

Islam and confucianism

Religion



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During the post-classical period, the Islamic and Confucianist " world religions? were based upon the principles of spiritual and intellectual growth. Both valued intelligence and knowledge, and strongly supported education, yet each religion viewed the world and its inhabitants from different vantage points. In Islam, life was a series of tests which determined a person's stature in the afterlife.

Though not especially rigorous, these " tests? focus people's lifestyles on ways to better their eternal futures. Islam molded people into charitable, honest, and true Muslims who worked to spread their faith. Confucianism saw the world in a more immediate sense, and felt that it needed to be controlled by properly trained men. Confucianism pushed for social gain, personal happiness, and proper " gentlemanly? composure.

An Islamic education was available to any good Muslim, rich and poor alike, although the wealthy were educated more often, due to fewer time constraints. It was a rarity to see a Muslim woman educated in the same manner as men, however, since Muslim society was strongly patriarchal, and " Men are the managers of the affairs of women? (p. 105, The Koran and Family).

A Confucian education, in contrast, was quite esoteric. Those in the wealthy classes, primarily the aristocracy, were educated, and although it was possible for a lower class citizen to receive an education, it was a rarity, occurring only if said citizen was very wealthy. The Confucian focus on creating a classic " Gentleman? centered the education on men, and not women. " Confucianism was primarily an ethical system... Confucius largely

recommended obedience and respect; people should know their place?
(World History, p. 46).

Confucianism strove to create an educated man: a ruler, not a peasant. It taught art and literature, nature and proper handling of women, and diplomacy. It stressed composure and proper social skills, with specifics on how to dress and how to act at public gatherings being of the utmost importance. Mannerisms were not the whole of the social education, however. Training the Aristocracy, Confucianism taught ruling, government, law, crime and punishment. A Confucian Gentleman knew how to act properly and rule accordingly in any situation that might present itself.

Islam's Five Pillars, "testifying that there is no deity save Allah and that Mohammed is his apostle, on performing prayer, on paying legal alms, on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and on the fast of Ramadán." (document 18, p. 108) strongly focused the Islamic education on religion and philanthropy. An educated Muslim had intricate knowledge of Islam, the Hadith, and the Koran. Generosity was important in Islam, and a good Muslim gave Alms. Islam did not focus on making an Aristocrat, but rather a philanthropist who would spread the religion.

Islam taught the knowledge of travel, trade and bartering as well. Muslim society, was advanced in these areas, and viewed merchants as very powerful and important men. Subsequently trade and bartering were highly valued skills which need to be learned. Scientific knowledge was also important. Muslim science was based on Greek and Hellenistic technology and philosophy, thus their scientific education focused

on rationalistic generalizations, theories and hypotheses. Confucian teaching frowned upon trade and bartering, as Merchants were tolerated, but not respected by the upper classes. Confucian scientific teaching was directed towards specific developments and advancements, generalities were not as important.

The Confucian lack of religious teaching was diametrically opposed to the Islamic education" s strong religious focus, and Confucianism taught artistic merit more where Islam taught more trade skills. Scientific advances were important to each. Specific social customs were taught by both, although Islam leaned towards helping the lower classes through charity, and Confucianism leaned towards helping the lower classes through proper rule. Obviously, a Confucian education and an Islamic education both focused on teaching men to better themselves, but their different approaches to the same matter yielded two strikingly different educated persons.