation of many terms, especially those reflective of the unique Chinese philosophy, humanism, values, and ways of thinking. It is even more regrettable that the lack of unified norms for the translation of such terms into foreign languages has frequently led to deviations from their actual meaning, and consequently confusion and even misunderstanding on the part of overseas readers may result. To ameliorate the above circumstances, we officially launched in 2014 the "Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture Project." Drawing on the excellent history of traditional Chinese thought and culture, the Project has focused on key concepts encapsulating Chinese philosophy, humanistic spirits, values, ways of thinking, and cultural characteristics, especially those with implications for the development of contemporary world civilization and in line with the common values of the human race. Those concepts were then interpreted in objective and concise Chinese and translated into English and other languages, for overseas readers to better understand the connotations and essence of Chinese thought and culture, and consequently to promote equal dialogue and exchanges between Chinese civilization and other civilizations of the world, so as to jointly build a community and shared future of mankind. So far, over 600 terms have been collated, interpreted and translated by Project experts and published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) in six volumes in Chinese and English under the serial title of "Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture." However, due to style and volume restrictions, the historical context, semantic context, origin and evolution, academic influence and the underlying humanistic spirit, values, and modern implications haven't been fully elaborated for some of them. To give overseas audiences a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of them, FLTRP and Springer Nature have jointly planned the new "Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture Series" (English Edition).

Each volume of this series will be centered on one concept only or a couple of closely related concepts. The authors are required to examine in detail the historical context, semantic context, origin and evolution, and academic influence, based on the research findings on ancient

Chinese literature. They are expected to unfold their elaboration around important figures in the development of Chinese thought and culture, as well as their works, theories and academic viewpoints. The series thus features comprehensive and original academic contributions offering relevant theoretical approaches and insights based on independent research by the respective authors. Integrating professional studies with popular interest, it emphasizes integration of corroboration and exposition and equal emphasis on Oriental and Occidental scholarship. All authors selected are young and middle-aged scholars accomplished in the study of Chinese thought and culture. It is believed that the publication of this series will make it possible for overseas readers to have a more systematic understanding of the philosophy, humanistic values, academic perspectives and theoretical viewpoints underlying the key concepts of Chinese thought and culture, and a clearer understanding of the ways of thinking, the values and cultural characteristics of the intellectual world of the Chinese nation and overseas Chinese.

We are grateful to Harmen van Paradijs, Vice President of Springer Nature Group, and Myriam Poort, Editorial Director, Humanities and Social Sciences, Springer Nature for their generous support in planning and publishing this series. Our gratitude also goes to Sara Crowley-Vigneau, Senior Editor (Palgrave Macmillan), Springer Nature, for her insightful suggestions from the perspective of academic English publishing.

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PRAISE FOR *MODERN NOTIONS OF CIVILIZATION*
AND CULTURE IN CHINA

“Professor Weigui Fang became one of the first scholars in China to focus on the history of concepts when his research essay on changing notions of civilization and culture in modern China was published in 1999. During the entire process of modernization that set in after the mid-19th century, in the wake of the Opium War, the demand for reform and change was the consensus of almost all intellectually awake Chinese. At the time, it was mainly due to externally enforced contact between China and the Western world that an unprecedented change occurred that effected a profound shift in cultural values, especially concerning the idea of *wenming*. This ancient Chinese concept thus acquired a new trope and perspective. *Modern Notions of Civilization and Culture in China* discusses in simple terms the paradigm shift and conceptual changes surrounding the *wenming* concept in the intellectual history of modern China.”

—Fansen Wang, *Professor and Vice President, Academia Sinica, Taipei, China*

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