



Undergraduate assignment feedback form
(to be completed by marker)

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<i>Module Code:</i> SICH5008	<i>Student number:</i> 2205749
<i>Module title:</i> Cultural and Intellectual Discourse of the Records of Ritual	
<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i> 	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i> NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

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☐ I have not used AI in my assignment

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

☒ I have used AI in my assignment

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Confucian Friendship from ‘the Conduct of Scholar’ in *the Classic of Rites*

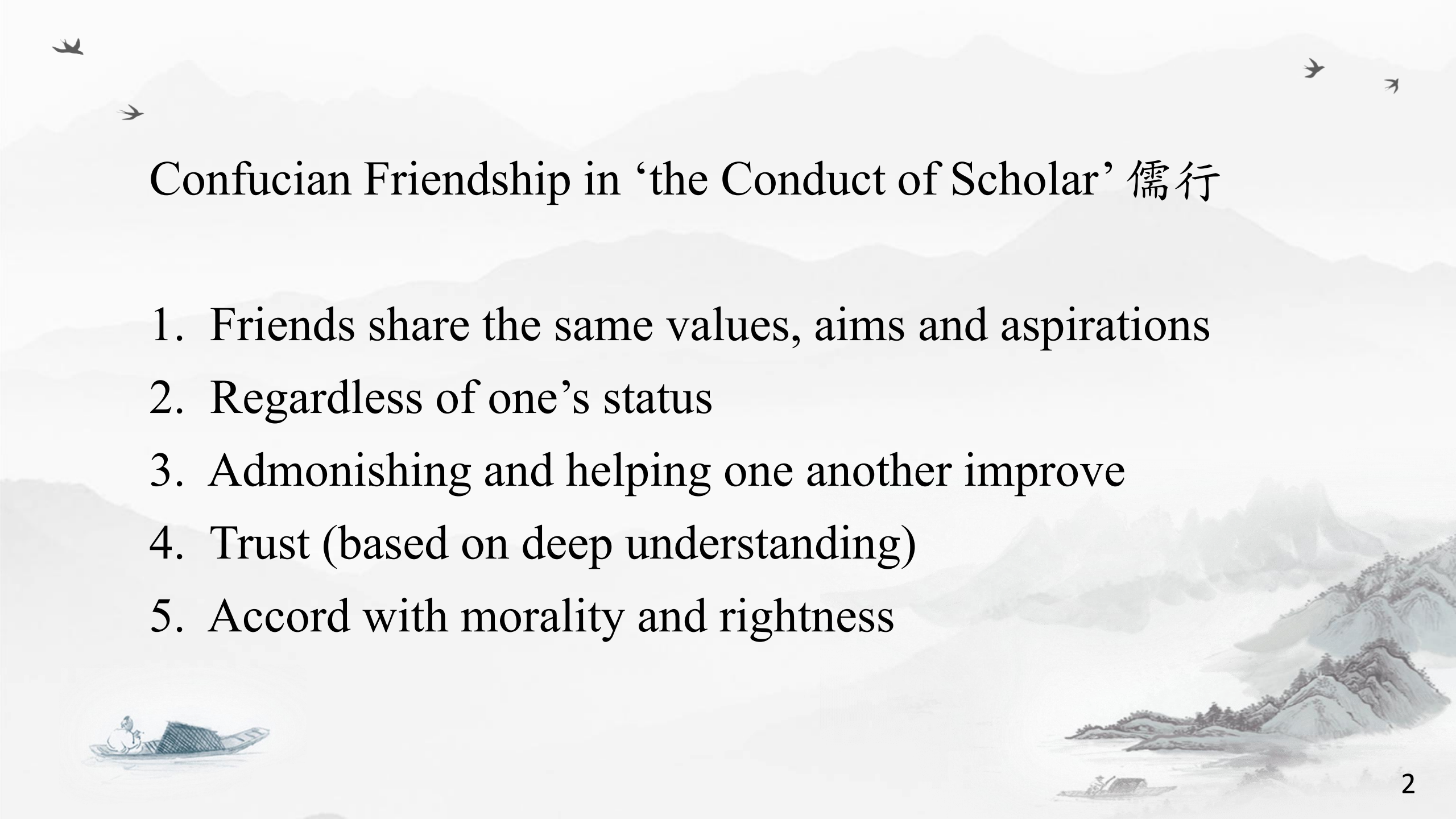
Module code: SICH5008

Module tutor: Prof. Su-Chuan Lin

Student name: Xiran Yao

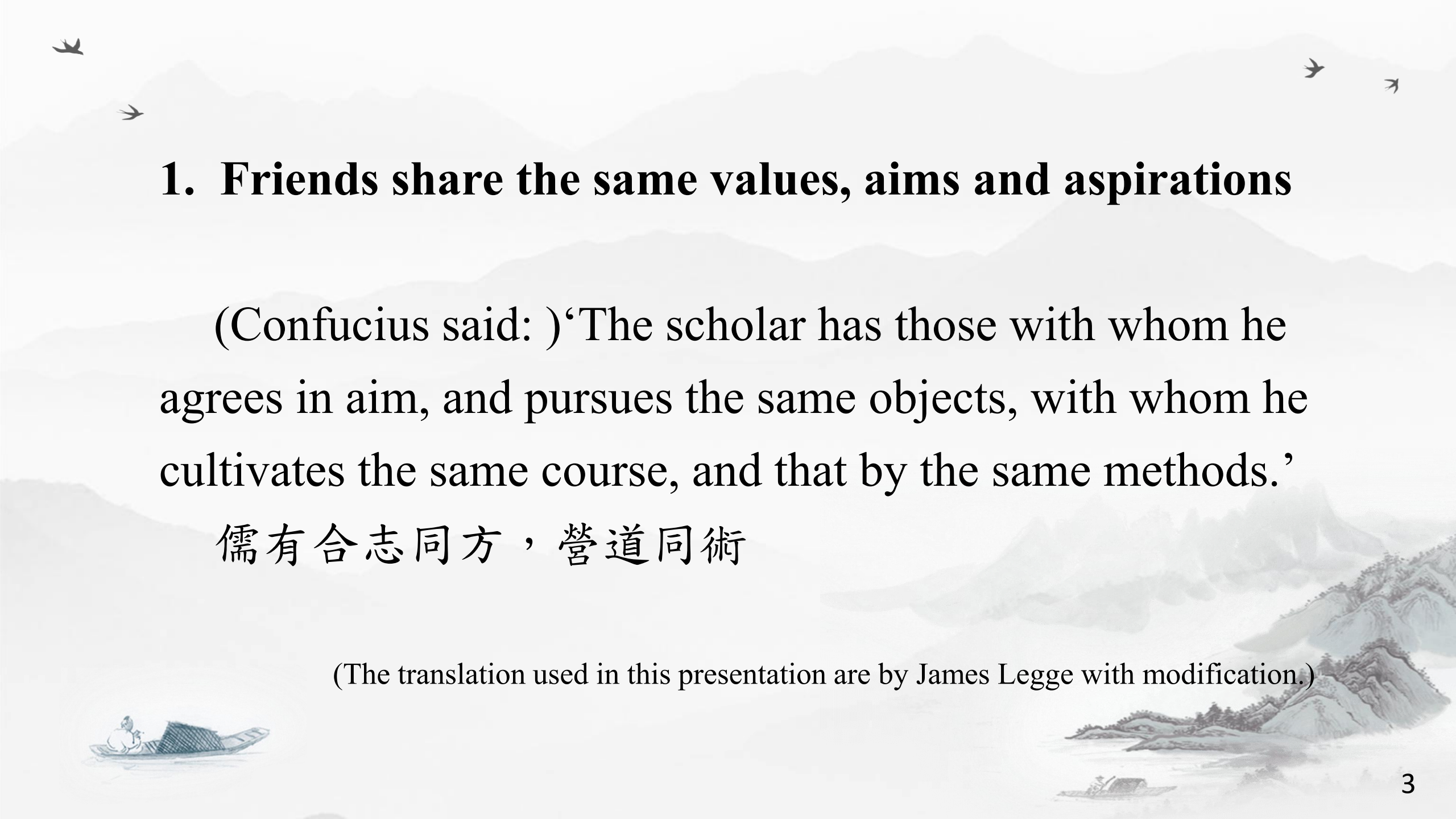
Student ID number: 2205749

Date: 13 August 2025

The background features a traditional Chinese ink wash style illustration. It depicts misty, layered mountains in the distance. Several birds are shown in flight, scattered across the upper portion of the image. In the lower-left corner, a small boat with a person inside is visible on the water. In the lower-right corner, there are more detailed mountain peaks and a small structure, possibly a pavilion or another boat, near the water's edge.

