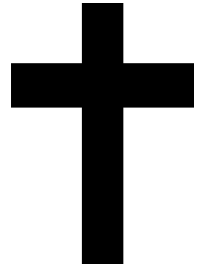


# Religions in East Asia

Mai Nguyen



# Confucianism

- Confucianism stemmed from China and is influenced by the beliefs of Confucius. Followers of Confucianism worship ancestral beings and value moral excellence. Confucianism is referred to as a religion and a philosophy because it acts as a guide to an individual's life and character.
  - “[M]oral character is achieved through the virtue of ren, or “humanity,” which leads to more virtuous behaviours, such as respect, altruism, and humility” (National Geographic Society).
  - “[P]eople are essentially good yet may have strayed from the appropriate forms of conduct.” Rituals were performed to encourage respect and bring people together to connect.
  - Filial piety (“devotion to family”) is important because family is valued highly, and maintaining love and loyalty for family helps establish a stronger society. “This devotion can take the form of ancestor worship, submission to parental authority, or the use of family metaphors.”



# Daoism

- Also known as Taoism, Daoism is a philosophy and religion that originated in China. The Dao, or “the way,” was created by Laozi, and this concept “is seen as the force behind the natural world. It is the model for humanity, the total of all things which are and which change” (“Daoism”).
  - The world is constantly transforming in cycles. The concept of yin and yang “dualistic but balanced principles of the Dao. The yin is the dark side, the breath which formed the earth. The yang is the light side, the breath which formed the heavens.”
  - The goal of Daoists is to establish harmony and maintain natural order and balance. Wu wei is a method of doing as little action as possible to achieve a natural flow of energy throughout the body.
  - “A Daoist pantheon developed in which gods formed a hierarchy, with heavenly gods mirroring earthly officials and demons mirroring social outcasts and criminals. People sought happiness, good health and prosperity by worshiping and appeasing the spirits.”
  - Daoists’ goal in life was to live a worthy and satisfying life so that their “[s]ouls reached happiness.”

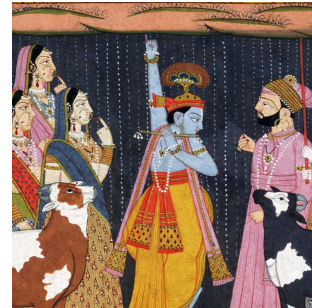


# Folk Christianity

- Folk Christianity is a combination of Christianity and animism, and of East Asia, the Philippines is the only country to practice this religion.
  - “[I]ndigenous Filipinos believed in a supreme sky god, or creator god. This god was invisible, his name was sacred and only spoken during rituals, and no images of him were made. He was believed to be so far from humanity that contact was often made via lower deities, in the form of prayers and rituals” (“Folk Christianity”).
  - Animism influenced ancient beliefs in which spirits resided in any object and animal, and animal spirits were connected to humans.
  - Souls went to heaven if they were good and hell if they were bad, and many believe in possessing multiple souls. How someone died or their worth in life influenced where a soul went after death.
  - “The spirits of the dead were appeased in order to prevent them from harming the living or taking the living with them to the realm of the dead.”
  - Because Folk Christianity is based on Spanish Catholicism, Filipinos view Christ similarly: “a deep sense of tragedy, a dread of or obsession with death and religious contemplation of the wounds and death of Christ.”

# Hinduism

- Hinduism is a very diverse religion that emerged in India and believes in the worship of multiple deities. Complex rituals led by priests were performed, but personal mediation has become popular among followers of Hinduism.
  - Brahman- “the ultimate reality; the ultimate source of all being” (“Hinduism”).
  - Atman- “the soul or self, an inherent, eternal part of all living things.”
  - Maya- “the visible world is maya; it appears as we see it but conceals a different reality.”
  - Reincarnation- “the soul is reborn after physical death into the body of another human or animal.”
  - Karma- “determines each new birth. It is based on our ignorance. ... We reap what we sow, in the present and future lives.”
  - Moksha- “release from karma, death, decay, anger, lusts and maya. This release is attained through understanding and detachment from worldly pleasures.”
  - The cow is a symbol for “the universe and its gifts to humanity.”



# Islam

- Islam originates in the Middle East, but the religion is popular among East Asian followers. Muslims worship Allah and believe that the Qur'an, the sacred text of Islam, is a revelation from God. The Five Pillars are beliefs and practices essential for Muslims to follow: Testimony of faith (Shahada), Prayer (Salat), Almsgiving (Zakat), Fasting (Sawm), Pilgrimage (Haj).
  - "Jesus was not the son of God and was not crucified. He is believed to have been a prophet whose work was superseded by Muhammad" ("Islam").
  - **Sunni Islam:** "recognized Muhammad's successor as the caliph or ruler of the believers. ... Caliphs were not prophets, since Muhammad was "the Seal of the Prophets," but were protectors of the tradition, leaders and administrators. ... Shari'a ... is central to the practices and beliefs of Islam."
  - **Shi'a Islam:** "recognize the imam as the principal authority figure and successor of Muhammad. The imam ... was appointed by Muhammad and possesses the infallible and inherent ability to interpret the Qur'an."
  - **Sufism:** "based on the love of God and the search for intimacy with him. ... Sufis regard themselves as seekers ... Their path involves spiritual purification through self-mortification, prayer and striving. One passes through several stages including repentance, conversion, poverty and love. However, human effort is not enough."

# Shinto

- Shinto (“the way of kami”) is a form of religion based in Japan, and its followers worship the kami (gods) that are represented by ancestral spirits and objects in the natural world. The rituals that define Shinto are performed to respect kamis.
  - Japanese people believe that Shinto is “a set of customs” rather than a religion (“Shinto”).
  - “Shinto's key concepts of purity, harmony, family respect, and subordination of the individual before the group have” greatly influenced Japanese culture (Cartwright).
  - Any person approaching a shrine enters through gates and performs a ritual purification with water. Then they “stand outside the worship hall, throw a coin in an offering box, pull a bell rope to bring their presence to the notice of the gods, clap their hands, pray, then clap their hands again before leaving” (“Shinto”).
  - Shinto festivals encourage families to get together; these festivals include portable shrines and represent the god’s trip and security of the designated area.



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