

## CONFUCIUS AND HIS PORTRAITS.

BY BERTHOLD LAUFER.

[CONCLUDED.]

Yen Hui (B. C. 514-483) was the favorite disciple of Confucius. His father Yen Wu-yu was a disciple of the sage and sent his son, while still a boy, to the same great teacher. Yen Hui soon became the most distinguished of all the disciples and was unbounded in his love and admiration for his master whom he regarded as a father. Untiring in love of learning, he studied with unrelenting diligence, and tried to practice the rules of conduct which he imbibed. He was silent and attentive, seldom asked questions and never offered criticisms; the master's doctrines were to him sublime and faultless. He lived a life of poverty and was content with the pursuit of virtue and wisdom. A bamboo joint for a cup, a gourd for a bowl, his elbow for a pillow, rice and water for his food, and a hovel in a lane for a house—such was his lot, over which he never lost his cheerfulness. He won the lifelong affection of his master whose despondent moods could always be charmed away by Yen Hui's harp and song. Se-ma Ts'ien compares him in his friendly relations to Confucius with a fly which travels far and fast by clinging to the tail of a courser. The sage looked to him for the future propagation of his doctrines, but was cruelly disappointed when "the finger of God touched" the disciple and took him away "in his summer day" at the age of thirty-two. The old master wept bitterly in despair and exclaimed that Heaven had ruined him. From the time of the Han dynasty, he was associated with Confucius as the object of worship, and he has received various titles and designations. He is usually known as Fu shêng Yen-tse, as written on the top of our picture, a term variously explained, probably "the sage who reported the lessons taught by the master." Of all Confucian portraits, that of Yen Hui is the most intellectual in conception. The stone tablet on which it is engraved is preserved in his an-

cestral temple in K'ü fu; it is not known by what artist the original was made.

Facing Yen Hui's tablet and next to it in order of succession



YEN HUI OR YEN-TSE, THE PHILOSOPHER YEN.

is that inscribed *Tsung shêng Tsêng-tse*, i. e., "the Philosopher Tsêng, the Founder-Sage," or as Legge translates, "Exhibiter of the Fundamental Principles of the Sage." We see him pictured on

a stone engraving in the Museum of Inscriptions (*Pei lin*) at Si-ngan fu, which is undated and ascribed to an artist Wên Yü-kuan;<sup>18</sup>



CONFUCIUS AND THE PHILOSOPHER TSÊNG.

Confucius is sitting on a bench, holding a *Ju-i*, a scepter of good augury fulfilling every wish, and the disciple is standing in front

<sup>18</sup> I cannot find any references to him in the Chinese catalogues of painters.



of him, apparently listening to his instructions. Tsêng, whose full name was Tsêng Ts'an (B. C. 506-437), was an extremist in the practice of Confucian morality and carried filial piety to a point where the sublime is nearing the boundary of the ridiculous. On one occasion while weeding a garden of melons, he accidentally cut the root of a plant. His father took a stick and beat him almost to death. As soon as he was able to move, he approached his father and expressed his anxiety lest the old man might have hurt himself in administering such a strong dose, and then sat down playing the lyre to put his father's mind at ease. Confucius rebuked him for his conduct as going to excess, since by quietly submitting to such a punishment he might have caused his father to kill him—the worst possible act of unfilial conduct on the part of a son. This and several other absurd stories—e. g., that he divorced his wife for serving up to her mother-in-law some badly stewed pears—have probably been concentrated on his life for no other reason than because the small book, the Canon of Filial Piety (*Hiao king*) is ascribed to him, and so he had to be made a model of filial piety himself.