Confucian Friendship in ‘the Conduct of Scholar’ 儒行

1. Friends share the same values, aims and aspirations
2. Regardless of one’s status
3. Admonishing and helping one another improve
4. Trust (based on deep understanding)
5. Accord with morality and rightness

The background features a traditional Chinese ink wash style illustration. It depicts misty, layered mountains in the distance. Several birds are shown in flight, scattered across the upper portion of the image. In the lower-left corner, a small boat with a person inside is visible on the water. The overall tone is serene and scholarly.

1. Friends share the same values, aims and aspirations

(Confucius said:)‘The scholar has those with whom he agrees in aim, and pursues the same objects, with whom he cultivates the same course, and that by the same methods.’

儒有合志同方，營道同術

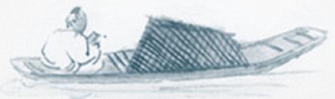
(The translation used in this presentation are by James Legge with modification.)

2. Regardless of one's status



‘When they stand on the same level with him, he rejoices in them; if their standing be below his, he does not despise them.’

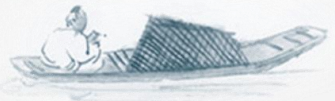
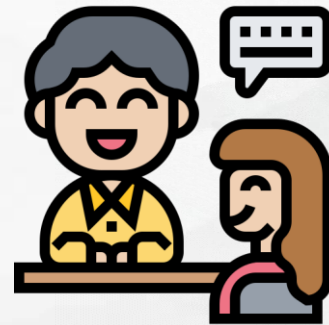
并立則樂，相下不厭



3. Admonishing and helping one another improve

‘When they stand on the same level with him, he rejoices in them; if their standing be below his, he does not despise them.’

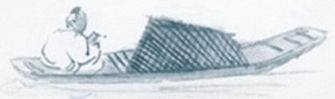
并立則樂，相下不厭



4. Trust (based on deep understanding)

‘If for long he has not seen them, and hears rumours to their prejudice, he does not believe them.’

久不相見，聞流言不信

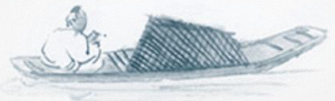


5. Accord with morality and rightness



‘His actions are rooted in correctness, and his standing in what is right. If they proceed in the same direction with him, he goes forward with them, if not in the same direction, he withdraws from them - so is he in his intercourse with his friends.’

其行本方立義。同而進，不同而退。其交友有如此者

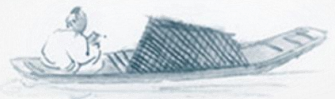


Classic comparison

The Master said, 'Exemplary persons seek harmony not sameness; petty persons, then, are the opposite.'

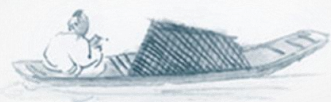
(Analects, 13.23)

子曰：「君子和而不同，小人同而不和。」





Guan Zhong and Bao Shu



Conclusion





Thank you for listening!

Bibliography

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Confucian Friendship from ‘the Conduct of Scholar’ in *the Classic of Rites*

Friends is one of the most important parts in our lives. They may accompany us during our growth or some special moments, creating joy together, or helping one another go through some tough times. However, how to get along with friends is always worth discussing. Today, I’m going to share with you about how Confucius thought friendship would be like for a scholar or a learned person.

The passage I’d like to share with you is from the chapter ‘the Conduct of Scholar’ in *the Classic of Rites*. I’ve summarised 5 principles of friendship:

1. Friends share the same values, aims and aspirations

Confucius said: ‘The scholar has those with whom he agrees in aim, and pursues the same objects, with whom he cultivates the same course, and that by the same methods.’¹

儒有合志同方，營道同術

This is a fundamental principle for friendship. When they have the same aims and aspirations, they can work together toward the same objective. As they share the same value, their judgement toward things will be consistent, and they can understand and agree with one another and with fewer arguments. Values are inward mindsets, and course and methods refer to the outward practices. If friends share the same values and goals, the combined power is much more than two separate people, for they can encourage and support one another. Thus, their friendship will be strong lasting.

