

What are the main chinese religious beliefs history essay



In Ancient China, the three main religions that the Chinese believe are: Confucianism, Taoism(pronounced Daoism), and Buddhism. Confucianism is not actually a religion, it is a philosophy that was taught by a man named Confucius who was born in 551 B. C. This philosophy, or “ religion” follows his code for living and behavior. He believed that everyone should be treated fairly. He also believed in having a strong family, stable society, and a strong government. Taoism is a religion and a philosophy. The religion of Taoism(which means the “ path” or the “ way”) completely disagrees with the teachings of Confucius. Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, said to his followers that trying to work hard or to strive to become better was bad. He thought that if you were born poor, you should accept being poor and that it was bad to try to make your life better. Lao-Tzu believed in the yin-yang symbol. Yin was female, and yang was male. Together they created a balance in Nature. Buddhism started in India and it follows the teachings of Buddha, who was born in 563 B. C. He thought that you should seek knowledge and happiness in your life and he thought that fancy clothes and homes weren't important. He also believed in Recarnation. Recarnation is the thought that people are reborn over and over again, but they come back as different things. He said that people would keep being reborn until they lived correctly, and then they would live in the state of nirvana. Even in these three religions, the Chinese never believe in just one god. They believe that gods and spirits are everywhere.

The Chinese have many different customs for various reasons. First of all, family life in Ancient China is very important. Their families are very large, and the entire family lives together. Also, the children respect their parents.

For example, the younger generations and young couples must take care of their parents and grandparents. Another big custom is worshipping your ancestors. Most families have an alter in their inner courtyard to honor their dead ancestors. They pray to their ancestors so that they will guide and help them. Tea drinking is a very important for many reasons. It is used as a sign of respect to their elders, to apologize to someone, to express thanks to your elders on your wedding day, and to connect large families at weddings. The Chinese believed that the afterlife was an additional part of life on earth. The ruler's tombs were their palaces. That means that they would need belongings and servants. When, a ruler died, his servants were usually killed to look after him. Also, another custom of the Chinese is to place a piece of jade in a ruler's tomb to protect his body and spirit. They chose jade because it is hard and durable. It was also thought to have magical powers to preserve the ruler's body and to keep evil spirits away. In the Shang culture, oracle bones were used by Shamans to predict the future. Since oracle means "vision", the shamans would heat a turtle shell or the shoulder blade of an ox until it cracked. The patterns of the cracks were thought to be messages from the spirit world or predictions from dead ancestors and gods who controlled nature. The Chinese believed in acupuncture also. This is the process of inserting needles into your body so that your body will have restored balance and allow the energy to flow freely.

The yin-yang symbol- a very important belief to the Chinese

Buildings- Chinese Style

Architecture in Ancient China is very important. The Chinese mainly build with wood and plaster. They chose to build with wood because they thought that it had symbolic value. The houses are built using the post-and-lintel system. Houses are built on platforms to rank the status of the owner. If the owner had a high platform, this means that he has a high status in society. During the ruling of the Zhou dynasty, three generations of a family would live in one house. Where your bedroom was located depended on your rank in the family. The homeowner had the main room, the elders had the back rooms, and the younger members lived on the sides of the homeowners room. They don't use chairs in their homes. During the Warring State Period, beds and couches were starting to be used. They use oil lamps for light. Peasants can only afford the basic furniture and wealthy people have the better quality furniture.

One of the most famous architectural pieces is the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall of China is the largest structure ever built. Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of China, ordered it to be built to keep their enemies out of China. It is over 4, 000 miles long. It is about 25 feet tall and it was built entirely by hand.

The Great Wall of China

What Are They Living In?

Their are two different housings in Ancient China: Wealthy Housing and Peasant Housing. Peasant homes are usually one roomed homes and they are made out of bricks of mud. They are built out in the countryside where the peasants live. Wealthy homes are often made of wood with tile roofs.

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Their roofs curve up at the ends, because they think that it keeps the evil spirits away. Their houses are built in sections. Different generations of the family live in different sections of the house. Also, the wealthy homes usually have an inner courtyard for the family to enjoy and an outer courtyard for the visitors and merchants. Finally, their homes have a high outer wall that surrounds the whole area of land.

A Chinese building with a curved roof.

