The Three Paths Of Faith In Chinese History: Confucianism, Taoism And Buddhism

The Chinese culture has many different areas and the three paths of faith have had a huge role in Chinese history leaving a great impact on Chinese culture and their traditions.

The three paths of faith have influenced history in may ways. Arts, paintings, pottery, sculptures and literature were important in all, however Confucianism focused more on education, government politics and personal behaviour. Taoism more on literature, medicine and philosophy and Buddhism more on cultural and social behaviour.

Confucianism

A picture of a Confucian Ceremony

Confucianism began from a Chinese wise man and philosopher called Confucius who lived between 551 to 479 B.C.

Confucius was born in conflict and war, he felt that people did not respect each other, he wanted to teach people to be good and to be well behaved. Confucius wanted to have a good government and he believed in order to have this you needed a good and superior ruler.

Confucianism was more of a philosophy rather than a religion, they did not have a church or god. Confucius would teach men to become Junzi (a superior person), to respect each other, to be noble, to be kind and to know the difference between right and wrong. He had an important rule “that people should treat others as they would like to be treated themselves”.

Years later with the influence of Taoism, Confucianism's values changed and focused more on the importance of daily life and a way to live with nature and in harmony.

From about A.D. 200 to 600, Confucianism became less desired and Buddhism and Taoism became more popular.

Confucianism has influenced Chinese life throughout history and still remains an important part of Chinese cultures.

Taoism

A picture of the Symbol of Taoism.

Taoists believe in two complimentary forces in the universe, the Yin and the Yang.

Taoism, which is also referred to as Daoism is a Chinese religious tradition and philosophy that began around 400 B.C. founded by a Chinese philosopher called Lao-Tzu

Taoism beliefs are different from that of Confucianism. Confucianism believed that people could only live a good life if they were orderly and disciplined where as Taoism believes that people are all born good and worthy and that it is the effects of the life around them that destroys peoples goodness. They believe in leading a simple life, living in harmony and close to nature. By living in this natural way they will be at harmony with the Tao.

The word Tao is known as a road or path, it is not a name but more of a thing, it is the mother of all things, the natural cycle of the universe.

Taoism has influenced the Chinese for many years, today two types of Taoism exist the Zhengyi Tao, or Zhengyi Dao where priests read, sing, dance and pray to the gods and the Quanzhen Tao, or Quanzhen Dao where monks meditate, read, pray and take part in physical activities to live a harmonious life.

Buddhism

A picture of a Buddha

Buddhism is a popular religion founded in India in about 500 B.C. by a teacher called the Buddha. The word Buddha means “Enlightened One”, the first Buddha was Siddhartha Gautama, born in Nepal.

Siddhartha Gautama was a prince full of wisdom, he decided to leave his palace life and go travelling for many years. During this time he became enlightened and finally understood how to be free from any suffering. He taught others what he had learnt which became known as the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths:

1. That suffering is common.
2. That suffering is caused due to being greedy and ignorant.
3. That you can end suffering by not being greedy and ignorant
4. To follow the “Eightfold Path” to end any suffering.

Buddhists respect and follow what is known as “The Three Jewels”.

The Dharma (the Buddha’s teachings) - Buddhists believe in being reborn and that there is rebirth after death. The dharma preaches that how you are reborn is determined by how you have behaved in your previous life.

The Buddha (the enlightened one) - The Buddha preaches that you would remain in suffering whilst in this cycle of life but that you could avoid the suffering if you became a more honourable person by following the “Noble Eightfold Path”. The “Noble Eightfold Path” taught how to know the truth, resist evil, to not hurt others, to respect property, to hold a job, to free your mind of evil, to control your thoughts and to be able to concentrate properly. By following these guidelines this would lead to obtaining Nirvana which means being released from any suffering.

The Sangha (the community) - The Sangha is the Buddhist community that existed during the

time of the Buddha. It consisted of monks and nuns and focused on a simple live of discipline, meditation, study and to honour the Buddha.

Today, there are several types of Buddhist schools teaching Buddhism traditions with over 350 million followers.