A Confucian iconography would be incomplete without a picture of his great successor and the most ardent champion of his tenets, Mêng-tse (or, Latinized, Mencius, who lived B. C. 372-289). The story of his education by his mother—the father died when the boy was at the age of three—has become a classical example of pedagogical principles to the present day. He first lived with his mother near a cemetery, but they moved away from there because the boy imitated in play the funeral ceremonies daily before his eye. She then took a house near the market-place, but her child soon began to play buying and selling and to learn the bad ways of tradesmen. So she moved a second time near to a public school where the imitating faculties of the boy were soon developed in copying the ceremonial observances interchanged between scholar and master. Another story goes to tell how his mother roused him to learning by cutting asunder the thread of a woof, in order to exemplify the disastrous effect of want of continuity in learning—a household anecdote to this day and a subject represented in art as early as by Ku K'ai-chih in the fourth century A. D.

Subsequently Mêng-tse studied under K'ung Chi, a grandson of Confucius and endeavored to put into practice the master's maxims in several states. He was a man of stern and firm character, but not wanting in self-appreciation. The basis of his teaching, a continuation and development of Confucius's doctrines, was that man is born good, but that his spiritual nature re-

quires careful fostering and training. Mêng-tse dwells with predilection on the problems of practical life and on the moral obligations of those who rule and those who are ruled; a commonwealth on a strongly ethical foundation was his ideal aim. The book handed down under his name recalls to mind Plato's Republic and is also composed in the form of dialogues; the nature and method of his dialectics are similar to those of Socrates.



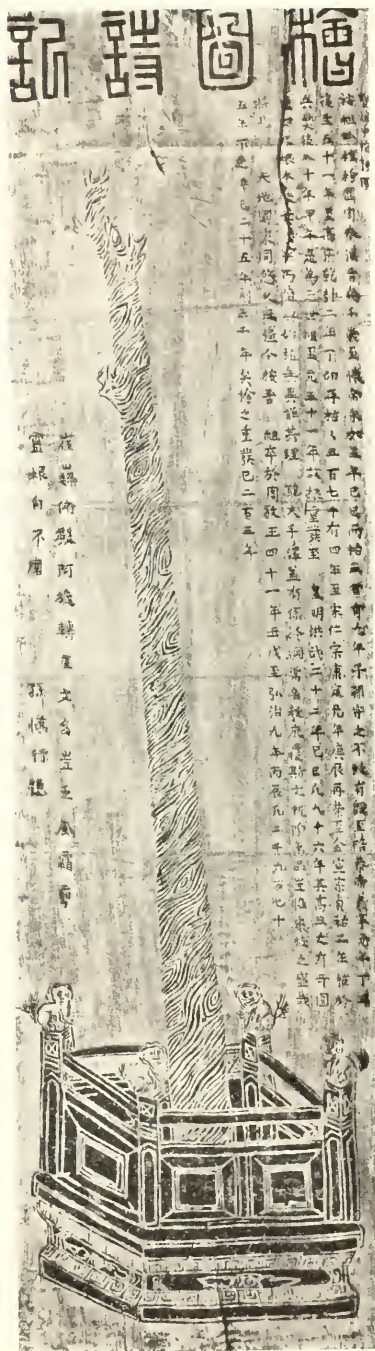
MÊNG-TSE (MENCIUS).

His thoughts and language are more definite and precise than those of Confucius, his style is bright and eloquent, betraying a writer of keen individuality. He was the first real author, orator and dialectician of the Confucian school, and it is his merit that the ideas of his master became propagated and popularized. "The Sage who is Second" is therefore the posthumous title bestowed upon him. His tomb and ancestral temple are in the town Tsou in Shantung. The stone on which his portrait is engraved is provided with a dated inscription which is unfortunately so much effaced that it is only partially legible.

