

### 3

## CONFUCIUS

### The Analects, c. 479–221 B.C.E.

Creating and governing an empire requires ideas as much as soldiers and officials. The ideas of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.), compiled after his death by his disciples in *The Analects*, played a crucial role in the governance of the Chinese Empire from at least the time of the Han dynasty. Notice how the great Han historian Sima Qian began the previous selection with a quote from Confucius. Candidates for official positions in the empire studied the writings attributed to Confucius in order to pass the civil service exams that originated in the Han dynasty. In one sense this might seem a bit strange. Confucius lived long before the Qin establishment of the empire. His world was feudal: Authority was personal, based on family or clan ties, and divided among various competing states. His emphasis on filial piety (duty of sons to fathers, worship of ancestors, and respect of elders) reflects that feudal society. Nevertheless, Confucianism became the bedrock ideology for the governance of the empire. What would be

Source: *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge (New York: John B. Alden, Publisher, 1890), 13–14, 16, 18–19, 64–66, 70–71.

the appeal of these ideas to a Chinese emperor? Which ideas in particular would be useful in governing the empire?

The First Emperor of Qin who unified China was not a follower of Confucius. In fact, at one point he had Confucian writings burned. Why might an empire creator be less attracted to the ideas of Confucius? Which ideas expressed in this selection might bother an aggressive conqueror?

#### THINKING HISTORICALLY

The set of ideas that serve a particular political interest or function is called an ideology. Based on your reading of the previous chapter, how was the ruling ideology of classical Greece different from that of Han China? How was the dominant Brahman Hindu ideology of classical India different from that of Han China? Is there an equivalent modern American ideology that supports the government of the United States in the world?

### On Government by Moral Force

I, 5. The Master [Confucius] said, "To rule a country of a thousand chariots, there must be reverent attention to business, and sincerity; economy in expenditure, and love for men; and the employment of the people at the proper seasons."

II, 3. 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."

XII, 11. The Duke Ching, of Ch'i, asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son." "Good!" said the duke, "If, indeed; the prince be not prince, the minister not minister, the father not father, and the son not son, although I have my revenue, can I enjoy it?"

XII, 19. Chi K'ang 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 evinced 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."

XIII, 6. The Master said, "When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed."

XIII, 10. The Master said, "If there were (any of the princes) who would employ me, in the course of twelve months, I should have done something considerable. In three years, the government would be perfected."

XIII, 11. The Master said, "If good men were to govern a country in succession for a hundred years, they would be able to transform the violently bad, and dispense with capital punishments.' True indeed is this saying!"

### On Public Opinion

II, 19. 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."

II, 20. Chi K'ang 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."

XII, 7. Tsze-kung asked about government. The Master said, "The requisites of government are that there be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler." Tsze-kung said, "If it cannot be helped, and one of these must be dispensed with, which of the three should be foregone first?" "The military equipment," said the Master. Tsze-kung again asked, "If it cannot be helped, and one of the remaining two must be dispensed with, which of them should be foregone?" The Master answered, "Part with the food. From of old, death has been the lot of all men; but if the people have no faith in their rulers, there is no standing for the state."