
The Role Of Religion In China

As in all ancient societies, religion was a significant factor in the culture of early Chinese dynasties. Another important factor in the development of Chinese society was the geography of the region. During the Shang, Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties, China developed two religious systems. The culture included arts, inventions, and important political achievements.

China was very isolated from the rest of the world. The west and southwest side of China was blocked by the Himalayan mountains which consists of some of the tallest peaks in the world, Also the Tien Shan both large mountain ranges isolating the west side of China. Not only are there mountain ranges there with large peaks there are also some intense deserts you must face if trying to get into China. The Southeast side has something completely different than desert it has a vast rainforest that divides Southeast Asia and China from one another. To the North there is the arid region called the Gobi desert. The Gobi desert provides China with lots of isolation considering that it is one of the largest deserts in the world. East of China there is the world's biggest body of water the Pacific Ocean. Even though it seems nearly impossible to get anywhere near China the Chinese managed to have trade with their neighbors allowing them to learn new things and for them to be able to spread their already found knowledge. Despite China being very isolated they were still able to trade and such through later what would become the silk road. Through trading and sharing the knowledge of iron working became more familiar to the Chinese. By being able to make nice iron tools the farmers were able to make more food and be more successful. Knowing how isolated China was it still doesn't seem like they had any troubles expanding into a great civilization.

Religion was used to elevate the kings and emperors above the common people. They did so by using what is called the mandate of Heaven. The Zhou leaders when they rebelled against the Shang dynasty said it was because the Gods were furious at the Shang leader because of his cruelty. The Zhou leader said that the Gods wanted him to have the mandate of heaven because he would be a good fair leader. Later on the mandate of heaven was more widely spread and used more as a reason for the rise and or fall of something like the dynastic cycle. People said that as long as the rulers were fair and the government was good then the mandate of heaven would be in their favor and the gods would approve and give them good crops. However if there was a shortage of crops or famine the people would think that the mandate of heaven no longer approved of the rulers and the government. That's how dynastic cycle worked in the eyes of the people if the crops weren't good or any catastrophe happened the gods must be mad but if crops and everything was good the gods must be happy. Religion played a big part in the culture of the people and how they chose a ruler. All because someone said the gods were unhappy gave him the right to rule.

Religion was a big part of Asian culture. The religious beliefs were different under different rulers. During the Shang dynasty the people believed in many gods and spirits that they prayed to. The king at the time Shang Di believed he had the link between him and god. So as long as you prayed good to Shang Di god would answer your prayers. Later on people started to believe that only few were great enough to pray to Shang Di such as the ancestors of late kings or nobles. They thought that the ancestors would bring good luck and good crops to the community. However this was the thought process when the Shang dynasty was ruling but

when the wars broke out things changed. Emerging from the war were two things Confucianism and Daoism. Confucius the man behind Confucianism and Daoism had longed for a job in court as an advisor. However he didn't end up finding a job as an advisor so he started teaching his beliefs and as he did that more and more students started wanting to learn from him. Confucius didn't make a new religion but a way of life a philosophy to go by. He had focused on making sure social order was strong and government was good. Confucius made emphasis on social classes and acceptance of your social class. He believed that if we had correct social class and we obeyed them there would be more stability in our lives. He taught that rulers had the responsibility to make sure the government was good and fair for their people and in return the people would give him loyalty. Confucius taught a way of harmony and peace he really effected the way the China thought of the world.

China was greatly affected by the religious beliefs of the people and the rulers. Religion is so powerful that it affects the rise and fall of a whole dynasty. People want to be better because of religion and rulers want to be better rulers because of religion. Words and thought process can be very powerful and influential like Confucianism and Daoism. China would not have had such a rich history without the influence of religion.

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