Chinese Government and Rulers

Starting in 2205 B. C. the Xia dynasty ruled. This was China's first dynasty. There isn't any written evidence that the Xia dynasty existed, but some archeologists found some artifacts that prove that it was a real dynasty. Then, in 1570 B. C. the Shang dynasty ruled China. This dynasty is known for its metalwork and this dynasty started the Chinese style of writing. After that, in 1045 B. C. the Zhou dynasty took over. They continued some of the Shang dynasty's rules, but they made some of their own as well. During the Zhou ruling, great lords ruled the peasants from their large homes. In, 221 B. C. the Qin dynasty started to rule. There had been a period of time between the two dynasties where lords were fighting over which family would rule. It was called the Warring States Period. The Qin dynasty ended that period and began to unite China. In 206 B. C. the Han dynasty ruled. This dynasty started the civil service system. The civil service system was a form of government. The civil servants took a difficult test to determine what position in the civil service they would get. In 221-589 A. D. China split into many different states. This was called the Period of Disunity. Several

dynasties within the different states struggled for power during that time period. In 589 the Sui dynasty ruled. They reunited Northern and Southern China. They also rebuilt the Great Wall of China. They dug the Grand Canal, which allowed them to transport grain and soldiers around the empire by water. The Tang dynasty began ruling in the year 618 A. D. Under the Tang rulers, China became a great world power. It brought prosperity to the people, a time when art and trade was very successful. In 907 A. D. the Period of Five Dynasties began. During this period, China split into the North and South regions. The North was ruled by foreigners. The South was divided into states. Five different dynasties ruled these states. During this period, Southern China was still prosperous. In 960 A. D. the Song dynasty ruled. This dynasty helped China reach high goals in civilization. They advanced the studies in science and technology. The Song dynasty also improved road and canal networks and brought poetry, calligraphy, and painting to new levels of perfection. The Yuan dynasty began ruling in 1279 A. D. The Yuan dynasty was actually ruled by the Mongols, who had conquered China. They controlled the government and the Silk Road. During this dynasty many merchants became rich from their trades and many Europeans visited China. The next dynasty to rule was the Ming dynasty. The Ming dynasty was the last Chinese dynasty. They made Beijing China's new capital, strengthened the Great Wall, and improved the Grand Canal. They also sent Admiral Zheng to visit foreign rulers for the Chinese. The Ming dynasty helped the Chinese culture to succeed and improve once again, and they became famous for their arts and crafts. Lastly, the Qing dynasty ruled in 1644. The Qing dynasty was ruled by foreigners that feared the Chinese. Thanks to this dynasty, Chinese technology fell behind the other countries, and brought the <https://assignbuster.com/what-are-the-main-chinese-religious-beliefs-history-essay/>

Chinese into many wars over trade. This dynasty kept weakening China until they were overthrown in 1911, and China became a republic nation.

Ancient Chinese Timeline

From 8000 B. C.- 1644 A. D.

8000 B. C. Farming begins in China

2205 B. C.-1570 B. C. The Xia dynasty rules

2000 B. C. The Chinese learn to make bronze

1570-1045 B. C. The Shang dynasty rules

1045-256 B. C. The Zhou dynasty rules

563 B. C. Approximate date of Buddha's birth

551-479 B. C. Confucius's life

400 B. C. Metal coins come into use in China

300 B. C. The Loazi- one of the basic books of Daoism is written down

221 B. C. Qin dynasty defeats last of the other warring states & begins to unite China

207 B. C.- A. D. 220 Han dynasty rules, the civil service system is started

105 A. D. Traditional date the Chinese give for the invention of paper

121 A. D. Scholars complete the first Chinese dictionary

132 A. D. Zhang Hing invents the seismograph

221 A. D.-589 A. D. Period of Disunity

589 A. D.-618 A. D. The Sui dynasty rules

618 A. D.-906 A. D. The Tang dynasty rules

900 A. D. The Chinese invent porcelain

907 A. D.- 960 A. D. Five Dynasties(China was split into north and south)

960-1279 A. D. The Song dynasty

1279-1368 A. D. The Yuan dynasty(ruled by the Mongols)

1368-1644 A. D. The Ming dynasty (the last Chinese dynasty)

1644-1912A. D. The Qing dynasty (ruined a lot of the Chinese culture)

1912 The Chinese became a republic nation

Old Chinese Fashions

The clothing in Ancient China is used to show your place in society. Peasants wear long, loose-fitting tops and pants made of hemp, and later cotton.

Wealthy people wear long, loose-fitting robes made of silk. Since the wealthy women thought that beauty and always looking their best is very important, they wear a lot of fancy jewelry and accessories. Men in the military wear special symbols and patterns on their clothes to show their rank. Also, different types of hats showed the rank of men as well. The Ancient Chinese

believe that certain colors have special meanings. Yellow, is only worn by emperors. The color white is worn for mourning and is worn at funerals. The color red represents joy. When girls get married, they wear red silk bridal robes. One favorite accessory of Chinese women is the fan. A fan sometimes was made of ivory, wood, or even bamboo. One part of the female beauty came from their feet. The Chinese thought that small feet made women beautiful. If a girl did not have small feet, sometimes the parents would bind the girl's feet to make them the size that they were supposed to be. This lead to a lot of feet damages and disorders. Chinese women also wore fancy combs and clips in their hair.

