

Major Religions and Philosophies in China c. 551 BCE–PRESENT DAY

RELIGIONS/PHILOSOPHIES

- 1 c. 500 BCE–PRESENT DAY
Confucianism
- 2 c. 500 BCE–PRESENT DAY
Taoism
- 3 c. 1279–PRESENT DAY
Islam
- 4 1601–PRESENT DAY
Christianity



An eighth-century stone engraving of Confucius (c. 551–484 BCE). His teachings dominated Chinese society for around 2,000 years.

BCE

500

CE

500

1000

1500

2000

EVENTS

- c. 551–484 BCE Life of philosopher Confucius
- c. 500–200 Classical Age of Chinese philosophy or Age of a Hundred Philosophers. Six major schools exist, of which two are still popular: Confucianism, concerned with morality and good government, and Taoism, concerned with understanding *tao* (way or road) of nature and universe
- c. 371–289 Life of Confucian philosopher and second sage, Meng-tzu (Mencius). He stresses preserving innate human goodness through moral education
- c. 369–286 Life of Chang Tzu, supposed author of important Taoist mystic work of same name
- 298–230 Life of Confucian philosopher Hsun Tzu. He argues that innately evil humans can be improved with good education and moral training
- 221–206 Legalism (philosophy concerned with creating strong, centralized government) is paramount under ruthless, totalitarian Ch'in dynasty
- 206 BCE–8 CE Confucianism elevated to state cult under Western Han dynasty
- c. 124 BCE First Imperial University founded for prospective civil servants to study Confucian texts—*Five Classics* and *Four Books*
- 34–156 CE Organized religious Taoism thought to date from this period
- 65 First reliable reference to Buddhism in China. Chinese varieties of Buddhism develop under influence of Confucianism and Taoism
- c. 200–400 Decline of Confucianism as Taoism and Buddhism flourish in politically disunited China
- 364–370 Taoist monasteries established
- 400s Introduction of Zen Buddhism from Japan
- 606 Sui dynasty establishes rigorous Confucian-based civil service exam
- 618–907 Confucian revival under T'ang dynasty, but Buddhism suppressed (from 845). Period of greatest Taoist success: it reaches Tibet, Kashmir, and Japan
- 960–1279 Neo-Confucian movement (concerned with *li*—universal principle, truth, order, or law found in all things) popularized under Sung dynasty
- 1130–1200 Life of Chu Hsi, neo-Confucian scholar whose views become neo-Confucian orthodoxy
- 1279–1368 Influx of Islamic peoples under Mongol rule leads to establishment of Muslim communities
- 1281 Yuan emperor Kublai Khan, Buddhist patron, orders Taoist cannon to be burnt
- 1601 First Christian missionaries (Jesuits) arrive in Peking (Beijing)
- 1842 British and American Christian missionaries begin to preach the gospel within trading enclaves
- 1855–1874 Muslim rebellions against Ch'ing (Manchu) rule
- 1905 Abolition of Confucian-based civil service examination system
- 1900–1950 Chinese governments oppose Taoism as being based on superstition
- 1912 Republic declared. Confucian-based imperial system ends
- 1949 Communist government condemns Confucianism and religions
- 1977 Communist government opposition to Confucianism and religions ends

Gods of Greece and Rome

The gods of the Greeks were said to live on Mount Olympus in northern Greece. Zeus was regarded as the ruler of the gods but not the creator of the world. In Greek legends, the gods are constantly in conflict with one another and the authority of Zeus, reflecting the turbulent political and social lives of the Greeks themselves. Their tales often relate the interference of gods in the lives of mythical heroes such as Herakles. Greeks felt their gods to be close to the affairs of mortal men, and many of the gods are personifications of activities and forces important to Greek life: the ocean, the home, warfare, hunting, and love. The Romans adopted most of the Greek gods, calling them by other names. Roman names for the Olympian gods shown here are given in parentheses.



