

# Diversity of World Religious Expression

## Religions of Far East

### Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism

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# Confucianism

- 2,500 years ago in China
- Supreme Sage and foremost teacher K'ung fu tsu (Confucius) and Second Sage Meng tzu (Mencius).
- Scriptures
  - The Analects, Doctrine of the Mean, Great Learning, and Writing of Mencius are the sacred books of Confucianism.
  - The Analects contain the basic teachings and was compiled by the students of Confucius after his death. Because it was not written as a systematic philosophy, it contains frequent contradictions and many of the philosophical doctrines are ambiguous.
- Sects
  - There are no formal sects within Confucianism. Followers are free to profess other religions yet still be Confucians.
- Estimated at 350 million, mostly in China, Japan, Burma and Thailand.

# Confucianism – Goal

- To create true nobility through proper education and the inculcation of all the virtues.
- To return to the way of one's ancestors and to discover the ancient way of virtue.
- Spiritual nobility and moral achievement are attainable by all men and seen in a wise person.
- Wise man's greatest virtues are benevolent love, duty, wisdom, truth, and propriety.
- Wise man always knows what is right and follows his knowledge.
- Confucius accepted the Tao (mysticism) but emphasized on the return to an idealized age and the cultivation of the wise man and on the pragmatic rather than the mystical.
- Salvation is seen as realizing and living one's natural goodness, which is endowed by heaven through education.

# Taoism

- Taoism began about 2,500 years ago in China.
- Sage Lao tzu is the founder to whom Confucius describes as a dragon riding the wind and clouds.
- The Tao te Ching or Book of Reason and Virtue, is the shortest of all scriptures, containing only 5,000 words.
- Taoism is a mystical tradition, so interpretations have been diverse and its sects are many.
- Estimated at 50 million, mostly in China and other parts of Asia.

# Taoism – Goal

- He, who has realized the Tao, has arrived at pure consciousness and sees the inner truth of everything.
- Only one who is free of desire can apprehend the Tao, thereafter leading a life of “actionless activity.”
- Realizing the mystical intuition of the Tao, which is the way, the undivided unity, and the ultimate Reality.
- Both imminent and transcendent, the Tao is the natural way of all things, the nameless beginning of heaven and earth, and the Mother of all things.
- All things depend upon the Tao, and all things return to it. Yet it lies hidden, transmitting its power and perfection to all things.
- There is no personal God in Taoism, and thus no union with Him.
- The worship is a part of the path.

# Shintoism

- Shinto is the indigenous religious tradition of Japan. Its roots lie deep in the prehistoric religious practices of the Japanese people. However, some believe that Shinto began around 2,500 - 3,000 years ago in Japan.
- There are two main divisions. One encompasses all thirteen ancient sects. The second is known as State Shinto. The State Shinto finds its highest expression in the worship of the Emperor and loyalty to the State and family.
- Shinto has no historical founder; however each of the 13 ancient sects believes it has its own founder.
- Shinto does not have any canon of sacred scriptures, although important elements of its mythology and cosmology are found in Kojiki (Records of the Ancient) and Nihongi or Nihonshoki (ancient Japanese chronicles). The ritual hymns and prayers called Norito were compiled into written collections (Yengishiki) at an early date.
- All Japanese participate in Shinto rites and many of them are also Buddhists. Hence, adherents are not a useful category for this religion. It is estimated that 30 million Japanese perform Shinto rites.

# Shintoism – Goal

- To achieve a proper relationship (known as Kāmi) with the ancestral beings.
- Kāmi is supernatural holy powers living in or connected to the world of the spirit.
- All living things can be Kāmi.
- Human nature possesses the most Kāmi.