On the burial-place of Confucius near K'ü-fu is a stone tablet on which the decayed trunk of a tree is engraved. (See the illustration on the following page.) This is entitled "Picture of a Juniper (*kui*, *Juniperus chinensis* L.) planted by the Sage with his own hand." A story to this effect is not to be found in the ancient traditions, nor is it recorded in the accompanying inscription which merely tells us that this tree had existed during the Chou, Ts'in, Han and Tsin dynasties uninterruptedly for nearly a thousand years until 309 A. D. when it decayed; but the descendants of the sage protected it for 309 years more, not daring to destroy it, until the year 617 A. D. when it was planted anew. This tree again

quires careful fostering and training. Mêng-tse dwells with predilection on the problems of practical life and on the moral obligations of those who rule and those who are ruled; a commonwealth on a strongly ethical foundation was his ideal aim. The book handed down under his name recalls to mind Plato's Republic and is also composed in the form of dialogues; the nature and method of his dialectics are similar to those of Socrates. His thoughts and language are more definite and precise than those of Confucius, his style is bright and eloquent, betraying a writer of keen individuality. He was the first real author, orator and dialectician of the Confucian school, and it is his merit that the ideas of his master became propagated and popularized. "The Sage who is Second" is therefore the posthumous title bestowed upon him. His tomb and ancestral temple are in the town Tsou in Shantung. The stone on which his portrait is engraved is provided with a dated

rotted away in 667 A. D., but was flourishing in 1040 A. D. In 1214 A. D., under the Kin dynasty, it was burned by soldiers, but under the Mongols, in 1294, the old root shot forth anew, and in 1373 the trunk reached a height of three hundred feet. The inscription was composed and the monument erected in 1496 by a descendant of Confucius, Shên-hing, who was not brilliant in arithmetic, for he calculates at the end of his composition the time which has elapsed since B. C. 479, the death of Confucius, at 2975 instead of 1975 years. It is not a mere slip of his pen, for he adds: "In twenty-five years from now it will be three thousand years." This error is excusable in view of the fact that the writer was a young boy who died at the age of twenty-one. The story of the juniper tree is a pleasing tradition, though not of historical value. It is a symbol of the Confucian doctrine: imperishable like this tree, it may temporarily decline but will always rise again to new beauty and grandeur. The trunk of a tree very similar to the one depicted on the stone tablet is standing beside it and is still pointed out to the visitor as the one planted by Confucius. The juniper is a tall, very common tree in the northern provinces of China and is remarkable for the dimorphism of its leaves, resembling in general those of the common cypress. It is once mentioned in a song of the *Shi king*



(cd. Legge, p. 102), oars made of its timber being used in boats of pine.

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The oldest pictorial representations extant, which describe the scenes from the life of Confucius, are from the hand of the painter Wang Chên-p'êng (or Wang Ming-mei, or Wang Ku-yün) of the time of the Yüan dynasty, who flourished at the period of the Emperor Jên-tsung (1312-1320). He is praised as a master by Chinese critics and excelled in power of composition and coloring. An original work of his in the collection of the present writer tends to confirm this judgment. He has left to us a precious album containing ten oblong paintings, each accompanied by an explanatory notice and poem written by the celebrated calligraphist Yü Ho from Hang-chou. In the second part of the sixteenth century, this album was in the possession of a reputed connoisseur, Hiang Tse-king by name, and was preserved in his family until the fatal year 1900, when it fell into the hands of an Englishman whose name is unknown. The latter generously placed it at the disposal of Mr. Têng Shih, editor of an important series of art publications (*Shên chou kuo kuang tsi*) at Shanghai who brought out a half-tone reproduction of the pictures in 1908 as No. 2 of his Series of Albums (*tsêng k'an*), under the title *Shêng tsi t'u*, "Scenes in the Life of the Saint." From this edition, our reproductions are derived. The work of the Yüan artist is not only interesting for its artistic merits and qualities, but it is also of historical importance, since it was the forerunner of the subsequent illustrated lives of Confucius. In the great Confucius temple of K'ü-fu, a collection of 112 stone slabs with engravings displaying an illustrated biography of the sage are immured in a wall and come down from the year 1592. On a visit to K'ü-fu in 1903, I obtained a complete set of rubbings from these stones which is now preserved in the American Museum of New York. Unfortunately the stones are much damaged and mutilated, and most pictures have to be restored by guess-work. Seven of Wang's paintings have been reproduced in this series of stone engravings. The latter gave rise to a volume depicting the life of Confucius in woodcuts (reedited in 1874, at Yen-chou fu, Shan-tung) which are very coarse and without the fine spirit of the originals; they are merely intended as a souvenir for the pilgrims visiting K'ü-fu.<sup>10</sup>

