

Ancient China: Religion and Philosophies

Three major religions or philosophies shaped many of the ideas and history of Ancient China. They are called the three ways and include Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Legalism.

Taoism

Taoism was founded during the Zhou Dynasty in the 6th century by Lao-Tzu. Lao-Tzu wrote down his beliefs and philosophy in a book called the Tao Te Ching.

Taoism believes that people should be one with nature and that all living things have a universal force flowing through them. Taoists didn't believe in a lot of rules or government. In this way they were very different from the followers of Confucius.

The idea of Yin and Yang comes from Taoism. They believed that everything in nature has two balancing forces called Yin and Yang. These forces can be thought of as dark and light, cold and hot, male and female. These opposing forces are always equal and balanced.

Confucianism

Not long after Lao-Tzu founded Taoism, Confucius was born in 551 BC. Confucius was a philosopher and thinker. Confucius came up with ways that people should behave and live. He didn't write these down, but his followers did.

Confucius' teachings focus on treating others with respect, politeness, and fairness. He thought that honor and morality were important qualities. He also said that family was important and honoring one's relatives was required. Unlike Taoists, followers of Confucius believed in a strong organized government.

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Confucius



Lao-Tzu was the founder of Taoism

Confucius is famous today for his many sayings. Here are a few of them:

- Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses.
- It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop.
- Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in getting up every time we do.
- When anger rises, think of the consequences.
- Everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it.

Buddhism

Buddhism was based on the teachings of Buddha. Buddha was born in Nepal, just south of China, in 563 BC. Buddhism spread throughout much of India and China. Buddhists believe in a "rebirth" of the self. They also believe that the cycle of rebirth is complete once a person lives a proper life. At this point the person's soul would enter nirvana.

Legalism

Idea of Legalism: Punishment for bad behavior and a reward for good behavior. Legalists believe the people of China should work to serve the government and the emperor Shi Huangdi demands ALL BOOKS BE BURNED except books on Medicine, Technology, and Farming

1) What are the three major religions of Ancient China (Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) sometimes called?

- A. The triple threat
 - B. The three ways
 - C. The three perfections
 - D. The three philosophies
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2) Which religion did Lao-Tzu found?

- A. Taoism
 - B. Buddhism
 - C. Hinduism
 - D. Confucianism
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3) Which of the following is NOT part of the Taoist beliefs?

- A. People should be one with nature
 - B. Lots of rules and a strong government is good
 - C. Everything in nature has two forces: the Yin and the Yang
 - D. All living things have a universal force flowing through them
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4) Where did the religion of Buddhism begin?

- A. Mongolia
 - B. India
 - C. Japan
 - D. Nepal
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5) The strictest of Chinese philosophical schools, which advocated strong laws and punishments.

- A. Mohists
 - B. Reformists
 - C. Legalists
 - D. Classicists
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6) Which of the Ancient Chinese religions believed that eventually your spirit can enter a place called nirvana?

- A. Buddhism
 - B. Taoism
 - C. Animism
 - D. Confucianism
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7) In the religion of Buddhism, what is the concept that all actions have consequences?

- A. Destiny
 - B. Karma
 - C. Nirvana
 - D. Boomerang Theory
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8) Which of the following statements is part of the philosophy of Confucianism?

- A. Everything in the world has a balance of forces called the Yin and Yang
 - B. If you live your life right, then eventually you can enter nirvana
 - C. Honoring your family and relatives is an important part of life
 - D. Laws and rules are not important
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9) Which of the following men was not a founder of a major Ancient Chinese religion/philosophy?

- A. Muhammad
 - B. Buddha
 - C. Confucius
 - D. Lao-Tzu
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10) What is something that Confucius is still famous today for?

- A. The book he wrote called The Art of War His
- B. His many sayings that were written down by his followers
- C. His art including many paintings and drawings
- D. Poetry describing the beauty of nature