

CHINA'S "THREE TEACHINGS:"

Confucianism

Daoism

Buddhism

CONFUCIANISM, DAOISM,
AND BUDDHISM IN AN
INTERCONNECTED
COSMOS WITH LOTS OF
GODS

THE INTERCONNECTED COSMOS

- Organ in your body
- Spatial direction
- Ritual musical tone
- One of the “Five Phases” (wood, earth, water, fire, metal)
- Color
- Ethical/moral quality (justice, etc)
- Heavenly constellation

CONFUCIANISM

- A set of teachings by followers of Master Kong (Kong fuzi), 551-479 BCE
- Classical texts complete by 100 BCE
- Texts and commentaries still being written

CORE CONFUCIAN CONCEPTS

- Harmonious hierarchy, nourished by creative extension of cultural heritage
- Filiality
- Ruler-subject reciprocal responsibilities (if a ruler is unjust, the people can work together with Heaven to overthrow him)
- Husband-wife reciprocal responsibilities (family as little empire)
- Individual moral responsibility (first major teaching to DE-LINK birth status from moral authority)

CENTRALITY OF LANGUAGE

- Language, categories, and naming are crucial.
- You must live up to your “job description”--a father must DO what a father should do, etc.

CONFUCIANISM INSTITUTIONALIZED

- Governmental civil-service examinations
- Official sacrifices to Confucius and other worthy teachers and officials

DAOISM (“TAOISM”)

- Coalescence of teachings floating around in 5th-2nd centuries BCE
- No real founder--Laozi (Lao-tsu) just means “the old one.”
- Main text “Dao De Jing” (Tao-te ching), title means “Classic of the Way and Virtue.”

CORE DAOIST CONCEPTS

- Language and naming DON'T matter--you should break free of them!
- If you get stuck in the part, you won't see the whole.
- Banish all distinctions, see the vastness of it all.
- Yielding can overcome rigidity and strength.

DAOISM

INSTITUTIONALIZED

- Temples and lineages of priests
- Rituals to maintain the interconnected cosmos

BUDDHISM

- Originates in India around same time as origin of Confucianism.
- Enters China in 1st and 2nd centuries CE, following trade routes
- Filled a need: offered a personal spirituality at a time when empire was crumbling

CORE CONCEPTS: FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

- All life is suffering
- Suffering comes from being attached to things, desiring things
- Stop the attachment and stop the suffering
- Live a balanced, ethical life and thus become able to get rid of your attachments (“Nirvana”)

CORE CONCEPTS: MAHAYANA

- Many Buddhas
- Bodhisattvas--they COULD reach Nirvana, but choose to stay in our world and help us reach it
- Reincarnation--right conduct leads to higher forms of life with access to Nirvana
- Possibility of a blissful afterlife in a Buddhist heaven

CHINESE BUDDHISM INSTITUTIONALIZED

- Temples and convents, priests, monks, and nuns
- “Compassionate” institutions--hospitals, charities

LOTS OF GODS

- Earliest “supernatural” forces: ancestors, natural forces (wind, thunder, etc)
- “Heaven” as early god--enforces consequences for actions
- Locality gods who respond to local conditions
- Hierarchy: like imperial hierarchy (from the god in your kitchen to the Heavenly Emperor)
- Interpenetration of earthly officials and gods
- Bodhisattvas as gods: Guanyin

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

- **CONFUCIANISM:** the teaching associated with ethics, government, interpersonal relations, and individual responsibility
- **DAOISM:** arts, maintenance of the interconnected cosmos
- **BUDDHISM:** personal spirituality, institutions of compassion and charity, rituals for what happens after death

THE THREE TEACHINGS TODAY

- Called “superstition” during late 19th-c. modernization
- Uninterrupted development in Taiwan; seen as NOT in conflict with modernization
- People’s Republic of China--banned 1949-1978, allowed back 1978 to present, under governmental control