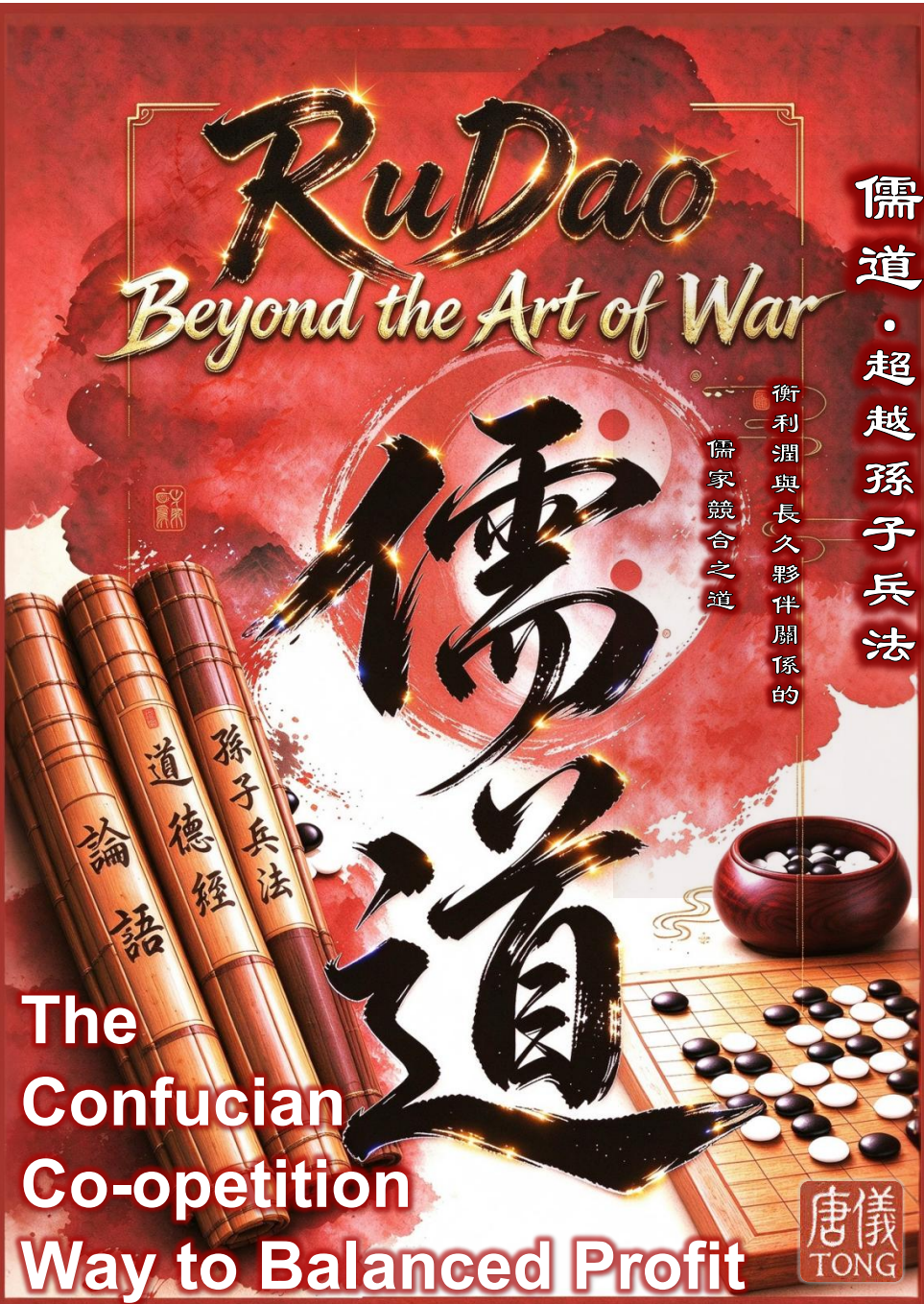


Author : TonyTong.cc www.RuDao.org

RuDao

儒道

RuDao - Beyond The Art of War

The Confucian Co-opetition Way to Balanced Profit and Enduring Partnerships

Tony Tong
(唐儀 v1.3)

RuDao.org - 2026 - TonyTong.cc

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Chapter 0
Preface
前文

"Without Trust, a Man Cannot Stand" - Confucius 孔子 人无信不立

Happy Thanksgiving!

