Not to value and employ men of superior ability is the way to keep the people from rivalry among themselves; not to prize articles which are difficult to procure is the way to keep them from becoming thieves; not to show them what is likely to excite their desires is the way to keep their minds from disorder.

Therefore the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones. He constantly tries to keep them without knowledge and without desire, and where there are those who have knowledge, to keep them from presuming to act on it. When there is this abstinence from action, good order is universal.

2. Confucius (551-479 B.C.E)
Visual Sources: ancestor portraits, funeral objects, images of ancestor altars
Vocabulary: Kongfuzi, filial piety, propriety

Zhou Viewed from Above and Below

6. THE CLASSIC OF ODES

The Shih Jing, or The Classic of Odes, is another of the five Confucian Classics that served as the basic texts of an educational system that molded China’s leaders for more than two thousand years. The work consists of 305 poetic songs, covering a variety of topics from love to war; their dates of composition largely fall into the period of about 900 to 600 B.C.E. The book ultimately became Confucian by virtue of the fact that Confucius and his many generations of disciples used the songs as texts for moral instruction. No good reason exists to believe that Confucius actually had a hand in crafting any of the poems or even in assembling the collection.

The following three ballads show us the Western Zhou regime as viewed both by those who were part of it and those who served it. The first poem celebrates the virtues of Zheng Shan Fu, ninth-century chief minister to King Xuan. A careful reading of the song reveals not only the Zhou Dynasty’s vision of itself but also its philosophy of what constituted good government and personal virtue. Although the great lords of Western Zhou believed their rule was virtuous and their wars glorious, that was not necessarily the view from other quarters. Our second song is the commentary of a person from the East on the ways of these western lords. The third poem could be the lament of any rank-and-file soldier in virtually any army at any time in recorded history.
QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. The first four lines of the first poem neatly sum up the classical Chinese self-image. What was it?
2. According to this poem, what is good government, and how does one achieve it?
3. What is the meaning of the proverb, "Inward power is light as a feather; yet too heavy for common people to raise"? What does it tell us about China's political-social philosophy?
4. Compare the philosophy that undergirds the first poem with our selection from The Classic of History (source 5). What conclusions do you reach?
5. In the second poem the author compares the lords of Western Zhou to certain heavenly constellations. What message does the poet intend to convey through this image?
6. What dichotomy has this poet drawn between the people of Zhou and the people of the East whom they have conquered?
7. According to the third poet, what aspects of life has soldiering disrupted?
8. Compose a reply by the author of the first poem to the second and third poems. A prose answer is sufficient.

1. THE IDEAL MINISTER

The people of our race were created by Heaven
Having from the beginning distinctions\(^1\) and rules.
Our people cling to customs,
And what they admire is seemly behavior.
Heaven, looking upon the land of Zhou,

Sent a radiance to earth beneath.
To guard this Son of Heaven\(^2\)
It created Zhung Shan Fu.

In his nature Zhung Shan Fu
Is a pattern of mildness and blessedness.
Good is his every attitude and air,
So cautious, so composed!

\(^1\) Distinctions between persons with regard to their status and relationship with one another. For example, the distinc-

\(^2\) The king.
Following none but ancient teachings,
Striving only for dignity and good
deporment,
Obedient to the Son of Heaven,
Whose glorious commands he spreads abroad.

The kind commanded Zhung Shan Fu:
"Be a pattern to all the officers of Court,"
"Continue the work of your ancestors,
Protect the royal person,
Go out and in with the royal commands,
Be the king's throat and tongue,
Spread his edicts abroad
That through all the land men may be stirred."

With due awe of the king's command
Did Zhung Shan Fu effect it.
If in the land anything was darkened
Zhung Shan Fu shed light upon it.
Very clear-sighted was he and wise.
He assured his own safety,
But day and night never slackened
In the service of the One Man.

There is a saying among men:
"If soft, chew it;
If hard, spit it out."
But Zhung Shan Fu
Neither chews the soft,
Nor spits out the hard;
He neither oppresses the solitary\(^3\) and the
widow,
Nor fears the truculent and strong.

There is a saying among men:
"Inward power is light as a feather;
Yet too heavy for common people to raise."
Thinking it over,
I find none but Zhung Shan Fu that could
raise it;
For alas! none helped him.

When the robe of state was in holes
It was he alone who mended it.

