

S. A. M. ADSHEAD

China and Rome Compared

In this selection a modern historian of China compares the Chinese Han dynasty with the Roman Empire. You will have to read carefully because his analysis is quite dense. He uses a complex vocabulary and covers a wide range of factors—from food to social classes to writing and roads. How, according to the author, were these two empires similar? How were they different? Which of these factors (showing similarities or differences) would you judge to be the most important, and why? In addition, can you think of any similarities or differences between Rome and China that are not mentioned in this reading? If so, how important are they?

Thinking Historically

The easiest way to make a comparison is to list the similarities in one column and the differences in another. You might do this for Rome and China, according to Adshead. Thus in the similarities column, you might begin with such items as empire, 1.5 million square miles, conquered aristocracies, and so on. After you have listed as many items as you can in each column, it might be useful to ask yourself what relation exists between the similarities and differences.

Notice that Adshead begins with similarities and then turns to differences. As we said in the introduction, this is a standard procedure, because differences are only meaningful in terms of some assumed or recognized similarities. Generally, we assume that the similarities are more important than the differences. The differences are mere variations on the larger similarity. Here, however, Adshead says that the differences between Rome and China are greater than the similarities. What might he mean? Are Adshead's differences more important? Are the similarities more superficial? Return to your list of similarities and differences and decide.

This section examines first the similarities between Han China and the classical, pre-Constantinian Roman empire and second, the differences. The conclusion will be that the differences outweighed the similarities.

S. A. M. Adshead, *China in World History*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 4–7, 9–16, 17–19.

Similarities

These may be divided into origin, organization and outcome.

Origin

Both the Han and Roman empires began in the third century BC with the military expansion of conservative, relatively unideological aristocratic states on the western peripheries of their respective civilized zones. The Roman republic was not a full member of the Hellenistic world; the duchy of Ch'in¹ was an outsider in the Chou confederacy. Both expansions were based on a combination of political stability, abundant rural manpower nourished by advanced agriculture, and disciplined infantry, which was pitted against political instability, artificial urban growth and over-specialized military technology. Both were directed first against mercantile rivals: Carthage, the emporium of tin and silver in the West and Ch'i, the emporium of salt and iron in the East; and then against colonial frontiers: the Hellenistic east and Gaul, Ch'u and Wu-yueh. In both cases conquest was followed by civil war. It ended in the elimination of the aristocracies which had organized the expansion and the establishment of bureaucracies which disguised their novelty by archaizing their ideology and exaggerating their continuity. Thus the neotraditionalist refoundation of the republic by Augustus was paralleled by Han-Wu-ti's *feng* and *shan* sacrifices in imitation of the sage rulers of antiquity. In both cases the *novi homines*² of the bureaucracy came to be supplied by men from the defeated but more educated east, freedmen, from Greece and scholars from Honan, through the patronage of aggressive and colourful empress-dowagers: Agrippina in the West, empress-dowager Teng in the East.

Organization

In terms of organization the Han and Roman empires had much in common, both problems and solutions. The Roman empire under Hadrian covered 1,763,000 square miles; the Han empire towards the end of the second century AD covered 1,532,000 square miles. Both faced similar problems of distance and time in administering an area half the size of the United States with a technology in which nothing went faster than a horse. Both sought a solution in the cultural solidarity of elites: the spontaneous coordination produced by the shared values, institutions,

¹Duchy of Ch'in (256–206 B.C.E.). Unified China in 221 B.C.E. by conquering the larger Chou confederacy (1050–256 B.C.E.). [Ed.]

²Latin for "new men." Usually refers to a newly created class of powerful or wealthy men. In this case, Adshead means new recruits to the bureaucracies. [Ed.]

vocabulary and reactions of, on the one hand, the classical *paedeia*⁴ and, on the other, the Confucian *wen-yen*.⁵ Both empires relied on this solidarity as their foundation, both built roads to foster it and facilitate military flexibility, and both constructed great walls to give that flexibility time to operate and to avoid the costly continuous mass mobilization which might destroy culturalism by militarism. In both empires, the dominant element of the army was the infantry; the dominant colour of the culture, literary, with poetry giving way to prose. In both the army was opposed by cavalry enemies, the Iranian cataphract⁶ and the Hsuing-nu light horseman, and in both the culture of the elite was challenged by barbarians, *sectaries*,⁷ soldiers, and peasants in varying degrees of alienation from it. In both the challenge was for a long time contained by political skill, social flexibility, economic prosperity and cultural syncretism, underpinned by military effectiveness. When the system needed reconstruction, the Severi of 193–235, provincial lawyers turned soldiers, populists and patrons of exotic religions, were closely paralleled by Ts'ao Ts'ao and the Wei dynasty of 184–265, outsiders from a eunuch background, meritocrats, founders of military colonies, and friends of unorthodox, new-style philosophy.