As RuDao approaches its November 24 launch, I am deeply appreciative of the family, mentors, partners, and friends who have guided me over three decades of entrepreneurship, technology, and investing.

This Thanksgiving, I invite you to join me on the journey.

RuDao: Beyond the Art of War -- The Confucian Co-opetition Way to Balanced Profit and Enduring Partnerships

The future belongs not to those who merely build powerful technologies, but to those who cultivate trust, uphold virtue, and build lasting partnerships worthy of future generations.

This is the Way of RuDao. Order your copy today and join me on the journey!

-- TonyTong.cc (唐儀) Co-Founder, RuDao.org

As algorithms, blockchain, and artificial intelligence rewrite the underlying logic of global commerce, code can prove that data is authentic - but it cannot generate trust; smart contracts can execute rules - but they cannot guarantee the right rules, still less turn competitors into partners.

The first limit speaks to trust (xin 信). In an era where AI agents, smart contracts, and borderless digital nomads work together without ever meeting face to face, the trust Confucius insisted upon twenty-five centuries ago has become the scarcest foundational asset of the digital economy. The second speaks to harmony (he 和): the art of "the noble person seeks harmony, not conformity" is exactly

the wisdom that turns competition into symbiosis and rivals into allies.

Only by standing on trust and living in harmony can digital commerce move from zero-sum games to enduring alliances. That is the core proposition of this book, RuDao - Beyond the Art of War: using an ancient merchant's way to answer a digital future.

In 1986, I graduated from King's College (Kings.edu.hk), Hong Kong - the same school that produced Professor DC Lau (Professor Din Cheuk Lau 劉殿爵教授), the authoritative English translator of The Analects 論語, DaoDeJing 道德經 and Mencius 孟子 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. As a junior alumnus of King's College, I was exposed to Confucian and Taoist culture from an early age through my teachers. From 2024-2026, I studied under Professor Xiao XianHua (肖先华) and Mr. Zhang HaiBiao (张海标校长) in the HuaXue EnXue (HX357 Class 华学恩学) Chinese Studies, and received guidance from Taoist Master Ji Gong (季工 道长) of the Hong Kong Taoism Institute. I was inspired by Professor Tang Enjia (湯恩佳博士), President of the Hong Kong Confucian Academy (ConfucianAcademy.com).

My career has spanned Web1.0 to Web4: in 2000 I co-founded Pacificnet, a Nasdaq-listed company, and I hold a US Internet workflow patent. Today I teach AI, blockchain and Web3 at several universities, and have spoken at Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan, UBS and other global financial summits.

This dual experience - bridging traditional Confucianism, frontier technology and global finance - convinced me that Confucian thought is not a museum piece. It can provide a critical governance logic for the intelligent digital age.

The Art of War has long been treated as the bible of business strategy, teaching people how to defeat opponents. But zero-sum thinking, aimed at beating competitors, often destroys the foundations of cooperation, erodes trust, and makes long-term partnerships unsustainable.

This book steps beyond pure adversarial strategy and articulates the Confucian path of co-opetition (竞合) - the insight that one need not choose between profit and integrity. One can compete fiercely and still build a durable network of partners. Inner virtue alone is not enough to survive in a brutal global market; pure stratagem without ethical roots will eventually collapse. Ru-Shang (儒商) and Ru-Jiang (儒将) must work as one.

Chapter 0.1
Opening Story:
My Intellectual Journey to RuDao

序章:我的儒道思想之旅

When I first began my career in 1991 as a young mechanical and industrial engineer at Seagate Technology's Minneapolis office - building computer hard drives - and later at Andersen Consulting (now Accenture) engineering internet workflow automation for US Bank and Target's Minneapolis headquarters, I did not intend to write a treatise on classical philosophy. Even as I transitioned into technology entrepreneurship and launched PacificNet in 1999, most of my early professional life was spent far from ancient texts. I was focused on building software architectures, founding technology ventures, filing patents, allocating venture capital, and participating directly in the most transformative digital waves of our era. Like many engineers of my generation, I was fueled by a singular conviction: that technology innovation alone could change the world. In many ways, it did. Over the past three decades, I watched the Internet connect billions of people, followed by the rapid rise of mobile infrastructure, cloud computing, blockchain, and AI - technologies that transformed global industries and accelerated human productivity beyond anything previous generations could have envisioned.