Zeus (Jupiter),
father and ruler of
the Olympian gods



Poseidon (Neptune),
god of the oceans
and brother of Zeus



Ares (Mars),
god of war and
military strength



Hephaestus (Vulcan),
god of fire and
blacksmith to
the gods



Hermes (Mercury),
messenger of Zeus;
god of speedy travel



Apollo (Apollo),
god of poetry, music,
and archery



Hera (Juno),
wife and sister
of Zeus



Athena (Minerva),
goddess of wisdom,
arts, and war



Aphrodite (Venus),
goddess of love and
beauty



Artemis (Diana),
goddess of hunting
and sister of Apollo



Demeter (Ceres),
goddess of
agriculture



Hestia (Vesta),
goddess of the home
and the hearth

Buddhism: A Buddhist Life

The Buddhist community

- The Buddhist community (*sangha*) is made up of four groups of people: monks (*bhiksus* or *bhikkhus*), nuns (*bhiksunis* or *bhikkhunis*), laymen, and laywomen
- Laymen and women give shelter, clothing, and food to the monks and nuns
- Monks and nuns spend their lives in poverty, traveling, meditating, studying, and teaching others about Buddhism

Buddhist children

- Young boys and girls can become trainee Buddhist monks and nuns from the age of eight
- The beginning of life as a monk is celebrated in the *Pravrajya* ceremony
- Girls do not usually have an initiation ceremony of their own, but in Burma they have an ear-piercing ceremony on the day of their brothers' *Pravrajya*

Buddhist monks

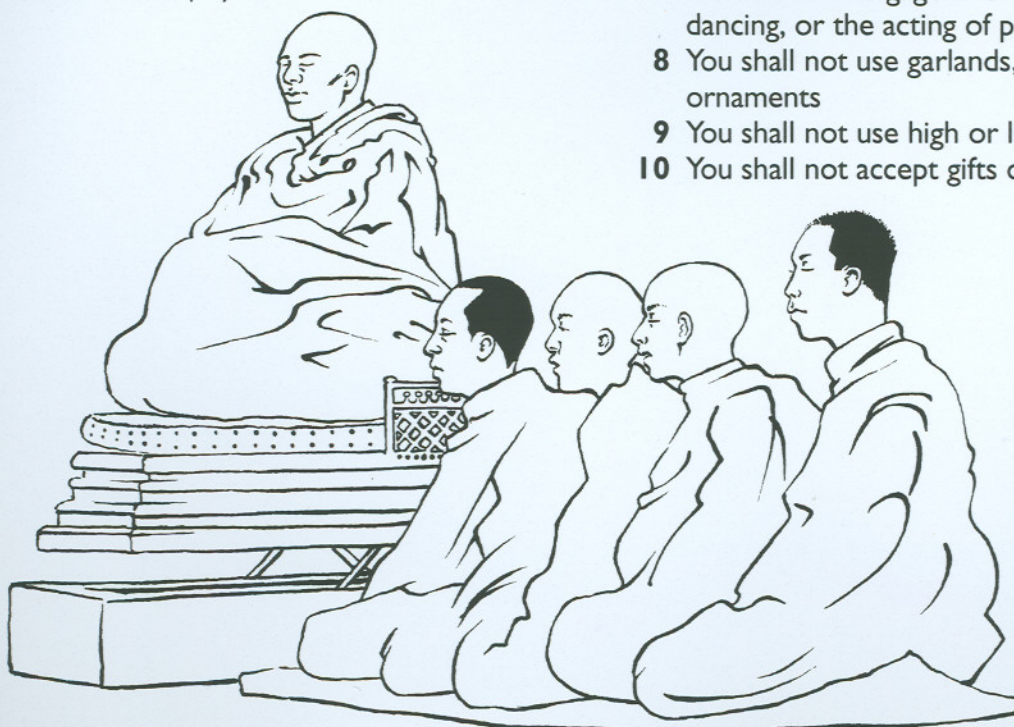
- There are many more Buddhist monks than there are Buddhist nuns
- Buddhist monks are easily recognizable because they have shaven heads and generally wear special red, orange, yellow, gray, or black robes (the color depends on the country in which they live)
- Monks live in poverty and have just four possessions: a robe to wear; a begging bowl to hold food; a razor to shave with; and a filter to strain insects from their water

The Buddhist precepts

The first five precepts are for all Buddhists, who live by these rules and recite them every day. The second five precepts are for monks and nuns.

