

## Chapter 2

# Confucius and His Teachings

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents an account of Confucius' personal life, his character, professions, and doctrinal dispositions. Confucius championed ethical rectitude and demonstrated that morality and public administration begins at home, in the family. Being mindful of widespread iniquitous, widespread inhumane and unethical activities, conducted by people at all levels and professions in the society, Confucius was determined to minimize the effects of administrative corruption and improve social control through the institution of ancient Chinese customs, specifically filial piety and ancestor worship. He was essentially interested in learning or remembering the ancient rites and customs. He admittedly introduced no new philosophical ideas apart from combining politics with religious rituals, ethics, and learning. As an extraordinarily adept scholar of the Confucian canon, Confucius whose birth name was Kong-qui, ably presented a variety of interpretations of given canonical passages. Confucius was suspected of being a Buddhist priest given his strong inclination towards Buddhism. Confucius exhibited a somewhat mercurial personality.*

### INTRODUCTION

Confucianism, as an imperial bureaucratic or administrative doctrine, is one that does away with egalitarianism, embraces inequalities, and ensures social stability through the implementation of hierarchical social structures. Confucianism is imbued with various levels and types of relationships that

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are characterized as varying degrees of responsibilities. Inequalities denote the epistemology and ethics of diversity, including a cluster of responsibilities based on various factors such as gender, age, and social status. Confucius, an eponymous sage of Confucianism, espoused the necessity of education as requisite for propriety in public administration and bureaucracy. Confucius championed ethical rectitude and demonstrated that morality and public administration begins at home, in the family. Being mindful of widespread fraud conducted by people at all levels and professions of society, Confucius was determined to minimize the effects of administrative corruption and improve social control through the institution of ancient Chinese customs, specifically filial piety and ancestor worship. This chapter specifies the historical account of Confucianism and its role in the contemporary society. The chapter begins with the background of Confucius, the sage, and details the various responsibilities that Confucianism entails.

## **Confucius, the Sage**

Confucius, a 6th-century BCE Chinese philosopher, was born on June 19, 551 BC, at Shang-ping near the town of Tseuse in the kingdom of Lu. His father, Shuh-leang Heih, was an eminent military officer described as a man of commanding stature and esteemed for his bravery (Douglas, 1906). Edkins (1893) recounted that the forename given to the celebrated Chinese sage was *Kong*. His disciples called him *Kong-fu-tse* (Kong, the master or teacher), Latinized by Jesuit missionaries as *Confucius*. *Confucius* is hereafter used to refer to the sage Kong-fu-tse. At the age of 70, Confucius married his second wife, Ching-Tsae, who became the mother of Confucius. At the age of 3, his father died and Confucius' mother, Yen Ching-tsai, became widowed. His interest in history became apparent as he grew older. As narrated in Douglas (1906), Confucius was particularly captivated by the reigns of the great and good Yaou and Shun.

## **Confucius, the Scholar**

*Confucius* was mostly interested in learning or memorizing the ancient rites and customs. He admittedly introduced no new philosophical ideas apart from combining politics, with religious rituals, ethics, and learning. Giles (1915) recounted Confucius' interest and aptitude for learning, which earned him the highest degree at the age of 19. By the age of 17, Confucius had

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