Yet as our technological capabilities expanded exponentially, I observed an unsettling divergence. We were becoming increasingly connected, but not necessarily more trusting; our enterprises were scaling globally, yet business relationships were becoming shorter and more transactional. Information became abundant, while long-term civilizational wisdom seemed increasingly scarce. While our technical tools improved dramatically, human governance and institutional behavior failed to keep pace.

Over time, my core questions shifted. Early in my career, I asked: How do you build a successful venture? Later, as a founder and investor, I asked: How do you scale innovation? Ultimately, navigating decades of economic cycles forced me to ask a far deeper question: What allows leaders, organizations, and civilizations to truly endure? That inquiry led me directly to the strategic framework of RuDao (儒道).

My career provided a front-row seat to extraordinary success stories as well as entirely preventable corporate collapses across Asia, North America, and Europe. Again and again, I observed the same pattern: organizations rarely failed due to a lack of technology or capital; they failed because they suffered a breakdown in trust. Some possessed brilliant software products but toxic cultures; others commanded vast financial resources but lacked ethical leadership; many won fierce short-term market battles only to lose the enduring confidence of their partners, employees, and regulators. Technology creates initial opportunity, intelligence yields temporary advantage, and capital accelerates momentum - but none of them can replace structural trust. Trust is not a soft virtue; it is a high-performance economic asset and the ultimate strategic differentiator between transient ventures and generational institutions.

This realization deepened through my involvement in Web3 and distributed ledger technology. While many viewed blockchain strictly through the lens of financial speculation or database architecture, I saw an attempt to address humanity's oldest problem: How do strangers establish verifiable trust without central intermediaries? Yet the deeper I probed into cryptographic protocols and smart contracts, the more I found myself returning to the ancient Confucian concept of Xin (信) - trustworthiness. Thousands of years before distributed ledgers, Confucius identified trust as the non-negotiable foundation of social order. Blockchains can scale transactional verification, but they cannot manufacture human integrity. Only people can do that.

Then came Artificial Intelligence. If the Internet networked information and blockchain decentralized value, AI arrived to

transform cognitive intelligence itself. For the first time in human history, we created non-human systems capable of generating knowledge, writing code, executing multi-step reasoning, and performing tasks that once belonged exclusively to human cognition. Like my peers across the technology sector, I was fascinated, but I was also deeply concerned. AI forces us to confront a fundamental civilizational question: As machines grow infinitely more intelligent, what becomes the true responsibility of human leadership?

Artificial Intelligence can optimize complex outcomes, but it cannot decide which outcomes are worth pursuing; it can amplify operational capability, but it cannot provide moral purpose. The paramount challenge facing modern governance is no longer technological, but ethical and philosophical.

Around this time, I began re-examining the classical thinkers I had first encountered years earlier: Confucius, Mencius, LaoZi, Wang Yangming, and SunTzu. Expecting historical curiosity, I discovered urgent contemporary relevance. The dilemmas they confronted thousands of years ago remain strikingly familiar to the modern C-suite: How should leaders exercise power without eroding legitimacy? How should competition be conducted when short-term victory threatens systemic stability? What is the true relationship between moral integrity and sustainable profit? How does cooperation endure amid conflict and uncertainty? The technological tools had changed; human nature had not.

One fundamental insight reshaped my strategic worldview above all others. Modern business education has long been dominated by hyper-competitive frameworks - focusing almost exclusively on competitive positioning, zero-sum market capture, and defensive moats. While competition undoubtedly drives efficiency, the most resilient enterprises I encountered were never built on zero-sum conflict alone. They relied on trusted strategic alliances, long-term relational reciprocity, and shared value creation. The most enduring executives understand not only how to compete, but how to execute co-opetition and building high-trust partnerships.

I began defining this executive equilibrium as RuDao: competition anchored in trust, strategy guided by ethics, and commercial success bound to responsibility.

RuDao was not developed in an ivory tower. It emerged from thirty years of practical experience across global entrepreneurship, software development, venture investment, cross-border corporate governance, and complex dispute resolution. It represents a practical bridge between two worlds: one looking forward to AI, Web3, capital markets, and technological breakthroughs; the other looking back to character, relational ethics, and civilizational wisdom.

