

Confucianism

China's most influential scholar was Confucius. Born in 551 B.C., Confucius lived a time when the Zhou Dynasty was being torn apart by warring lords. He led a scholarly life, studying and teaching history, music and moral character. Confucius was not content to be merely a great teacher. He wanted to reform Chinese society by showing a prince how to govern wisely. According to legend, Confucius so overwhelmed people by his kindness and courtesy that almost overnight crime vanished from Lu. The only records of his ideas are the writings of his students. His students later collected his works in a book called *the Analects*. Confucianism was not a religion, it was an ethical system and became the foundation for Chinese government and social order.

Basic Beliefs on Life and Family

Confucius believed that people were naturally good and that social order, harmony, and good government could be restored in China if society was organized around **Five Basic Relationships**. These were the relationships between-

1. ruler and subject
2. father and son
3. husband and wife
4. older brother and younger brother
- friend and friend

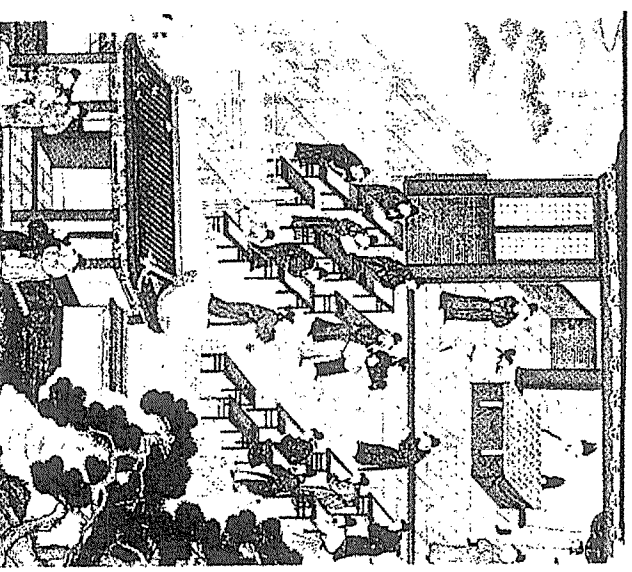
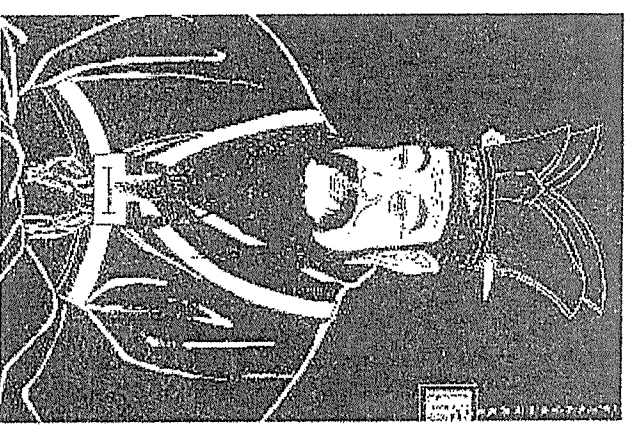
He stressed the importance of moral behavior and a code of proper conduct. People should know their place in society and do what is expected of them based on these relationships.

Confucius also stressed that children should practice what he called **filial piety**, or respect for their parents and elders.

Basis Beliefs on Government:

Confucius said that **education** was important for career advancement. He stressed the importance of taking **civil service examinations** if people wished to advance in the government. He laid the ground work for the creation of a **bureaucracy**, a **trained civil service**, or those who **run the government**.

Confucius believed that a ruler should set a good example for his subjects. He said, "If a ruler himself is upright, all will go well without orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders, *they* will not be obeyed."



In this painting, a Chinese emperor watches over eager scholars taking the civil service examination. Those who passed could get government jobs in areas such as, census taking, taxation and road building.