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Confucianism Is Food for Thought in Building a More Beautiful World

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On September 26, 2020, major media in Japan published an amazing piece of news at the same time. A copy of *Annotations on The Analects*, handwritten sometime during the sixth–seventh centuries reemerged in Japan. It consists of 20 pages glued together, the pages being 27.3 cm in length. The book was first purchased by the Keio University library from an old bookstore. The research group organized by the university and some other institutions believed that it was probably written at some point from the end of the Southern and Northern Dynasties to Sui Dynasty. Through comparison with relics unearthed earlier, the newly-emerged copy is believed to be the most ancient.

The Analects was introduced to Japan in about the third–fifth centuries and has since left a huge impact there. In Japan’s first written statute, the *Seventeen Article Constitution*, the very first article began with “harmony being most precious” to elaborate the content. This was a typical example demonstrating that Japan recognized the spirit of Confucianism in its governance. Up to the present day, textbooks for compulsory education in Japan still take Confucian classics as sources of knowledge and cultivation.

Confucianism has always functioned as a channel for heart-to-heart communication between Japan and China, as shown in the case of the *Annotations on The Analects*, which got lost during the reign of Emperor Wu (武帝 464–549) of the Liang Dynasty in the twelfth century and was transmitted from Japan back to China during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (乾隆 1711–1799) of the Qing Dynasty.

In 1998, the InterAction Council of Former Heads of State and Government, co-founded by my father Takeo Fukuda, former prime minister of Japan, and former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, proposed the *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities* to the United Nations, which passed it. The declaration defined “do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you” as a “golden rule.” This was not only because the key idea originated from *The Analects*, but also because it was bred and rooted in other cultures as well. That’s why it is recognized worldwide and strikes a common chord.

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In his keynote speech at the International Symposium to Commemorate the 2565th Anniversary of the Birth of Confucius, on September 24, 2014, Chinese president Xi Jinping pointed out that promotion of communication, integration, and mutual learning between human civilizations is the only way for the world to become more beautiful and people of all countries to live a better life.

It is my sincere hope that the world will become more beautiful and life will become better with Confucianism as food for thought.

It is my earnest expectation that *International Confucian Studies* will serve as an index of happiness, presenting a human world full of smiles.