Most leaders are told they must choose between economic realism and moral principle. I believe the future of global enterprise demands both. If the Internet Age asked how to connect information, and the AI Age asks how to scale intelligence, then RuDao asks the defining question of our time: How do we ensure that human wisdom grows alongside technological power?

That question is the reason this book exists, and it marks the beginning of our journey together into RuDao as our way to connect wisdom.

This book is not about returning to the past. It is about bringing timeless principles into an uncertain future. The future belongs not only to those who build powerful technologies, but to those who can build trustworthy civilizations. That is the journey of RuDao.

- TonyTong.cc 唐儀 Co-Founder of RuDao.org

Chapter 0.2
Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, teachers, mentors, partners, and all those who shaped my journey.

To the generations before us who preserved wisdom, and to the generations after us who will carry it forward.

To:

My teachers and classmates of King's College, Hong Kong,

My classmates and host families at Mayer Lutheran High School, Minnesota, USA,

University of Minnesota, USA,

Professor Wei-Tek Tsai of the Department of Computer Science, University of Minnesota,

My teachers from HuaXue-EnXue,

My colleagues at Andersen Consulting (now Accenture),

My partners & colleagues at the Hong Kong Blockchain Association HKBA.net,

My earliest angel investors: Steve Lau (Lau Siu Ying) of Eagles Fund and Fortune Telecom, Mr. Oei Hong Leong, Mr. Eka Tjipta Widjaja, and the Sinar Mas family of Indonesia.

I dedicate this book to my parents, my father, Tong Cho Sam, engineer, entrepreneur, and founder of the Tong Family Foundation, and my mother, Cindy Yip, engineer and graduate of Guangxi University. They gave me life, shaped my character, and taught me that trust must be earned, character must be cultivated, and success without virtue is incomplete. This book is a reflection of those lessons.

My father graduated in 1965 from Shanghai Mechanical Institute, now renamed the University of Shanghai for Science and

Technology (USST), as a qualified Electric-Mechanical Engineer. During his university years, he was an avid sportsman: a member of the basketball team, and a champion swimmer representing the university swimming team.

My father grew up and forged his path from HaiWuTian in Xing'an, Guilin, Guangxi. His life journey from HaiWuTian is documented in the biography "Songs Flying out of HaiWuTian". He is an Honorary Citizen of Guilin, whose mountains and waters are praised as "most beautiful under heaven". Early in his career, he was a highly accomplished engineer working at Zhuzhou Instrument Factory in Hunan, making vital contributions to China's aerospace industry. As a distinguished EE/ME engineer, inventor and electronics entrepreneur, he took part in China's reform-and-opening-up entrepreneurial wave. He founded multiple electronics enterprises and factories across Hunan, Guangxi and Guangdong, specializing in television and related electronics industries, employing thousands of people and making substantial contributions to the society. He is also an accomplished painter skilled in drawing and Chinese calligraphy painting, as well as an accomplished Chinese dizi flute performer. He has performed dizi solos and collaborated with local orchestras on major stages at numerous middle schools and universities across Guilin.

I am forever grateful for my parents' decades of guidance by words and deeds. My father personally taught me the four arts of the Chinese scholar: Music 琴 Qin, Chess 棋 Qi, Calligraphy 书 Shu, Painting 画 Hua. He constantly encouraged me to endure hardship, holding firmly to the ancient maxim: "Only those who bear the hardest hardship may rise to greatness." He guided me toward balanced development of morality, intellect and physical fitness. Thanks to my parents' care, from childhood I received well-rounded training in academics, art, calligraphy, music, games of Chinese Chess and Go WeiQi, and sports including swimming, basketball, ice hockey and skiing. This balanced education nurtured my moral, intellectual and physical growth through the four arts and beyond.

1981-1986: School Days at King's College, Hong Kong: The Seed Is Planted

To the teachers of King's College, who inspired a lifelong search for knowledge, wisdom, and character. Many of the ideas explored in RuDao can trace their roots back to the lessons first learned in their classrooms. With special appreciation to the teachers of King's College (Kings.edu.hk), whose guidance helped shape both my intellectual journey and personal character, especially:

- Mr. Poon Wai-Tong, Principal of King's College 1986-1998;
- Mr. Leung Chik-Wing, Principal of King's College 1992-1996, Author of "Official King's College 160th Anniversary Commemorative Document and Photo Collection"
- Professor DC Lau (1921-2010), senior alumnus of King's College, authoritative English translator of "The Analects", "DaoDeJing" and "Mencius" at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

To King's College, my alma mater, where I first learned that education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but the beginning of a lifelong search for wisdom. Its Chinese school motto is 慎思篤行, rendered in English as "Meticulous Thoughts, Diligent Action." This motto is more than a guiding phrase - it is a way of life. (School website: Kings.edu.hk)

King's College, Hong Kong, is the alma mater of Professor Lau Din-cheuk, the authoritative English translator of the Analects.