Chinese wedding robes

The Ways of Chinese Art and Music

There are many different types of art in Ancient China. Calligraphy is a very important form of writing that is made of different symbols called characters. Each character stands for a word. Painting is also very important. The Chinese usually paint pictures of nature, especially mountains and water. They want their art to be filled with peace, harmony, and the beauty of nature. Another type of art is poetry. Their poetry is mainly written about feelings or praising nature's beauty. Well-educated people are expected to know how to write poetry. Calligraphy, painting, and poetry are known as the three perfections because the Chinese feel that they are three ways perfect ways to express beauty.

The Chinese discovered music during the Neolithic Age when someone found a flute made of bone. At first, only wealthy people listened to music, which was

mainly just chimes and bells. During the Tang dynasty, singing and dancing was introduced to the Chinese. This type of music could be done by anyone. Out of all the Chinese instruments, they are put into four categories: Stringed, Percussion, Plucked, and Wind Instruments. The four main Chinese instruments are: the Horse-Headed Fiddle, the Lute(Pi Pa) the Erhu or Huqin, and the Flute. The Horse-headed Fiddle is a bowed-stringed instrument that has a scroll carved on it in the shape of a horse's head. The Lute, or Pi Pa, was named after the Loquat fruit. It was introduced to the Chinese during the Qin dynasty. The Erhu, or Huqin, was introduced from the Western region of China during the Tang dynasty. The Flute was first made of bone, and then later made of bamboo.

A Ancient Chinese painting

<http://www.designyourway.net/tuts/1chinese.jpg>

What are the Chinese Cooking?

The Chinese have created a type of cooking that combines a bunch of different techniques of cooking. They might boil their food and then deep fry it, or they might steam their food and then stir fry it. The Chinese do it all. They pan-fry, flash-fry, deep-fry, steam, stew, and stir-fry their food. The Chinese eat different types of foods in the different regions of their country. In the Northern Region, they eat a lot of pancakes, dumplings, lamb, and

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duck. They also use wheat flour to make noodles and buns. In Southern China, they eat rice and different vegetables with almost all of their meals. In the Western Region of China, they are known for their hot chili peppers. Mushrooms and bamboo were popular along the Chang Jiang (Yangzi River). Meat was a rare treat for the Chinese and meat dishes were usually spiced with garlic or ginger. Meat dishes could contain: turtle, dog, monkey, bear, fish, chicken, and pork. When the Chinese cook, they believe it is very important to preserve the natural flavors of the dish, and remove all unwanted odors. The Chinese usually have 3-5 different colors in their dishes. These colors are: caramel, black, white, yellow, red, green, and dark green. They also have a lot of seasonings in their dishes. Some examples are: dried mushrooms, sesame oil, pepper, cinnamon, star anise, wine, chili pepper, garlic, fresh ginger, and scallion. Vinegar, sugar, and soy sauce are used a lot to increase the flavors of the dish. Their dishes can be spicy, hot, sweet, sour, and many other flavors. Chinese food has a taste for everyone.

Part of an Ancient Chinese meal

Things To Be Proud Of

The Chinese invented many useful tools. One of their most important inventions is paper. They started being made in the first century B. C. Cai Lun is said to be the inventor of paper. Paper is very important to the Chinese because it makes their writing easier. It also lead to books, playing cards, and paper money for the Chinese to use. Another important invention is silk. The silk is made from silkworms' cocoons. The Chinese women spin it into a lightweight stretchy material. Silk became a highly valued fabric and

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now China has a trade route with Europe called the Silk Road. The Chinese also invented the wheelbarrow. It was made in the first century B. C. and it is used for farming and construction. The compass was a Chinese invention made in the fourth century B. C. and is used by ship captains to determine direction. They also invented a ship's rudder. It was made in the first century B. C. and is used to steer large ships. Some other important Chinese inventions are: gunpowder, seismographs, stirrups, umbrellas, the sun dial, porcelain, and fireworks.

Chinese fireworks- one of their coolest inventions.