Outcome

Despite reconstruction, by the Severi and the tetrarchy and by the Wei and the Chin, the long-term outcome was the same: the rise of barbarism and religion; the collapse of the too-costly superstructure in one half of the empire; its survival, reformed, in the other. Both the Roman and the Han empires collapsed in their north-western halves through a mixture of institutional hypertrophy, military pronouncements, ecclesiastical non-cooperation, and barbarian invasions. Both survived in slightly new forms in their south-eastern halves with a new capital and the establishment of a foreign, previously "sectarian," ecumenical religion which gradually conquered the north-west as well. In the north-west, the leaders of the invading barbarian armies, often ex-imperial *foederati*,⁶ set up kingdoms but, except in the vicinity of the *limes*,⁷ there was no serious linguistic change. In both China and the West, society ruralized and centred itself upon self-contained aristocratic es-

⁴py DEE oh

⁵*Paedeia* and *wen-yen* are names for the educational systems of Rome and China, respectively. *Paedeia* or *paideia* refers to humanistic Greek culture; *wen-yen* refers to humanistic Confucian education. [Ed.]

⁶Heavily armed horsemen. [Ed.]

⁷Members of religious sects, especially Christians and Buddhists. [Ed.]

⁸Allies of Rome by treaty (*foedus*). [Ed.]

⁹Roman frontier or wall at Roman boundary. [Ed.]

tates, lay and monastic which, with their immunities, vassals, retainers, "guests," and servants, were more sociological than economic units. In both, a new superstructure, a medieval civilization with deeper roots and firmer foundations than its antique predecessor, was eventually constructed, but in neither was it built on the old plan or centred on the segment of the old system which had survived in the south-east. Neither Constantinople nor Nanking were to be a basis for the medieval world.

Differences

These may be grouped as contrasts of foundation, architectonics, and decay which paralleled the similarities of origin, organization, and outcome, qualified their genuineness, and limited their significance.

Foundation

... In the Roman west, the principal crop was wheat or its relatives barley and oats. In Han China, on the other hand, although wheat and rice were known, the principal crop was millet. Millet is a less palatable grain than wheat, but it had a higher productivity in pre-modern conditions in both quantity sown and area sown. Before the nineteenth century, the ratio of wheat harvested to wheat sown was seldom more than 6:1, while the rate for millet was 10:1. Similarly, while the average pre-modern yield of wheat was 6 quintals a hectare, that of millet was 12 quintals a hectare.

The original difference in productivity was compounded by the difference of natural milieu. In the Roman west, grain was grown on light downland soils which, to maintain their nitrogen content and hence fertility, required fallowing in alternate years. In China, on the other hand, grain was grown on the porous loess⁸ of the north-west hills which, because of its permeability by the chemicals of the air and subsoil, was self-renewing and did not require either fallowing or manuring. The amount of arable land under grain at any one time in China was thus double that in Rome.

By the Han period, a higher percentage of [China's] arable acreage was irrigated than in the Roman west, and a larger proportion of the irrigation was by large-scale macrohydraulic means than elsewhere. ... If this advantage be added to those of millet yields and the absence of fallowing, then average Chinese grain yields would have been eight times those of the Roman west. The two societies had different nutritional bases.

⁸Wind-blown dusty but fertile soil of northern China. [Ed.]

A corollary of this greater intensity of Chinese grain farming was a difference in the role of animal husbandry between China and the Roman west. The difference was not as pronounced as it was later to become, but already the two societies were oriented in different directions. Because of the self-renewal of the loess, Chinese arable farming did not require animals for manure; because it did not need to lie fallow there were no unsown fields free for temporary stocking; and because farms could be smaller thanks to the higher grain yields, there was less marginal land for permanent pasture and less need for ploughing animals. Thus, though China and Europe shared the same domestic animals—cows, horses, sheep, goats, pigs—and, as we shall see, China in antiquity used the horse more efficiently than did the West, in China animals were ancillary while in Europe they were essential. True, in antiquity, animals, in particular horses, were much fewer in Europe than they subsequently became (why could Pheidippides⁹ not find a mount between Athens and Sparta?), while the opposite was true in China, but already the Chinese farmer was oriented to pure arablism in contrast to the European farmer who was oriented to a mixture of arablism and pastoralism.