As a junior alumnus of Professor DC Lau (Lau Din-cheuk 劉殿爵), one of the most respected English translators of Chinese classical philosophy, I was exposed to Confucian thought from a young age. Professor Lau devoted much of his scholarly life to introducing the wisdom of Chinese civilization to the English-speaking world through his translations of the Analects (论语), Mencius (孟子), and the DaoDeJing (道德经).

Looking back, I did not fully appreciate the significance of that connection at the time. Yet decades later, after journeys through entrepreneurship, venture investing, the Internet, blockchain, and Artificial Intelligence, I found myself returning to many of the same questions that Confucius, Mencius, and LaoZi had explored centuries ago:

How should we lead? How should we compete? How should we build trust? How should we create prosperity without losing our values?

In many ways, Professor DC Lau translated the Chinese classics for the world. My own journey with RuDao is an attempt to translate their timeless wisdom into the language of modern entrepreneurship, leadership, technology, and digital civilization.

Dedication: To Michael Gaard

To Michael Gaard who was my boss before he became my partner.

At Andersen Consulting (Accenture), he taught me that a strategy without delivery is only a promise. At PacificNet, he helped carry a young company onto Nasdaq, and stayed through the listing. At Com2000, he helped me build an AI accelerator for the next generation of founders.

Three companies. Three decades. One constant: he showed up, he delivered, and he kept his word.

In a book about trust and co-opetition, Mike is not a case I cite. He is a man I learned from.

Michael Gaard -- former financial services partner at Andersen Consulting (Accenture) and PwC; General Manager of the Banking Group at Unisys (Nasdaq: UIS); enterprise software and data warehouse leadership at Information Advantage (Nasdaq: IACO); director through PacificNet's Nasdaq listing; chairman of Com2000

and Contata Solutions; co-founder of Com2000.org AIeee.net Accelerator.

To Master Teacher Xiao XianHua (肖先华) of HuaXue-EnXue (华学恩学), whose teachings helped reconnect me with the timeless wisdom of Confucian culture and inspired many of the ideas that eventually found their way into RuDao. Through his Huaxue lectures, I came to understand the path of self-cultivation through ritual, music and qin, which inspired the integrated Confucian-Daoist philosophy at the heart of this book.

I am grateful to Mr. Bill Zhang Haibiao (张海标校长 HuaXue-EnXue 华学恩学), whose guidance deepened my appreciation of Confucian culture and RuShang (儒商) philosophy, particularly the principles of righteousness and profit in harmony (义利统一) and the importance of building long-term, trust-based alliances. These ideas became important foundations of the RuDao framework.

Dedication: To Mayer Lutheran High School, University of Minnesota, USA

I dedicate this book, RuDao: Beyond The Art of War (RuDao.org), to my beloved United States alma mater, Mayer Lutheran High School (MayerLutheran.org). This dedication honors my senior year as an exchange student during the 1986-1987 academic year under the PEACE-USA Scholarship Program.

To my American host families, the Harts and the Roger Lindemeier family, whose generosity and hospitality taught me an early lesson that trust, friendship, and human kindness transcend culture, language, religions, and geography. I also extend my deepest gratitude to my host brothers and classmates Eric and Matthew Lindemeier, Julie and Jessica Hart, and my classmates Chris and Erin Bode of Mayer Lutheran High School.

That 1986-1987 school year marked my very first time going abroad, flying halfway around the globe to the United States. I left behind my childhood home across Guilin, China, and Hong Kong.

I still vividly remember my mother crying at the Hong Kong Airport departure hall, while my King's College classmates came to cheer and celebrate, as I was the first one in our class to study abroad.

