

INTRODUCTION TO
ORIENTAL
CIVILIZATIONS

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Sources of
Chinese Tradition

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above and below [i.e., the king and his servants] labor and be anxiously careful; may they say: we have received Heaven's mandate, may it grandly equal the span of years of the lords of Hsia and not miss the span of years of the lords of Yin."

Book of Odes

THE GREATER ODES AND SACRIFICIAL ODES OF CHOU
[From *Shih ching*, Ta ya, Wen wang; Chou sung, Feng nien]

King Wen

1

King Wen is on high;
Oh, he shines in Heaven!
Chou is an old people,
But its charge is new.
The leaders of Chou became illustrious;
Was not God's charge timely given?
King Wen ascends and descends
On the left and right of God.

4

August was King Wen,
Continuously bright and reverent.
Great, indeed, was the appointment of Heaven.
There were Shang's grandsons and sons,
Shang's grandsons and sons;
Was their number not a hundred thousand?
But the Lord-on-High gave his command
And they bowed down to Chou.

7

The charge is not easy to keep;
May it not end in your persons.
Display and make bright your good fame.
And consider what Yin had received from Heaven.
The doings of high Heaven

Have no sound, no smell.
Make King Wen your pattern
And all the states will trust in you.

Rich Year

Rich is the year with much millet and rice;
And we have tall granaries
With hundreds and thousands and millions of sheaves.
We make wine and sweet spirits
And offer them to our ancestors, male and female;
Thus to fulfill all the rites
And bring down blessings in full.

AIRS FROM THE STATES

The "Airs" are folk songs from the various feudal states of early Chou times telling of the joys and sorrows of the common people in their daily lives. Some of them are love songs, while others lament the hardships of war or complain against the ills of government. Of the two selections given here, "Big Rat" is clearly such a complaint against high taxes and corrupt officials. The other is probably a song of love, but it is worth noting that from very early times it has been given a strictly political interpretation by the Confucian school. Thus the Confucianists turned even the old folk songs into lessons on political morality.

[From *Shih ching*, Wei feng, Shih sha]

Big Rat

1

Big rat, big rat,
Do not eat my millet!
Three years I have served you,
But you will not care for me.
I am going to leave you
And go to that happy land;
Happy land, happy land,
Where I will find my place.

The farmers of Wei complain of the tax officials.

3

Big rat, big rat,
Do not eat my sprouts!
Three years I have served you
But you give me no comfort.
I am going to leave you
And go to those happy fields;
Happy fields, happy fields;
Who there shall long moan?

The North Wind

This is probably a love song, but it has traditionally been interpreted as the song of the peasants of Pei who, oppressed by a cruel and corrupt government (the cold wind of the song), urge each other to flee to another state.
[From *Shih ching*, Pei-feng, Pei-feng]

1

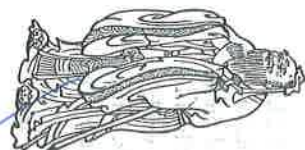
Cold is the north wind;
The snow falls thick.
If you are kind and love me
Take my hand and we will go together.
You are modest, you are slow,
But oh, we must hurry!

2

Fierce is the north wind;
The snow falls fast.
If you are kind and love me
Take my hand and we will home together.
You are modest, you are slow,
But oh, we must hurry!

3

Nothing so red as the fox,
Nothing black as the crow [omens of evil];
If you are kind and love me,
Take my hand and we will go in the same carriage.
You are modest, you are slow,
But oh, we must hurry.



孔子
精義道

CHAPTER II

CONFUCIUS

If we were to characterize in one word the Chinese way of life for the last two thousand years, the word would be "Confucian." No other individual in Chinese history has so deeply influenced the life and thought of his people, as a transmitter, teacher, and creative interpreter of the ancient culture and literature, and as a mold of the Chinese mind and character. The other ancient philosophies, the religious systems of Taoism and Buddhism, all have known their days of glory and neglect; but the doctrines of Confucianism, since their general recognition in the first century before Christ, have never ceased to exert a vital influence on the nation down to our own century. Many Chinese have professed themselves to be Taoists, Buddhists, even Christians, but seldom have they ceased at the same time to be Confucianists. For Confucianism since the time of its general acceptance has been more than a creed to be professed or rejected; it has become an inseparable part of the society and thought of the nation as a whole, of what it means to be a Chinese, as the Confucian Classics are not the canon of a particular sect but the literary heritage of a whole people.

Considering his tremendous influence and importance, the life of Confucius is peculiarly human and undramatic. He was born in 551 B.C. in the small feudal state of Lu in modern Shantung province. His family name was K'ung, his personal name Ch'iu. "Confucius" is the Latinized form of "K'ung Fu-tzu" or "Master K'ung," the title commonly used in referring to him in Chinese. It is probable that his ancestors were members of the lesser aristocracy who had, however, sunk to a position of poverty and insignificance by the time of his birth. His father died when he was very young, leaving him to struggle alone with the problem of securing an education and making his way in the world.