2. THE MEN OF ZHOU

Messy is the stew in the pot;
Bent is the thornwood spoon.
But the ways of Zhou are smooth as a grind-
stone,
Their straightness is like an arrow;
Ways that are for gentlemen to walk
And for commoners to behold.
Pull of longing I look for them;
In a flood my tears flow.

In the Lesser East and the Greater East\(^6\)
Shuttle and spool are idle.
"Fibre-shoes tightly woven
Are good for walking upon the dew."\(^7\)
Foppishly mincing the young lords
Walk there upon the road.
They go away, they come back again;
It makes me ill to look at them!

That spraying fountain so cold
Does not soak firewood that is gathered and
bundled.
Heigh-ho! I lie awake and sigh.
Woe is me that am all alone!
Firewood that is gathered firewood
May still be put away.
Woe is me that am all alone\(^8\)
I too could do with rest.

The men of the East, their sons
Get all the work and none of the pay.
The men of the West, their sons,
Oh, so smart are their clothes!
The men of Zhou, their sons
Wear furs of bear skin, black and brown.
The sons of their vassals\(^9\)
For every appointment are chosen.

\(^1\)By pleasing his ancestors, he escaped the wrath of
their spirits.
\(^2\)The king.
\(^3\)The person without family.
\(^4\)West of the coastal province of Shandong and cen-
tral Shandong, respectively.
\(^6\)That is, the shoes of a dandy.
\(^8\)Without family.
\(^9\)The lords who are the political and military subordinates
of Zhou.
Confucianism: The Way of the Superior Man

24 v Confucius, THE ANALECTS

The Chinese refer to the period of Eastern Zhou as the Age of a Hundred Schools. Of the many schools of thought that flourished then, none has had a more substantial impact on Chinese culture than Confucianism, a philosophy of life ascribed to a teacher whom history identifies as Confucius.

Tradition records that this sage was born in 551 B.C.E. into the impoverished, lower-aristocratic family of Kong. He became a high-ranking civil servant in his native state of Lu but was forced into exile as a result of political intrigue. There followed ten years of wandering from state to state as he attempted without success to convince the princes of the states he visited to employ his theory of how to achieve a harmonious and just society. Disappointed at his inability to win over the lords of his day, Master Kong turned to teaching, seeking out students who showed promise of rising to eminent posts in the various states of China. In this way he hoped his philosophy of life and government — his moral Way — would transform Chinese society to the point that it returned to the values and practices of the age of the duke of Zhou, a twelfth-century B.C.E. legislator and consolidator of the Zhou Dynasty, whom Kong deeply admired. For his educational efforts, posterity accorded him the elegant title Kongfuzi (Very Reverend Master Kong), which Western scholars have Latinized into Confucius. Tradition further records that he died in 479 B.C.E.

Recently some historians have challenged this story. Several claim that the historical Confucius was not a scholar but a conservative warrior-noble who held very few of the values that tradition later ascribed to him. Several others even question the historicity of Confucius, concluding that the man was a fictional construct of a much later age. Notwithstanding these challenges, most historians still accept the overall outlines of the traditional story, even though they generally agree that later generations ascribed to Confucius some ideas and emphases that were never his. One such notion seems to have been filial piety (respect for one's parents and ancestors), which apparently played only a small role in Confucius' teachings but centuries later became the bedrock of Confucian ideology under the guidance of later Confucian philosophers.

Whatever else one infers about the historical Confucius, it is clear that he was someone who revered the old ways and followed them zealously. But the Master
Kong of tradition and probably of history went well beyond simple admiration and emulation. He took traditional Chinese values, such as propriety (regard for proper decorum), and turned them into moral principles. His genius was that he insisted human beings are moral creatures with social obligations and are, by that fact, obliged to comport themselves humanely and with integrity. He also taught that humans, or at least males, are capable of perfecting themselves as upright individuals. His ideal moral agent, so far as we can infer from the evidence, was the superior man who cultivated virtue through study and imitation of the moral Way of the past. This person by knowing the good would choose the good. What is more, he would act as an example to others, who would irresistibly follow the path he set along the Way of Goodness.

Confucius' pupils were few; we know the names of only about twenty. Although Master Kong appears to have been a widely respected sage, he was only one of many itinerant teachers of his age and probably not the most popular. There is reason to conclude he died believing himself a failure, but in time Confucianism became virtually synonymous with Chinese culture and played an almost equally important role in shaping Korean and Japanese thought.