Arriving in America, it was my first time experiencing a Western Christian culture. Living, studying, and playing alongside my American host families, I soon realized I was the only Chinese student in the school-and in the entire small town. The culture shock was profound as I traded Hong Kong's concrete forest of skyscrapers for the wide-open, corn-covered Great Plains of rural Midwest America.

Classwork quickly shaped my thinking. I took religious studies courses, attended daily chapel, and read classic Western literature. At the same time, athletics, fitness, and farm work built my character. As a member of the Mayer Lutheran Crusaders cross-country team, I trained intensely in the gym, wrestling, weight-lifting, basketball camp, and hockey, eventually earning awards in cross-country tournaments. Running across endless corn and alfalfa fields, I learned to bale hay, harvest alfalfa, and work on local dairy farms. This hands-on farm life strengthened my resilience.

We lived in Mayer and New Germany, Minnesota, a region populated mostly by hard-working, Protestant residents of German descent. My host families immersed me deeply in the rhythms of Midwestern farm life, assigning me plenty of chores like baling hay and mowing the lawns for our local church, Zion Lutheran, and its cemetery. Baling heavy square hay bales-averaging 40 to 75 pounds (18 to 34 kg)-in the brutal Minnesota summer was grueling, legendary work. Managing the church and cemetery grounds added another 10 acres of exhausting lawn to mow. Yet, pairing this tiring physical labor with caring for a community cornerstone captured the heart of the region's heritage and taught me the Christian way of hard work before pleasure. I still fondly remember resting after those long days, listening to Garrison Keillor's Minnesota Public Radio show, A Prairie Home Companion. I giggled at its famous sign-off about the fictional town of Lake Wobegon: "where the women are

strong, the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average."

Minnesota winters brought entirely new adventures with my host families and classmates. I play-wrestled with the Lindemeier brothers in the backyard snowdrifts and played hockey on our homemade backyard rink, which we built by flooding the lawn and stacking left-over hay bales for walls. We also ventured out across the state for classic winter traditions, cross-country skiing, ice-fishing, and playing pond hockey on the frozen surfaces of local spots like Lake Waconia, the city's scenic Lake of the Isles, and even taking trips up to the frozen shores of Lake Superior.

Through this lifestyle, I experienced the Lutheran philosophy of "hard work before pleasure"-a practical living out of Martin Luther's concept of "The Calling" (Beruf). In this community, secular farm work was a religious duty and a way to serve God. It perfectly mirrored the spirit of worldly asceticism, where economic diligence and self-discipline are signs of faith, and personal pleasure is set aside for a higher purpose. This faith-driven resilience is precisely what communities supporting Mayer Lutheran High School continue to build today.

My time at Mayer Lutheran laid the foundational groundwork for my later thesis study of Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. In my RuDao book, I merge this Western Protestant view with the Eastern Ru-Shang (Confucian-Merchant) principle of righteousness and profit coexisting, demonstrating how faith, ethics, and economic diligence unite across different cultures.

To this day, I hold warm memories of daily chapel, Sunday church services, and Bible study in English, Hebrew, and Latin. I recall reading great works like Beowulf, Shakespeare, Hemingway, S. E. Hinton's The Outsiders, and Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit. One of my brightest youthful memories remains touring with our school orchestra all the way from Minnesota down to Houston, Texas.

I am deeply grateful for Mayer Lutheran's academic guidance and spiritual mentorship. These gifts have stayed with me across decades, and I am proud to pay tribute to my alma mater, my host families, and my MLHS friends and classmates in this book.

1987-1991: University of Minnesota and the Dawn of Web 0.9

Following my time at Mayer Lutheran, I attended the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, where I pursued a Mechanical-Industrial Engineering major paired with dual minors in Computer Science and Business Management, graduating in 1991.

It was during this monumental transition at the turn of the decade that the architecture of the modern digital landscape first began to take shape.

My journey in Minnesota also paved the way for my brother, Victor Tong, who enrolled at the University of Minnesota in 1989. After graduation, Victor and I both entered the corporate ranks of Andersen Consulting, a premier global IT consulting heavyweight that later rebranded as Accenture. This was a highly prestigious launchpad for our careers, allowing us to combine our technical IT background with high-stakes enterprise systems for America's top Fortune 500 corporations. Operating under the direct supervision of Managing Director Michael Gaard, we spearheaded complex IT system integration and corporate consulting projects for powerhouse Midwestern clients, including US Bank (USBank.com), Northwest Airlines, Best Buy, and Target Corporation. This intensive corporate exposure served as our practical introduction to the engine of modern American commerce, providing the precise operational discipline that would later fuel our own international ventures.