This difference, in turn, contributed to others: different attitudes to space (the pastoralist can never have too much of it); to mobility (the pastoralist has both ends and means for it); to energy (the pastoralist will be lavish with it so long as it is non-human); to nomadic pastoralism (the mixed farmer can compromise, the pure arablism cannot); to food (the pastoralist will structure his meal round a main course of meat where the arablism will blend a collection of vegetable dishes); and even to human relations generally (the pastoralist is a herder whereas the arablism is a grower). In *Pilgrim's Regress*, C. S. Lewis¹⁰ called the Jews the "shepherd people": it would be an appropriate name for all westerners. Chinese regalia never included the sword. Even more significant is that Chinese official insignia never included the shepherd's crook, the pastoral staff.

Chinese agriculture was further differentiated from Roman by China's superiority in metallurgy in antiquity, particularly iron. Needham¹¹ has shown that while the West could not liquify and cast iron until the fourteenth century AD, so that all ancient and medieval iron in the West was low-carbon wrought iron, China produced cast-iron hoes, ploughshares, picks, axes, and swords from the fourth century BC. This metallurgical superiority affected both agriculture and war. The Chinese arable farmer, in addition to his other advantages,

⁹Greek hero who, according to legend, ran the twenty-six miles from Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over the Persians. Aspiring "marathon" runners should also know he collapsed and died after announcing the news. [Ed.]

¹⁰Twentieth-century English Christian writer. [Ed.]

¹¹Joseph Needham was a famous scholar of Chinese science. [Ed.]

had more and better iron implements than his Roman counterpart. If China clung to infantry where Constantinople switched to cavalry, it was partly because the Chinese footsoldier was better armed and was better able to cope with his equestrian opponent than the Roman legionary. For example, it is doubtful if Roman artisans could have produced the precision-made bronze trigger mechanism required for the Chinese cross-bow. Consequently the Han never suffered a Carrhae or an Adrianople.¹² The capacity to cast iron, in turn, raised the level of steel production both in quantity and quality. Wrought iron is low in carbon, cast iron is high in carbon, and steel lies in between. For pre-modern siderurgy it was easier to decarbonize than recarbonize. So, by the Han period, the Chinese, starting with cast iron, could produce considerable quantities of good steel by what was, in essence, the Bessemer process of oxygenation, i.e., liquifying the iron while simultaneously blowing away part of the carbon; while the West, starting with wrought iron, could only produce limited amounts of poor steel by heating the iron in charcoal. The Damascus and Toledo blades,¹³ which were later to so impress the Crusaders, were the products of transplanted Chinese technology and when Pliny the Younger spoke admiringly of Seric iron, he was probably thinking of Chinese steel.

Intellectual technology. All four primary civilizations shared the primary human tool of articulate speech. Western Eurasia, East Asia, and Amerindia all possessed the basic tool for higher organization: a system of writing. In China and the West, but not in Amerindia, writing was sufficiently old and diffused to constitute the necessary vehicle for education: a literary tradition. As between China and the West, however, there was significant differences in all three intellectual techniques; speech, writing, and literary tradition.

Languages, one might assume are born equal. Each can express the full range of human consciousness and each is completely translatable into every other: as Leonardo Bruni¹⁴ put it: "Nothing is said in Greek that cannot be said in Latin." All languages are equal vehicles of speech and writing, prose and poetry, even though one may think, with Robert Frost, that poetry is what gets lost in translation. The Chomskyan hypothesis of a single transformational grammar or syntactic structure governing all languages supports the assumption of linguistic equivalence. Yet, it may be argued, at a more superficial level, languages are not equal and the inequality may have implications for the thought

¹²In the Battle of Carrhae in 53 B.C.E. the Romans suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Parthians whose calvary and archery tactics overwhelmed the Roman soldiers. The Battle of Adrianople in 378 C.E. against the Huns was the beginning of the end for the Roman Empire. [Ed.]

¹³Muslim steel made in Syrian and Spanish cities. [Ed.]

