

Chinese Religions

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Chinese religion help to shape its culture and people?

Religion In China

- The religious history of China is complex, and has evolved over the centuries. Deeply interwoven into their beliefs is the worship of their ancestors. The Chinese believed that the spirits of their ancestors were watching over them, and that they could be called upon during difficult times.



Chinese Philosophies/Religions		
Philosophy/ Religion	Founders	Characteristics
Confucianism	Confucius (Kongzi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace and order Respect for elders Ethical human relationships
Daoism	Laozi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reject material things Commune with nature Become one with Dao (force within all things)
Buddhism	Buddha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four Noble Truths Eightfold path Nirvana Harmony with the universe



Confucianism

- In 551 B.C.E. (Zhou) a man by the name of Kongzi was born to a poor family in the province of Shandong. Kongzi is known in the western world as Confucius.



The Teacher

- Confucius saw many problems in the world and wanted to correct them. When his attempts to become an advisor to a number of different government officials failed, he became a teacher.



Peace and Order

- The most important things to Confucius were peace, and order. He felt that everyone had a proper role in society, and that if people were willing to accept their role, and fulfill it, that peace and harmony would abound.



Respect for Elders

- In order to help people accept their roles in society, and establish order, Confucius outlined how individuals should treat one another. The most important of these ethics outlined the responsibilities of children to respect and listen to their parents, and other elders.



Ethics

- He also laid out ethics for how subjects should follow rulers, for how rulers should treat subjects, how husbands and wives should treat one another, and how friends should treat each other.



Teachings Accepted by Emperor

- During his own lifetime Confucius' teachings were not widely accepted. However, within a hundred years, they were being used by the emperor to help him rule, and eventually became a widely followed religion. Confucianism would remain a powerful force in Chinese history.



Daoism

- A contemporary of Confucius was a teacher named Laozi. Most of what we know about Laozi is so heavily mixed with legend, that it is difficult to know what is true, and what is myth.



Reject Material Things

- Laozi taught that a force known as the Dao permeated all living things. He told his followers that the most important thing an individual could do is to reject the world, and their desires for worldly possessions and power, and commune with nature, bringing ones self into a state of oneness with the Dao.



Relate to Nature

- Many individuals in China practices both Confucianism and Daoism. Confucianism taught them how to behave towards one another, while Daoism taught them how to behave towards the natural world, and with themselves personally.



Buddhism Arrives in China

- Buddhism was founded by an Indian prince, who called himself the Buddha. The Buddha or "Enlightened One" taught his people about Four Noble Truths, and an Eightfold Path. He also taught the people to use meditation.



The Four Noble Truths

- Suffering is part of human life.
- Suffering is caused by people's desires for pleasure and material things. (This results in an endless cycle of rebirths or reincarnation.)
- Overcoming desires during lifetime eventually brings end to this cycle and suffering.
- Desires can be overcome by following the Eightfold Path.



The Eightfold Path

- In order to eliminate their desires for worldly things, and thus end the cycle of rebirths, the Buddha taught his people to follow eight principals:



- Know the truth
- Resist evil
- Say nothing hurtful
- Respect life
- Free the mind from evil
- Work in service to others
- Resist evil
- Practice meditation

Nirvana

- By following the eightfold path, and avoiding evil extremes, the Buddha taught that an individual could achieve nirvana. He taught that nirvana, which in their language meant to blow out a candle, was a state of non-existence.



In Harmony with Universe

- Nirvana was not a place, like heaven, but rather an actual state of non-existence. When someone reached nirvana, their soul was in harmony with the universe, and they would cease to exist.