The first of Wang Chên-p'êng's memorable paintings conveys

<sup>10</sup> Eight of these illustrations have been reproduced by E. H. Parker in the *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, April, 1897.



an allusion to the birth of the future sage. His mother is sacrificing on the summit of Mount Ni, invoking the spirits for the birth of a child. As Dr. Carus<sup>20</sup> correctly points out, most of the birth-stories of the sage are of later origin and show Buddhist influence. They were invented because the followers of Confucius did not want to see their founder outdone in honors, and so they vied with Buddhist traditions in claiming a supernatural origin for their great sage as well.



THE FUTURE MOTHER OF CONFUCIUS PRAYS FOR A CHILD ON THE MOUNTAIN NI.

Painting by Wang Chên-P'êng.

This picture is doubtless conceived in a Buddhist spirit. It is a scene of great impressiveness due to the majestic simplicity of the composition. The background is filled with wandering vapors and rising clouds screening the little party off from the world and spreading a veil over their thoughts of the future event. A huge tree-trunk is breaking forth from the mist in vigorous outlines and setting off the hazy distant peaks in the corner. The future mother is preparing the offering in a brazier placed on a carved wooden stand; a servant-girl is bringing some ingredients enclosed in a

<sup>20</sup> *Chinese Thought*, p. 115 (Chicago, 1907).



box, respectfully carrying it on both hands covered by her sleeves. Two attendants are waiting behind. The rocky platform on which the ceremony takes place may be symbolic of the peculiar shape of the boy's skull which, according to tradition, bulged out into a hill-shaped protuberance and gained him the name *K'iu*, i. e., hillock.

The painter has not illustrated any scene from Confucius's boyhood and early manhood, but shows him in the next picture in an incident occurring in his fifties, in B. C. 496, very well chosen indeed, as it presents a turning-point in his life. At that time he was minister of justice in his native country, the principality of Lu, under the Duke Ting who was envied by the neighboring prince of Ts'i, who feared lest Lu might become too powerful under the enlightened guidance of the famous politician. To cause Duke Ting to neglect the affairs of government, his rival sent to his court a gift



CONFUCIUS FORSAKES THE STATE OF LU.

of eighty (according to Han Fei-tse, six) beautiful dancing-girls and thirty quadrigas of horses. The acceptance of this present was disapproved by Confucius and led him to resign his post. The artist has represented this scene with a true dramatic instinct. We see in the center the Duke of Lu on horseback, shielded by two halberd-bearers and protected by an umbrella. Ki Huan who had gone out in disguise to inspect the arrival and enticed the duke to look at the bait is kneeling in front of him pointing at the women, seven of whom are playing on instruments, while two are engaged in the performance of a dance. The group of eight horses on the right is a masterly work reminding us of the style of the great horse-painter Han Kan. Separated from this scene and turning away from the frivolous gayety, Confucius is standing on the left, giving orders to harness his cart which will take him off on a long peregrination ;

a man is oiling the hubs of the wheels, and another driving on the bullock to yoke to the cart.

On his travels, Confucius had to pass by K'uang, a place in the present province of Chihli where, owing to an inconsiderate utterance of his cart-driver, he attracted the attention of the people and was mistaken for Yang Hu, their old enemy who had once cruelly oppressed them and whom Confucius happened to resemble. In the third picture we see surrounding his chariot a throng of infuriated peasants armed with clubs, while he remains seated under the canopy of matting, unmoved and calm. His disciple Yen Yüan is trying to appease the excited people. The contrast between their wild passion and the divine calmness on the sage's countenance furnished the artist a welcome opportunity of showing his force of characterization. He apparently took his studies from the stage, for



CONFUCIUS IS THREATENED BY THE PEOPLE OF K'UANG.

the group of four men are engaged in a war-dance like those which may still be seen in the Chinese theaters in the class of dramas known as military plays (*wu hsi*). It is noteworthy that in this as in the following cases the painter follows the plain historical records and resists the temptation to introduce the inventions with which the more imaginative later traditions are adorned. Only a minor artist would have followed here the poetic account of Confucius winning the hearts of the people of K'uang by his songs or his play on a lute.