¹⁴Leonardo Bruni (c. 1370–1444) was a leading humanist and historian from Tuscany.

expressed in them. In particular one may consider whether or not the different sound/meaning ratio in Chinese as compared to the Indo-European languages influenced thought patterns in China and the West. Chinese, it has been said, "is exceptionally rich in homophones," or, to put it another way, it operates with a "poverty of sounds." Thus modern Mandarin uses only 1280 sounds to express what must be presumed to be the same gamut of meaning as the phoneme-rich Indo-European languages. Although archaic and ancient Chinese, the languages of Confucius and the middle ages, may have had a wider phonological range than Mandarin, economy in phonemes seems to be an original and basic characteristic of Chinese speech. The effect has been a wider indeterminacy of meaning *vis-à-vis* sound, a greater dependence on context and audience to establish signification, and a bias in favour of nuance, indirection, allusion and paradigm, as compared to the cruder, more direct, less allusive, more syntagmatic¹⁵ languages of the West. The medium does not prescribe the content of the message. It may be that nothing is said in Chinese that cannot be said in English, and vice versa: but it does determine the level of articulation, the degree of thematization, the place on the implicit/explicit scale. In this sense, the Chinese language with its peculiar sound/meaning ratio was an invitation both to the collective introversion which Jung¹⁶ found characteristic of the eastern mind and to the protocol thinking which Granet¹⁷ ascribed to the Chinese. . . .

Signification, already depotentiated by the sound/meaning ratio, was further beclouded by the accommodating but unresponsive script. The alphabet was an arithmetic tailored exactly to sound and significance; the *tzu*¹⁸ were an algebra which could mean everything or nothing. Once again the medium smothered the message.

By the beginning of the Christian era, both China and the West possessed a body of literature and a tradition of study which was, on one hand, a vehicle of education and, on the other, both a means and end of government. Both the Han and the Roman empires, as we saw above, were founded upon a *paedeia*. The character of the *paedeias*, however, were different. The Chinese tradition was paradigmatic, introverted to concepts, ethical; the Western tradition was syntagmatic, extraverted to things, metaphysical. In both cultures there was a certain transition from mythology to philosophy, but it had been made to different degrees and in opposite directions. In Greece the concrete myth-

¹⁵Ordered into a collection of statements or propositions (usually logically ordered). [Ed.]

¹⁶Carl Jung was a Swiss student of Sigmund Freud who generalized about cultural traits. [Ed.]

¹⁷Marcel Granet was an early twentieth-century French scholar of Chinese civilization. [Ed.]

¹⁸Chinese characters. [Ed.]

ology of Homer and Hesiod was overlaid by the equally concrete pre-Socratic cosmologies, and both gods and cosmologies were eventually subsumed in the mathematical *Dieu cosmique* of orthodox Platonism or the transcendent *Dieu inconnu*¹⁹ of gnosticism. Concrete paradigm was replaced by concrete syntagmata, and then by abstract syntagmata. There was a complete transition from mythology to philosophy. In China, *per contra*, the concrete mythology of the Shang and the early Chou was dissolved by, on the one hand, historicization (conversion of gods to heroes and dynastic founders, an inverse Euhemerism²⁰) and, on the other, ritualization (absorption of myth in liturgy), leaving only abstractions like *t'ien*, *tao*, and *te*²¹ behind. Paradigm was reinforced by theoretical abstraction and practical concreteness and philosophy's problem was not the structure of the cosmos but the method of elucidating the paradigms. There was only a partial transition from mythology to philosophy.

The Chinese *paideia*, more than the Western, was centred on form rather than content. It was a communications system rather than a body of doctrine. The *Shih-ching*²² provided the model for poetry, the *Shu-ching*²³ for prose, and poetry was preferred to prose as being more highly formalized. In both China and the West, the past was a prototype for the present, but where Alexander the Great used the model of Achilles to assert his personality and break continuity, the Han emperors used the model of the sage-emperors to conceal theirs and buttress it. History was understood not, as in Thucydides, as tragedy or pathology, but, as in the *Ch'un-ch'iu*, as annals where morality taught by example. In the *Li-chi*, ethics were reduced to protocol and the *I-ching* provided not an actual cosmology but a repository of concepts for all possible cosmologies.

Similarly, Confucius (author of *Lun-yu*) and Lao-tzu* (author of *Tao-te ching*) had no doctrine to teach, no wisdom to impart. They

¹⁹*Dieu cosmique* and *dieu inconnu*: literally "cosmic god" of science and "unknown god" of gnosticism. The argument is that Greek philosophy led to the idea of a governing god of the universe and that later religious mystics, for whom the visible world was less "real," believed the world was run by an unknown or invisible god. [Ed.]