1993-2000: From Minnesota Ice to the Nasdaq DotCom Boom

*Please refer to Chapter 6.5 - 30 Years at the Internet Frontier

1999-2000: The Pacificnet Ecommerce Nasdaq Listing

The years between 1999 and 2000 marked a historic transition for our entrepreneurial journey, as Pacificnet evolved from a Minneapolis startup into a premier cross-border e-commerce CRM portal bridging the United States and Hong Kong.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my cousin-in-law, Andrew "Andy" Mullin, and the wonderful Mullin family. Andy, who began serving as the Mayor of Wayzata, Minnesota in 2025, played a pivotal role in my early career. He welcomed me into his competitive young business hockey team, introducing me to the unique camaraderie of Minnesota's corporate ice leagues, and graciously brought me into his extensive family gatherings within prominent Minneapolis business circles. I am incredibly proud of Andy for becoming such a trusted business and political leader for the City of Wayzata.

It was through Andy's robust network that I met his close friend Ted Farrell at Haskells, a venerable Twin Cities institution. They became one of our very first internet web design clients when we helped design the Haskells.com e-commerce website-the first-of-its-kind wine e-commerce platform in town! As our relationship grew into deep mutual trust, the leadership at Haskell's transitioned from clients to believers, becoming one of the earliest angel investors in my first internet enterprise, Pacificnet.

Pacificnet started its roots in Minneapolis before strategically moving its core operations to Hong Kong to capture the booming international trade highway. That early foundation of trust, local networking, and collaborative capital eventually propelled Pacificnet

all the way to a successful public listing on the Nasdaq stock exchange in June 2000.

To Andy Mullin, the Mullin family, and the Farrell family, whose trust, friendship, and early support made possible some of the first steps of an entrepreneurial journey that continues to this day. Long before others could see what might be built, you offered your trust, your support, and your belief. Mr. Mullin gave us his invaluable contributions of time, effort, and early funding in our founding days in the dawn of Web 1.0. It remains a powerful, real-world lesson in how strong personal ethics, local networks, and mutual respect build truly sustainable global enterprises. Those early acts of confidence became part of the foundation upon which everything that followed was built.

Chapter 0.3
Purpose of This Book

RuDao (儒道) bridges ancient Eastern wisdom with the realities of the twenty-first-century digital economy. Its purpose is threefold:

1. Unify Moral Substance and Strategic Execution (体用贯通). To establish that ethical substance (Substance / Ti 体) and tactical strategy (Function / Yong 用) are not opposing choices, but two sides of the same discipline. Long-term commercial success requires combining Confucian moral grounding (Ru 儒) with Daoist strategic flexibility (Dao 道).

2. Shift from Zero-Sum to Positive-Sum Co-opetition (超越零和). To move beyond the purely destructive tactics of SunTzu's The Art of War (兵法) toward positive-sum ecosystem design - practising "Harmony Without Uniformity" (和而不同) to turn competitors into long-term strategic allies.

3. Bridge Classical Wisdom and Wall Street Execution (古今融合). To prove that ancient principles - such as FanLi's counter-cyclical logic (旱则资舟) and Confucius's view on propriety (富而好礼) - align directly with modern financial theory, Charlie Munger's inversion model (逆向思维), and Warren Buffett's value-investing principles (人弃我取).

Chapter 0.4
Who Should Read RuDao?

Executives, entrepreneurs, and institutional investors who refuse to choose between profit and principle

RuDao is written for executives, entrepreneurs, and institutional investors who demand a sustainable business philosophy capable of surviving market crises, economic cycles, and a lifetime of leadership. It is tailored for:

- Enterprise Leaders and Founders (企业领袖). Executives seeking an enduring business philosophy anchored in Confucian ethics (Ru 儒) and Daoist strategy (Dao 道) to navigate market panic, economic cycles, and multi-decade enterprise building.
- Cross-Border Tech and Finance Innovators (跨境精英). Founders and decision-makers in AI, fintech, and digital trade navigating global expansion and solving the institutional trust deficit (Shang Zhe Xin Dao 商者信道) in the digital economy.
- Strategists Beyond SunTzu (超越兵法者). Readers who have studied SunTzu's The Art of War (兵法) and recognised its ultimate limitation: zero-sum military tactics win temporary battles, but positive-sum co-opetition build enduring corporate ecosystems.
- Practitioners of Ethical Capital (义利兼顾者). Leaders who hold the conviction that character (De 德) and strategic execution (Shi 势) are not trade-offs, but two inseparable halves of the same discipline - where capital alignment and moral integrity

Chapter Review

Trust is not a soft value; it is the cart's load-bearing pin of every economy ever built.