The fourth picture illustrates Confucius alone at the east gate of the capital of Chêng in Honan. A man from Chêng shouldering a folded umbrella who had passed by him meets the philosopher Tse-kung and describes to him the appearance of the sage. He recognizes in his exterior the signs of a holy man and closes his description by saying, "He seems much embarrassed like the dog in a

family where somebody is dead." Tse-kung repeated his account to Confucius who joyously replied: "The outward form of a body is of no account; but that I resemble a dog in a family where somebody died, is very true."



CONFUCIUS SOLITARY AT THE GATE OF THE CAPITAL OF CHÊNG.

The fifth picture shows us the master sitting on a fur-covered, drum-shaped seat of pottery receiving instruction in playing the lute from the music-teacher Siang-tse. The pottery seat as well as the



CONFUCIUS RECEIVES INSTRUCTION IN PLAYING THE LYRE.

stool of the teacher are anachronisms, for in the time of Confucius the Chinese used only to squat on mats spread on the ground. It is even stated expressly in this story that at the end of the lessons



Siang-tse rose from his mat and prostrated himself twice before the sage. But Chinese artists were always intent on poetic truth and never cared for historical correctness of detail; costume, architecture and domestic surroundings always remain those of their own age, to whatever period the scene may refer.

In the sixth picture, Confucius is represented as again riding in his ox-cart and descending the steep bank of a river. A boat is ready to take him across. Not being able to obtain a position in the country of Wei, he decided to go westward into the country of Tsin to see Chao Kien-tse. Arriving at the Yellow River, he received the news of the death of two sages and officials of Tsin and abandoned his plan. He is said to have then exclaimed with a sigh: "How beautiful these



CONFUCIUS ABANDONS HIS PLAN OF CROSSING THE YELLOW RIVER.

waves, their extent how immense! If I, K'iu, do not cross this river it is the will of destiny."

It will be noticed that from the matting in the interior of the cart a gourd or calabash is suspended. This doubtless implies an allusion to the much discussed passage in the Confucian Discourses (*Lun yü*, XVII, 7).<sup>21</sup> The master was inclined to go to see Pi Hi, governor of Chung-mou in Honan, who had come into possession of this place by rebellion. Tse-lu warns him from this evil-doer, but the master retorted: "Is it not said that if a thing be really hard it may be ground without being made thin? Is it not said that if a thing be really white it may be steeped in a dark fluid without being made black? Am I a bitter gourd? How can I be hung up

<sup>21</sup> Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. I, p. 321.

out of the way of being eaten?" (Legge's translation). Chavannes<sup>22</sup> translates in accordance with the generally accepted opinion of the Chinese commentators: "Am I a calabash which may remain suspended without eating?" The meaning is that the calabash, because it does not eat nor drink, may always stay in the same place, while Confucius is a being that eats and must consequently move around. The empty shell of the calabash was used as a bladder tied around the body to keep it afloat in crossing a deep river, as we see from a song in the *Shi king*<sup>23</sup> and a passage in the *Kuo yü* cited by Chavannes. With reference to this practice, the above sentence would allow also of the translation: "Am I a calabash which can be fastened to the body, but which cannot be eaten." Though this interpreta-



CHAO, KING OF CH'U, IS PLANNING TO GRANT A FIEF TO CONFUCIUS, BUT IS DISSUADED BY HIS MINISTER.

tion is somewhat forced and excludes the essential point in Confucius's explanation "to remain suspended in the same place," it almost seems as if our artist Wang Chên-p'êng had adhered to this mode of understanding the passage, as he introduced the calabash into this scene where Confucius is ready to cross the river.