²⁰Euhemerus (ca. 300 B.C.E.) was a Greek philosopher who argued that the gods were once heroic people who had been turned into mythical beings and that mythological stories were elaborations of actual events. This process of rationalizing mythology is called euhemerism. It is sometimes used more broadly for an extremely rational, debunking, or nonreligious attitude. Here, however, Adshead uses it literally, suggesting that Chinese philosophers did just the opposite: turning gods into real people and treating myths as if they were real and abstractions as if they were concrete. [Ed.]

²¹*T'ien* means heaven, god, or nature. *Tao* means the "way" as in the way of nature. *Te* means power or virtue. Adshead's point is that Chinese retained abstractions while the Greeks looked for specific and concrete origins for abstract concepts. [Ed.]

²²The first and classic collection of Chinese poetry. [Ed.]

²³The classic collection of documents, or history. [Ed.]

*low TZOO

were concerned not to advance views, but to define the conditions for any views: linguistic reform in the one case, the recognition of the inadequacy of language in the other. They defined the conditions for debate, not as a modern philosopher to clear the ground for argument, but because for them to settle the medium was to settle the message: the categories of thought are thought, thought and reality are isomorphic, and all thought needs are the proper paradigms, the little red book of reality. This tradition was in marked contrast with that of the West where, whether in Indian cosmology, Zoroastrian ethical prophecy, Greek empiricism and logic, or Old Testament theocentrism, there was a recognition of the duality of paradigm and syntagma and the primacy of the latter. In this major intellectual contrast with China, all the minor contrasts within the West—the one and the many, metaphysics and ethics, rationalism and religion, science and intentionality analysis—were swallowed up.

Architectonics

In addition to the contrast of physical and intellectual foundations between China and the West, there was also a contrast in architectonics. The social and political structures erected on the foundations differed in ground plan, spatial relations, and decor.

Ground plans. The Roman empire was laid out like an amphitheatre around the arena of the Mediterranean. Rome itself was the imperial box, the older coastal provinces were the stalls, the new inland *limes* provinces were the heavily buttressed upper circle. The internal differentiation was between, on the one hand, upper and lower, *limes* and city, and on the other, sun and shade, the old urbanization of the east, the new urbanization of the west. The Han empire, *per contra*, was laid out like a wheel. The region of the two imperial capitals, Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, formed the hub; the converging valleys of the Wei, the Fen, the Ching, the Lo, the Han, and the Huang-ho formed the spokes. The internal differentiation was between centre and circumference, capital and provinces. Both empires in antiquity were centrally planned, but Rome in a series of concentric circles, China in a series of radiating lines. The Roman empire was the work of a city state which sought to stabilize its dominion by universalizing cities, city life, institutions, and values. It tended therefore to homogenization, a general rise in the level of urbanization, a Conrad Hilton civilization²⁴ of everywhere-similar fora, basilicas, theatres, baths, circuses, and insulae. The Chinese em-

pire, on the other hand, was the work of a bureaucratic territorial state which sought to stabilize its dominion by monopolizing for the court capital resources, amenities, protection, and prestige. It tended therefore to heterogenization, to a fall in the general level of urbanization following the unification of the empire and a growing disparity between the lifestyles of court and country. Both empires lived by and for cultural glamour and conspicuous consumption but in the one case they were diffused, in the other concentrated.

Spatial relations. A comparison of the extent and character of the communications systems of the two areas suggests that Han China was less integrated than the Roman empire. According to Needham, the Roman empire under Hadrian covered 1,763,000 square miles and had 48,500 miles of road, an average of 27.5 miles of road per 1000 square miles of territory. Han China, on the other hand, covered 1,532,000 square miles and had 22,000 miles of road, an average of only 14.35 miles of road per 1000 square miles of territory. Moreover, while for Han China, roads were the essence of the communications system, for Rome they were only an adjunct to the Mediterranean whose sea lanes will have at least doubled the total length of routes. Needham suggests that the greater use of rivers and canals for transportation in China as compared to Europe counterbalanced the advantage of the Mediterranean. This may be true for the later periods of Chinese history, the T'ang and the Sung, for example, when the Grand Canal had been completed, but it is doubtful for the Han. Neither the Yellow River nor its tributaries, in whose valleys Chinese civilization was then centred, are good for navigation and most Han hydraulic activity was for irrigation, not communication. Like the Achaemenid empire, Han China was a road state on a plateau, and this in itself ensured inferiority in spatial integration to a Mediterranean empire, since in pre-modern conditions land transport was twenty to forty times more expensive than water transport. . . .

