

Wang Bo's (650–76) Commentarial and Compilation Work on the Confucian Canon

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Wang Bo 王勃 excelled in literary writing, but he is seldom studied as a Confucian scholar. The present paper is an attempt to examine his role as a commentator and compiler of Confucian canonical texts, which contributed to the establishment of a “Wang family school of Confucianism” in early Tang times.

Descended from the eminent Confucian scholar Wang Tong 通 (584–618), Bo assigned himself a mission to compile his grandfather's posthumous works and provide commentaries on them. This mission led him to devote himself to the study of the Confucian canon. The present study aims to outline a picture of Wang Bo's commentarial and compilation work on Wang Tong's pieces, as well as his own digest of the Confucian canon. This picture forms a strong basis for a discussion of the image of Confucius in Wang Bo's literary writing. The prevalence of Confucian scholarship in the Zhenguan reign-period (627–49) must have prompted Bo to do this, but it was certainly a direct influence from Wang Tong's bequeathed works and fine legacy that triggered Bo's aspiration.