- 1 You shall not take life
- 2 You shall not take what is not given
- 3 You shall not be unchaste
- 4 You shall not lie
- 5 You shall not drink intoxicating liquors
- 6 You shall not be intemperate in eating and shall not eat after noon
- 7 You shall not engage in or witness singing, dancing, or the acting of plays
- 8 You shall not use garlands, perfumes, or ornaments
- 9 You shall not use high or luxurious beds
- 10 You shall not accept gifts of gold or silver

Buddhist monks at prayer



Christianity: A Christian life

BAPTISM

- Baptism, also known as christening, is a ceremony during which members are given their Christian names and welcomed into the Christian Church
- In most Christian faiths babies are baptized. Baptists, however, believe that members should be baptized when they are old enough to understand and make a choice to join the Church
- The sooner a baby is baptized the better, because Christians believe that if someone dies without having been baptized, he or she cannot go to Heaven but instead goes to a special place called Limbo (Roman Catholics)
- At a baptism, the priest or minister places holy water on the baby's forehead in the shape of the cross. In the Baptist Church, baptisms involve immersing the whole body in water, such as a river
- The use of water at baptism ceremonies symbolizes the cleansing away of sin
- Some Christians use oil at baptism to seal the Holy Spirit (chrism)
- Baptisms are also the time when a baby's godparents are named. Godparents promise to look after the baby if something should happen to his or her parents and to make sure that the child is raised as a Christian

FIRST COMMUNION

- Holy Communion is when a Christian eats the bread and wine that become, or are symbolic of, the body and blood of Jesus. Roman Catholic children take their first holy communion when they are about eight years old. After First Communion children can be confirmed

CONFIRMATION

- Once they are old enough to understand their faith, Christians have a confirmation ritual. For Catholics this is usually at age 11–14, but for other Christian faiths it can be at any time, even as an adult

SERVICES

- A Christian service includes hymns, prayers, readings, and a sermon that gives lessons based on the Bible to be used in everyday life
- Holy Communion is a special service, also called the Eucharist, commemorating the Last Supper. At the service, the priest serves bread and wine to the worshippers. Roman Catholics believe this bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ

PRAYERS

Different prayers are used for different purposes. The main types of Christian prayers are:

- Praising God
- Giving thanks to God
- Asking for forgiveness from God
- Asking for help from God and asking God to help other people

THE CLERGY

The clergy is the term used for religious leaders in Christianity. In different Christian denominations different names are used, including:

- Ministers
- Priests
- Vicars
- Pastors
- In some churches, the head of a region is called a bishop. The head of the bishops is an archbishop
- In Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox Church, only men can be members of the clergy
- People who live in a religious order, or closed community, are called monks or nuns. They spend their time in quiet devotion rather than preaching to others. They also often help in schools and hospitals

Shintoism: Basic Teachings

Main beliefs

- The world was originally created from chaos
- Life is beautiful, good, and powerful, and should be accepted and loved for what it is. It is more important than the afterlife
- There are thousands, or even millions, of different Shinto *kami* (gods, spirits, or sacred objects), each protecting particular places in Japan or different aspects of life
- Kami must be respected and revered, but they do not need to be worshipped, because everyone is capable of being a kami spirit in this life

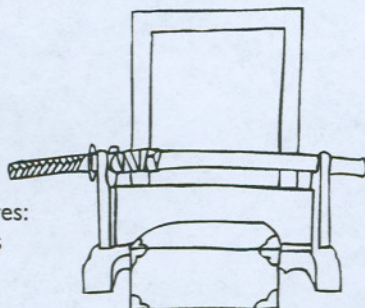
Shinto traditions

- Shrine Shinto (Jinja or Jinja)
- Sectarian Shinto (Kyoko)
- State Shinto (Kokka)

Shinto objects

- Torii, sacred gateways to shrines
- Three sacred treasures: mirror, sword, jewels
- Grand Shrine of Ise, the most respected Shinto shrine
- Jino Stone, placed in the garden in a thatched shelter to honor Jino, the god who looks after property
- Sakaki, the holy tree
- Gohei, a bamboo or wooden pole with plaited paper or cloth attached

Three sacred treasures:
mirror, sword, jewels



Sacred texts

- The *Kojiki* (the record of ancient matters, including the creation)
- The *Nihon Shoki* (Japanese chronicles)
- In Shintoism, there is no holy book that gives God's instructions on how to behave