Decor. Even allowing for accidents of survival, it is difficult not to conclude from the archaeological remains that Han China was a less splendid society than Imperial Rome. The Great Wall no doubt is a stupendous monument, though most of its imposing appearance dates from Ming rather than Han times, but it stands by itself, and though Chinese cities had impressive walls, they did not contain the monumental public buildings of the Classical West—the amphitheatres, aqueducts, arches, basilicas, baths, circuses, theatres, and temples. Rome was a federation of city states, Han China was a swollen court; but in addition, the difference between their towns was rooted in different options for building materials and different conceptions of what a house was for. The fundamental options of Rome and, following her, Europe

²⁴Adshad means a civilization that spreads the same hotels (Hiltons), buildings, foods, and chain-culture everywhere. [Ed.]

generally, were for stone, diffusion of heat by hypocausts or multiple fireplaces, and durability. A house was a capital investment, perhaps the prototype of all fixed capital investment, an assertion of culture in the face of nature. The fundamental Chinese options, on the other hand, were for wood, concentration of heat at the *k'ang* or heated divan, and repairability. A house was a charge on income, an extension of consumer non-durables, an adaptation of culture to nature. In the West, buildings were in principle winter palaces, exclusions of weather, permanent embodiments of hearth and family. In China, buildings were in principle summer houses, modifications of weather, makeshift additions to the real home which was the loess cave or the family tomb. The one option produced monumentality and splendour, the other convenience and harmony. . . .

Decay

Finally, besides these contrasts of foundations and architectonics, there was a contrast between the two empires in the pattern of their decay. Although there were superficial similarities between the fall of the Roman empire and the fall of the Han empire, there were more profound differences which in the end made the two episodes more unlike than like: differences in health, pathology, and prognosis.

The body politic of the Han was healthier than that of the Roman empire. With its superior physical technology in arable farming and metallurgy and its lower degree of urbanization, intercommunication and luxury building, the Han world did not suffer from irremediable contradictions between superstructure and base, state and society. Frictions there were, no doubt, but they were adjustable without cataclysm. In the Roman body politic, on the other hand, with its more primitive physical technology yet more grandiose and more parasitic sociology, there were such contradictions, especially after the Illyrian emperors, in response to the military mutinies and barbarian invasions of the mid-third century, doubled the army and multiplied fortifications without sufficient provision for increased agricultural productivity behind the front. . . .

Both the Han and the Roman empires were the work of elites—educated, civilian, and urban. Both coexisted with and were threatened by non-elites: barbarians beyond the frontier, sectaries outside the *paedeia*, soldiers separated from the civilian community, and peasants below the level of urbanization. . . . All four non-elites—barbarians, sectaries, soldiers, and peasants—played some part in the fall of the Roman empire: it was a social revolution.

In China on the other hand, under the Han and its successor states down to 400 A.D., the San-kuo and the Chin, pathology came from within the elite. It came from the aristocracy of great families, the

equivalent, *mutatis mutandis*²⁵ of the senatorial aristocracy of the Western empire or the *pronoia*-holding²⁶ magnates of medieval Byzantium. These people, the Ma, the Tou, the Liang, the Wang, the Ssu-ma, who as a Chin catch-phrase put it “share the world,” were not primarily a landed aristocracy though they owned estates and, especially, the newly invented watermill. Rather their substance consisted in men: *k'o*, literally guests, that is clients, retainers, tenants, servants, and slaves. For their *k'o*, as evidence of their power and prestige, patrons sought exemption from tax lists and muster rolls and thus weakened the fiscal and military foundations of the central government. The Han empire rested on a base of tax-paying and conscription-bearing free farmers. A vicious circle began: the more privileges for *k'o*, the greater the fiscal and draft pressures on the remaining free farmers, the greater the temptation to escape such freedom by commendation and an increase in the number of *k'o*. The Han empire died slowly by financial and military asphyxiation.

²⁵After the same changes. [Ed.]

²⁶*Pronoia* were land grants made to nobility by the Byzantine or Eastern Roman emperor. [Ed.]

19

CONFUCIUS

From The Analects

Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) was a son of a low-level noble family in China who, despite some political success in his early years, spent most of his later life teaching and looking for a governmental appointment. His *Analects*, a collection of sayings or teachings compiled by his students, touch on all of his major concerns: filial piety (or respect of sons for fathers), virtuous conduct, governance by good example, tradition, rites, music, and dance. Confucius, the person and model, and Confucianism, the school or writings known as *wen-yen*, had an enormous impact on Chinese thought and culture.