As is true of so many great teachers whose words and example have placed a permanent stamp on a civilization, Confucius was not a productive writer. As far as we know, nothing he wrote or edited survives. Early Confucian disciples, however, managed to transmit to posterity a number of sayings ascribed to Master Kong and his immediate pupils. In time these were gathered into a book known as The Analects. We do not know which of these maxims Confucius actually uttered, but collectively they provide us with the best available view of Kongfuzi's teachings as remembered by those who knew and followed him.

As you study the following selections, which we have arranged by general topic for your study, note the role that propriety plays in Confucius' system. For him propriety meant much more than good manners or proper etiquette. It was the primary interior quality that set the superior man apart from all other humans.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does propriety serve as the keystone of Confucius' philosophical system?
2. What is Confucius' concept of the ideal state?
3. Who is the superior man? Is he born or made? If the latter, how?
4. According to Confucius, what was the most practical form of education, and what was its purpose? What do your answers suggest about Confucius' social views?
5. Consider the four topics Confucius did not discuss. Why do you suppose this was the case? What does this suggest about the man and his philosophy?
6. Confucius, like Laozi, speaks of the Way and claims to teach it. How does his Way differ from that of Daoism? What do you think his attitude was toward those who preached either the Way of Non-striving or the idea that there are no absolute standards of behavior?
Chapter 4 The Secular Made Sacred

PROPERTY

The Master said, “Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness.”

Yan Youan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, “To subdue one’s self and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under Heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?”

Zhonggong asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, “It is, when you go abroad, to behave to every one as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself; not to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family.” Zhonggong said, “Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will make it my business to practise this lesson.”

IDEAL GOVERNMENT

The Master said, “When rulers love to observe the rules of propriety, the people respond readily to the calls on them for service.”

The Master said, “If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame.

“If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good.”

The Master said, “He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.”

The duke Ai asked, saying, “What should be done in order to secure the submission of the people?” Confucius replied, “Advance the upright and set aside the crooked, then the people will submit. Advance the crooked and set aside the upright, then the people will not submit.”

Ji Kang asked how to cause the people to reverence their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to nerve themselves to virtue. The Master said, “Let him preside over them with gravity; then they will reverence him. Let him be filial and kind to all; then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and teach the incompetent; then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous.”

Ji Kang asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, “To govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?”

Ji Kang asked Confucius about government, saying, “What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?” Confucius replied, “Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your clear desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.”

The Master said, “If a minister make his own conduct correct, what difficulty will he have in assisting in government? If he cannot rectify himself, what has he to do with rectifying others?”

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1 All under Heaven are all the Chinese.
2 This was the Way of the Legalists (see source 25).
3 The lord of the state of Lu (r. 494–468 B.C.E.), whom several of Confucius’ disciples served.
THE SUPERIOR MAN

"The superior man in everything considers righteousness to be essential. He performs it according to the rules of propriety. He brings it forth in humility. He completes it with sincerity. This is indeed a superior man."

"There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of sages. The inferior man does not know the ordinances of Heaven, and consequently does not stand in awe of them. He is disrespectful to great men. He makes sport of the words of sages."

Zi Gong asked what constituted the superior man. The Master said, "He acts before he speaks, and afterward speaks according to his actions."

The Master said, "The mind of the superior man is conversant with propriety; the mind of the inferior man is conversant with gain."\(^4\)

The Master said, "If the will be set on virtue, there will be no practice of wickedness."

The Master said, "Riches and honors are what men desire. If it cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be held. Poverty and meanness are what men dislike. If it cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be avoided.

"If a superior man abandon virtue, how can he fulfill the requirements of that name?"

"The superior man does not, even for the space of a single meal, act contrary to virtue. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it. In seasons of danger, he cleaves to it."

The Master said, "By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart."

The Master said, "By extensively studying all learning, and keeping himself under the restraint of the rules of propriety, one may thus likewise not err from what is right."

SPIRITS

The subjects on which the Master did not talk, were extraordinary things,\(^5\) fears of strength,\(^6\) disorder, and spiritual beings.\(^7\)

Ji Lu asked about serving the spirits of the dead. The Master said, "While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits?" Ji Lu added, "I venture to ask about death?" He was answered, "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?"

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\(^4\)This is a pun. The characters for both propriety and gain are pronounced li.

\(^5\)Extraordinary phenomena that cause delight and wonder among the ignorant.

\(^6\)Confucius and his disciples had only contempt for persons who exercised power by virtue of physical strength. The Confucians believed in the exclusive exercise of moral and intellectual power.

\(^7\)The spirits of the ancestors.