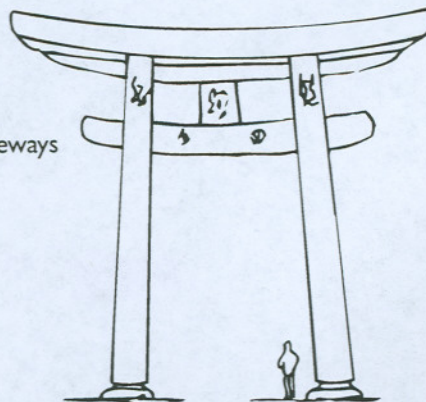
Festivals and holy days

- Oshogatsu (New Year) – January
- Adults' Day – second Sunday of January
- Ohinamatsuri (Girls' Festival) – March
- Prayer for good harvest – Spring
- Tango no Sekku (Boys' Festival) – May
- Hoshimatsuri, or Tanabata (Star Festival) – July
- Shinto thanksgiving – Autumn
- Shichi-go-san Festival – November

Worship and teaching

- Shintoists visit shrines (churches, or temples) for personal prayer regularly, often on the first or 15th day of each month
- Ceremonies are performed by the *kannushi* (amateur priests)
- At large shrines, there may be three types of religious official: the *nakatomi*, the *imibe*, and the *yrahe*

Torii, sacred gateways
to shrines



Confucianism: Basic Teachings

Main beliefs

- The five great relationships in life that must be recognized are those between: ruler and subject; father and son; husband and wife; elder brother and younger brother; and friend and friend
- We can hope to live in harmony with the universe only by facing up to the obligations that the five great relationships bring and by observing other Confucian laws and rites
- Confucianism does not entail a belief in gods or in life after death

Main laws

- People should have self-respect and treat each other with kindness and honesty
- Elders and ancestors should be revered, as should rulers

Confucian symbols and objects

- Symbolic patterns
- Ancestral tablets
- Temple of Confucius

Sacred texts

- The Five Classics:
 - Shu Ching* (Classic of History)
 - Shih Ching* (Classic of Odes)
 - I Ching* (Classic of Changes)
 - Ch'un Ch'iu* (Spring and Autumn Annals)
 - Li Ching* (Classic of Rites)
- The Four Books:
 - Lun Yu* (The *Analects*, or Sayings of Confucius)
 - Chung Yung* (Doctrine of the Mean)
 - Ta Hseuh* (Great Learning)
 - Meng Tzu* (Book of Mencius)

Worship and teaching

- Confucianism is a philosophy rather than a religious institution, and there is no formal Confucian teaching or worship of gods
- There are many different traditional rituals for social events such as marriages and funerals



An 8th-century stone engraving of Confucius

Taoism: Basic Teachings**Main beliefs**

- The Tao ("way") is a mystical presence that is the reality behind all things in the world and is the way nature works. It is not easily captured in words
- Everything in the Universe is constantly changing
- Living a simple life, reflecting on the Tao, and using the Te ("power") to keep in harmony with the changing Universe will eventually lead to a perfect balance in life
- There are two unseen forces in the Universe, called Yin and Yang, which are in everything and which balance each other harmoniously

Main laws

- Taoists must help others and be good in everything they do
- Taoists must not yearn for power and wealth or being "first in the world"

Three Pure Ones (*San-ch'ing*)

- Yuan Shih T'ien Tsun or Yuh-hwang Shang-ti – creator and source of all truth
- T'ai Shang Tao-chun or Wan-chang – who looks after learning
- Lao Tzu (Lao Zi or Lao-tse) – who became a god after he died

Taoist symbols

- Yin/Yang
- Lao Tzu's divine seal
- Trigrams

Sacred texts

- *Tao Te Ching* or *Dao De Jing* (*The Way and its Power*, the teachings of Lao Tzu)
- The writings of Chuang Tzu

Taoist groups

- Spirit Cloud Taoists
- Black-headed Taoists

Worship and teaching

- The Taoist religion stresses personal meditation on the Tao but also has monks and priests

The Three Pure Ones

Yuan Shih T'ien Tsun



T'ai Shang Tao-chun



Lao Tzu

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The Three Pure Ones

Yuan Shih T'ien Tsun



T'ai Shang Tao-chun



Lao Tzu

Buddhism: Basic Teachings

Main beliefs

- The “three jewels” (*triratna* or *tiratana*) of Buddhism are the Buddha, the *dharma* or *dhamma* (“teaching,” or “truth”), and the *sangha* (“community”). Anyone who “takes refuge” in these is considered a Buddhist
- The way to enlightenment is through the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path
- Theravada Buddhists believe that people should not worship any gods but should strive to attain happiness by learning to control their own minds
- Mahayana Buddhists believe that it is possible to attain happiness by having faith in, and praying to, the Buddha of Infinite Light (Amitabha Buddha)
- When people achieve true happiness, they are released from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth and reach a blissful state called *nirvana*