On the seventh painting, Wang has depicted the scene in which Chao, king of Ch'ü, deliberates with regard to offering Confucius as a fief a territory comprising a group of seven hundred families. The king is sitting before a screen at a table on which a paper roll is displayed evidently purporting to be a map on which to point out the villages to be selected. But his councilor of state, Tse-si, stand-

<sup>22</sup> *Les mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, Vol. V, p. 348.

<sup>23</sup> Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. IV, p. 53.

ing in front, a jade emblem of rank in his hands, dissuades him from this plan for political reasons, on the ground that Confucius would grow too powerful and prevent the small state from aggrandizement. On this remonstrance the king desisted from his intention. On the left-hand side, an agent of the king is negotiating with the sage who remains in his cart. The king died the same year, B. C. 489, and Confucius left his country to return to Wei.

After his long series of trials and disappointments, the sage shines in his full glory in the eighth painting where he is represented after his return to his native country Lu, worn with sorrows and age, resigning from active service and busily engaged in imparting instruction to his disciples and in revising the texts of ancient literature. The artist could have chosen no more significant



CONFUCIUS REVISING THE ANCIENT BOOKS AND INSTRUCTING HIS DISCIPLES.

theme to celebrate the apotheosis of his hero, and he has accomplished his task with an eminently skilful composition entirely freed from the burden of tradition. He did not load himself with the complete array of the official number of seventy-two disciples, but has arranged easy groups of scholars, reading, reciting or arguing. True it is, the paper rolls, the books, the writing-brushes, the tables, the tea-pots are all gross anachronisms, but all this does not detract from the beauty and spirituality of this fine work of art which is doubtless the best conception of Confucius in Chinese art. The Chinese painters always possessed too much artistic sense and instinct to be rigid antiquarians and wisely refrained from that stilted and pathetic theatrical style in which our painters of historical subjects have sinned, much to the detriment of art.



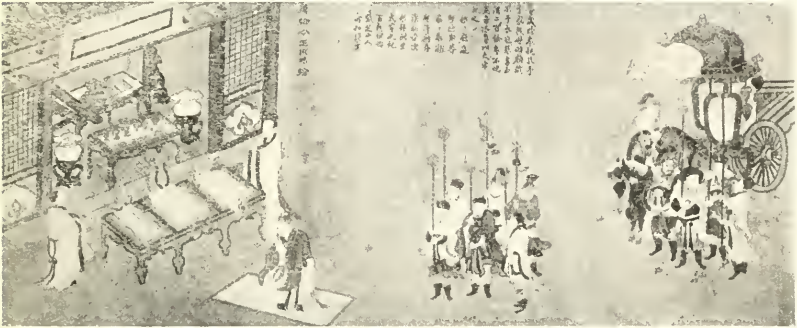
The *Tso-chuan* relates that in the fourteenth year of the Duke Ngai of Lu (B. C. 481) a strange animal was captured on a hunt by Ch'u-shang who took it for an inauspicious omen and killed it. It was brought before Confucius who recognized in it the supernatural Lin which is described as having the body of an antelope, the tail of an ox, and one horn. According to the *Kia yü* ("The Family Sayings"), Confucius exclaimed on this occasion: "It is a Lin. Why has it come? Why has it come?" He took the back of his sleeve and wiped his face, while his tears wet the border of his robe. Tse-kung asked the master why he wept, and he replied: "The Lin appears only when there is an intelligent king. Now it has appeared when it is not the time for it to do so, and it has been injured. This is why I was so much affected."



CONFUCIUS, VIEWING THE "LIN" KILLED BY HUNTERS, FEELS A PRESENTIMENT OF HIS DEATH.