A cart cannot move if its pin is missing. Every story in this book - from the Shang boatmen to the AI age - is a variation on that small bronze pin. Remove trust, and no wealth, no law, no technology can

make the cart roll. Restore it, and the cart moves almost by itself. The Chinese spent three thousand years forging that pin; this book is its blueprint.

Bridge to next chapter

So let us begin where the pin was first cast - on a river in 1600 BC, in a dynasty whose very name became the word for business. (Chapter 1)

Chapter 1.0
The Roots - Natural Pursuit of Profit from 1600 BC

1.1 Shang 1600BCE Business Begins / 商朝 1600BCE - 商业起源

天下熙熙 皆为利来 天下攘攘 皆为利往

"All under heaven bustles and hustles, coming and going - all for profit." - SimaQian 司马迁, Records of the Grand Historian - ShiJi 史记-货殖列传 - Biographies of the Money-makers

Before dawn on the Yellow River, a bronze caster of AnYang counted his cowrie shells for the last time, loaded them onto a flat-bottomed boat, and pushed into the fog. He was not a soldier or a priest; he was something the world had barely named - a ShangRen, a man of Shang, a merchant. If the river took his cargo, his family would starve. If it carried him to the next market, his name would outlive his dynasty. Three thousand years later, we still call his trade by his dynasty's name: ShangYe, business.

More than three millennia ago, before the Great Wall rose or Confucius was born, the first Chinese merchants had already taken to the roads and rivers of the Yellow River valley, carrying goods, coin, and ideas that would quietly help shape a civilization. Commerce was never merely a footnote to Chinese history - it helped write it.

China possesses one of the world's oldest and most enduring commercial traditions. Its origins reach back more than three millennia to the Shang 商 Dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BCE) - the earliest Chinese dynasty to have left behind written records. Significantly, the very character Shang 商 - which in modern Chinese denotes business, commerce, and merchants - is inseparable from this dynasty's legacy. According to a long-held tradition, the ancestors of

the Shang people were celebrated for their skill in trade and commerce, a reputation so pronounced that the dynasty bore their name, and the term ShangRen 商人 ("merchant") passed into the language to describe those who conduct trade.

About a thousand years after the Shang Dynasty, around 94 BCE, SimaQian's (司马迁) Records of the Grand Historian (ShiJi 史记) - the first work to chronicle Chinese history systematically - devoted a chapter, "Biographies of the Money-Makers (史记-货殖列传)," to the pursuit of wealth and the managerial craft of history's most accomplished merchants.

Alongside this commercial heritage stand the two philosophical traditions that most profoundly shaped Chinese culture - Confucianism 儒 and Daoism 道 - which have consistently exalted fundamental human principles and a philosophy of principled living. Chapter Two of this book, "The Eight Virtues" (BaDe 八德), examines the essential ethical values familiar to every Chinese person. Within traditional Chinese values, an entrepreneur who earns both respect and success while conducting business with integrity is honored as a "Confucian Entrepreneur" (RuShang 儒商). Such a person is not merely one who excels at generating profit, but an individual who firmly upholds the core values of the Confucian tradition in every aspect of enterprise.

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Chapter Review

Profit is older than any philosophy; the question was never whether men seek it, but what keeps the seeking human.

The merchant on the Yellow River did not need a textbook to know that all under heaven bustles for profit - SimaQian only wrote down what the river already knew. What the Shang traders, FanLi, Zi Gong and BaiGui discovered is the harder half of the sentence: profit flows longest through the channels of character.'When others discard, I gather; when others grasp, I give' is not altruism - it is the oldest investment strategy on record, and it is still compounding.

Bridge to next chapter

But a river needs banks. Who first gave profit its banks - a code, a creed, a conscience? For that, we must meet a failed civil servant on an ox-cart. (Chapter 2)