The Four Noble Truths

- Suffering is part of life and is brought about by the results of past actions (*karma* or *kamma*)
- Suffering is the result of giving value to the wrong things and desiring them
- Suffering will stop if selfish desires are crushed
- The way to crush desire and reach *nirvana* is to follow The Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path

- Right knowledge: acceptance of the Four Noble Truths, which allows life to be looked at from the right viewpoint and happiness found
- Right attitude: love and kindness are to be valued over selfishness
- Right speech: speech is to be kind and helpful, rather than boastful, gossiping, lying, or tale-telling
- Right action: think right thoughts, and this will allow good to be done, so overcoming evil
- Right living: employment is to be done that is useful to other people, and done to the best of one's ability

- Right effort: love, thinking, and concentration are to be developed rather than evil things, and the Noble Eightfold Path is to be followed at the individual's own pace
- Right mindfulness: the desire for unnecessary things is to be avoided
- Right concentration: the mind has to be controlled so that concentration on the important things in life can be learned

Buddhist symbols

- The Buddha's enlightenment (Buddha sitting in the lotus position)
- The Buddha's death (Buddha lying on his side)
- The Wheel of the Law

Sacred texts

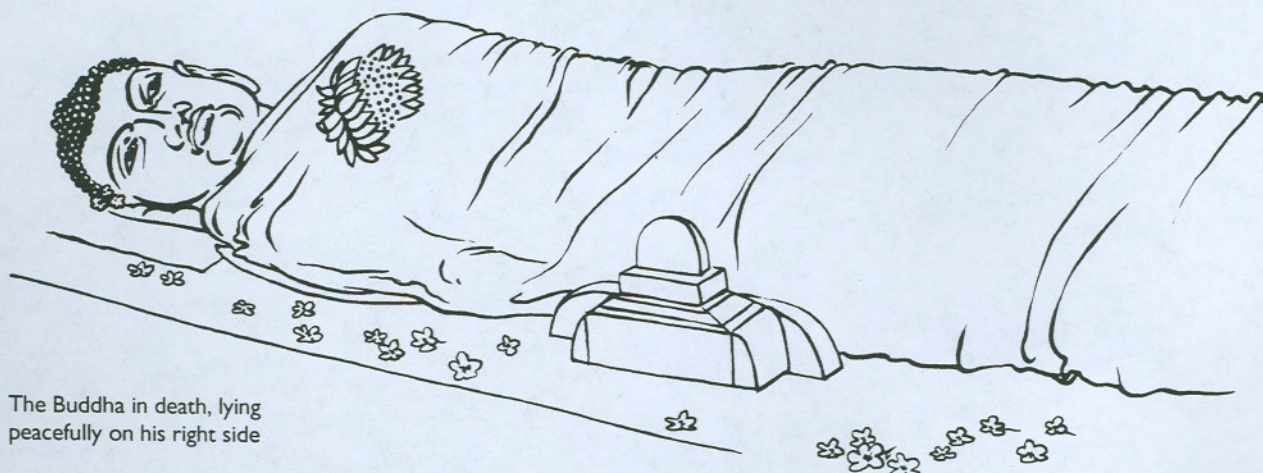
- *Tripitaka* (*Tipitaka*) or *Pali Canon* (Buddha's teachings)
- *Sutras* or *Suttas* (Buddha's teachings translated into Sanskrit)
- *Kajur* (Buddha's teachings translated into Tibetan)
- *Lalitavistara* (stories of Buddha's life in Sanskrit)
- *Buddhacarita* (stories of Buddha's life in Sanskrit)

Buddhist groups

- Theravada (“the southern way”)
- Mahayana (“the northern way”), which includes Zen Buddhism

Festivals and holy days

- Hana Matsuri (birth of Buddha) – April – Japan
- Saga dawa (Buddha's first sermon) – May – Tibet
- Festival of Wesak (Buddha's birth and enlightenment) – May/June – Thailand
- Summer Retreat (prayer and study) – July – China
- Anniversary of the arrival of Sanghamitta – December/January – Sri Lanka



The Buddha in death, lying peacefully on his right side