2. Regardless of one’s status

‘When they stand on the same level with him, he rejoices in them; if their standing be below his, he does not despise them.’

并立則樂，相下不厭

When friends are at the same level, such as being officials, they will be happy. Also, when they are not on the same level, like when your position is lower than your friend’s, they will

¹ The translation used in this presentation are by James Legge with modification.

not look down upon you or dislike you for this reason. A real friendship is not based on external conditions. They will not care much about your wealth and status because it is your mind and soul that are precious and build the friendship.

3. Admonishing and helping one another improve

Another commentary gives a different idea on this sentence. It said that when friends are together, they are happy and not tired of showing modest attitudes, in order to learn and receive advice from one another. This shows the humility of the scholars as mentioned by Confucius. I think this is also a crucial and beneficial aspect of friendship: we respect and learn from one another, not just seeking joy, but helping others to improve.

4. Trust (based on deep understanding)

‘If for long he has not seen them, and hears rumours to their prejudice, he does not believe them.’

久不相見，聞流言不信

Confucius said that the friendship of scholars is that, if they have not seen each other for a long time, and hear rumours about others’ prejudice, they won’t believe those rumours. Although there is a long-time separation, rumours cannot easily break the firm trust between them, because their friendship is grounded on deep understanding, the understanding of each other’s minds and hearts. It is to the depth that those people who start or spread the rumour could never reach.

5. Accord with morality and rightness

‘His actions are rooted in correctness, and his standing in what is right.’

其行本方立義

It seems this is less related to friends, but I think this is the principle of life for the scholar, so it also applies when they are making decisions in friendship. They will not follow their personal fondness or try to amuse one another. They will do what is right and morally correct. It is not being cold or cruel to friends, on the contrary, people with similar insights will be delighted and respect you if you act according with rightness, and this is the kind of person a scholar would like to make friends with.

Confucius then said, ‘If they proceed in the same direction with him, he goes forward with

them, if not in the same direction, he withdraws from them - so is he in his intercourse with his friends.’ 同而進，不同而退。其交友有如此者

This is what a scholar's friendship is like. Take further interaction with those who are in the same direction as you. If their pursuits are different, such as when you pursue rightness while others don't agree with you, it is better not to force each other. If it's unable to change their mind, quietly leaving a distance would be a good choice.

This returns to the first principle: make friends with the same values and aims. This is also the wisdom of choosing friends.

Classic comparison

The Master said, 'Exemplary persons seek harmony not sameness; petty persons, then, are the opposite.' (*Analects*, 13.23)

子曰：「君子和而不同，小人同而不和。」

They seem contradictory, but in fact, what Confucius wanted to emphasize is the same inner qualities, such as values and aspirations, not external similarity. Friends should respect diversity, such as different hobbies and personalities. It is the same values and aims that hold them together in harmony.

Story: Guan Zhong and Bao Shu

I'd like to share a story with you about the famous friendship in Chinese history.

2000 years ago, in the Zhou dynasty, there were two best friends called Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya. They became best friends at a very young age. They shared the same value, did business together, and became officials in the state of Qi. When they were doing business, Guan Zhong usually took more profits, but Bao Shu never complained about this. He said Guan Zhong was poor and ought to take more to feed his family. Later, Guan Zhong was imprisoned because of the failure of his superior. Bao Shu strongly recommended Guan Zhong to his superior, putting him in a position even higher than his, because he knew that Guan Zhong was more talented than him, and he didn't care about the queries or discussions outside. This is a firm trust based on deep understanding and equal friendship regardless of their different status. Guan Zhong once said: It is my parents who have born me, but it is Bao Shu who truly understands me. They became a model of friendship.

Conclusion

Friends should first have the same basic values and ultimate goals, which are aligned with morality and rightness. They never tire of helping others improve or giving advice and are happy to accept them. After thoroughly and deeply understanding one another, they build a firm trust that could never be broken by other people or other outside factors.

This is a Confucian friendship, in which we can cultivate and improve ourselves.