Another book, *K'ung ts'ung*, has the following tradition. The disciple Tse-yu asked the master: "Among the flying creatures, the most honorable is the phenix, and among the running creatures, the most honorable is the Lin, for it is difficult to induce them to appear. May I be permitted to ask you to whom this Lin corresponds which now makes its appearance?" The master replied to him: "When the Son of Heaven spreads his beneficial virtue and is going to produce universal peace, then the Lin, the phenix, the tortoise, and the dragon announce in advance this auspicious augury. At present, the august dynasty of Chou is nearing its end, and in the world there is no sovereign (worthy of this name). For whom does this Lin come?" He then shed tears and said: "I am among men what the Lin is among the animals. Now when the Lin appears, it is

dead; this is proof that my career is terminated." Thereupon he sang: "At the time of the Emperors Yao and Shun, the Lin and the phenix were strolling about. Now since it is not the right era for them, what may I ask? O Lin, O Lin, my heart is tormented." It seems to me that our artist has taken this or a similar tradition as his starting-point to compose a scene of great dramatic force and emotion. Confucius supported by two of his disciples stands erect, his head thrown back, and points at the animal's body. He is uttering words in deep emotion, and the impression conveyed by them is wonderfully brought to life in the startled faces of the hunters. The presentiment of death, the feeling "it is all over" is vividly expressed in a masterly manner: it is the Chinese version of the Last Supper.



THE EMPEROR KAO-TSU, FOUNDER OF THE HAN DYNASTY, OFFERING AN OX, SHEEP, AND HOG IN THE TEMPLE OF CONFUCIUS.

With the true instinct of the genuine artist, Wang Chên-p'êng refrained from representing the death of the master. In his final dignified theme, he conceives him as a spirit, as the deified intellectual principle of the nation. The Emperor Kao-tsu (B. C. 206-195), the founder of the Han dynasty, is worshipping in the temple of the sage, offering the three victims which are a bull, a sheep and a pig (the *suovetaurilia* of the Romans), spread on a table below the altar. Se-ma Ts'ien, in his Biography of Confucius,<sup>24</sup> relates this event as follows: "The princes of Lu handed down from generation to generation the custom of offering sacrifices to K'ung-tse at fixed times of the year. On the other hand, the scholars too performed such rites as the banquet of the district and the practice of archery near the tomb of K'ung-tse. The hall formerly inhabited by the

<sup>24</sup> Chavannes, *Les mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, Vol. V, p. 429.

disciples (during the three years of mourning) has been transformed into a funeral temple by the following generations who deposited there the robe of K'ung-tse, his ceremonial hat, his lute, his chariot and his writings. All this was uninterruptedly preserved for more than two centuries until the advent of the Han. When the Emperor Kao-tsu passed through the land of Lu (B. C. 195), he offered a sacrifice of three great victims (at the tomb of K'ung-tse). When the lords, the high dignitaries and councilors arrive there, they always go first to pay homage to his tomb, and not until this is accomplished do they devote themselves to the affairs of government."

In glancing back at the series created by Wang Chên-p'êng we notice that he carefully avoided exploiting the subject for cheap genre-pictures, such as were turned out later by the draughtsmen of the Ming period, but set himself the nobler task of illustrating the spiritual progress of the life of the greatest of his compatriots. The spiritual element is emphasized in each production, and only a master mind could have evolved these high-minded conceptions. The birth, the death and the final deification of the national hero are merely alluded to in the form of visions in which transcendental elements of a highly emotional quality are blended. Exceedingly fortunate is the artist in his choice of the incidents in the philosopher's varied career; with preference he dwells on the grief and renunciations of the sage, on the manifold sufferings which have endeared him to the hearts of his people, but he does not neglect to bring him near to their innermost feelings by glorifying him as lute-player and expounder of his teachings, both pictures being symbolical of the Book of Songs (*Shi king*) and the Book of History (*Shu king*) which Confucius edited. In a similar manner the subject of the Lin is emblematic of his work, the Annals of Lu (*Ch'un ts'iu*), his part of which terminates with the record of this event. These three paintings will certainly remain of permanent value in the history of art.