Learning For the Government

In Ancient China, most kids don't go to school. They usually have to work in the fields planting and harvesting crops, or they are taking care of their siblings. If the family could spare to send their children to school, they would only send the boy children. If the family lived far away from the school, the boy would go and live with his relatives that lived closer to the school. During the Han dynasty, the emperor would pay for the schools and the children's tuition. Schools are mainly held in temples. Boys start going to school at the age of six, and they continue to go to school until they are sixteen or seventeen. School starts around 6: 00a. m. and ends around 4: 00 p. m. They go to school everyday with no weekends. In Chinese schools, they learn how to read, write, paint , write poetry, and memorize pages of the teachings of Confucius. They also prepare for the government tests that they will take when they are older to receive their job based on their test scores. Once you finished school, then you would start taking the government exams.

Students wrote on tablets, and later paper. They write with ink, an ink stone (to mix the ink), and a writing brush that was made of soft animal hairs. Around 500 A. D., some boys and girls went to a school that was taught by Buddhist monasteries. Their children still learned to read and write, but they did not learn how to paint and write poetry. Also, they were taught the Buddhist beliefs, traditions, and ideas instead of the teachings of Confucius. During the Ming dynasty, some rich women learned how to write, write poetry, and read at home.

The World's Oldest Civilization

Out of all the civilizations in the world, Ancient China is the oldest. It has been around since 8000 B. C. or longer. It is also the most continuous. Throughout the years most of the Chinese traditions have stayed the same. Of course they have invented some things that make life easier, but some things in their culture, they don't change. Ancient China is very different from the other civilizations. Some are similar to China, but China is still different. In this report, I hope that you will see and discover why China is such an amazing civilization.

How Do They Trade?

The Chinese merchants trade with other countries by traveling along the Silk Road. Some travel by boat, but most traders used the Silk Road. The Silk Road travels from China to the Eastern borders of the Mediterranean Sea. To avoid being attacked, the merchants travel in caravans. The Chinese merchants travel on camels or on foot. Their main product is silk, but they also trade pottery, bronze, lacquer ware, spices, furs, and porcelain. They

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return to China with horses, wool, glass, pearls, unfamiliar animals to the Chinese, such as lions and rhinoceroses, or their favorite, gold.

A statue of a Chinese merchant traveling on a camel.

This Concludes...

I hope that this report on China has really gotten you thinking about what an amazing civilization it is. It very different from the other civilizations, and I hope you realized that. This civilization was a civilization that had some struggles and hardships along the way, but it also brought a lot of new things into this world. Their inventions have been so helpful to their country, and to other countries all over the world. I hope that you agree with me that china was a important piece to Cod's wonderful Creation.

Reflection Time!

When I was told that I was doing the Ancient Civilization of China, I ws so excited. I actually went ot San Fransisco with my family and a visiting relative before I found out what civilization I got. My Mom had taken me to Chinatiwn, and we bought some Chnese stuff. She was really hoping that I got China. I was too, but if I didn't , I could still use the things I bought! I think the most interesting thing about my civilization is the food. They have so many different styles of food, and they all have really funny names. Some of the names I can't even pronounce. Also, I thought learning about the different animals was cool too. They actually eat dog, monkey brains, and bugs, but some Chinese people won't eat cow! That section in the food kind of disturbe me at the same time. I must say that I was okay on using my

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time effeintly. I definitely wasn't perfect, but I did alright. There was nothing about the reort that I disliked, just some sections were a bit confusing with my civilization or alittle boring. No I don't think I would have wanted to change anything, but I wisg we could have brought something in to share with the class about our cicilzation. For example, a food dish would have been really fun! Finally, I would like to thank you for giving me this civilization and I had a lot of fun doing it!

Ancient China during the Han Empire

Tools that Help the Chinese Live

There are so many tools that the Chinese use that I will not be able to name them all. Here are some of the tools that the Chinese use. The Chinese use porcelain or bowls made of pottery to cook and eat with. Sharp knives are the main cooking utensils, and they eat with chop-sticks. They sleep on rush mats and use stone or pottery pillows to rest their head on. They reclined, ate, and talked mostly on mats, until the Tang dynasty, when they discovered wooden tables and chairs. Decorated, bronze ritual cauldrons are used to give food and drink to the Chinese spirits. Eight steel needles are used for acupuncture. It helps to calm the soul. Abacuses are used to calculate numbers and money. For writing they use writing brushes, ink, and ink stones. Different styles, shapes, and textures are needed for different parts of a painting. Looms are used to make silk. When the Chinese are working in the fields, they use wooden wheelbarrows, wooden and bamboo carts pulled by oxen, pots to carry water, hoes for gardening, and " turnover wheels" or " the endless chain" for irrigation. For war they use chariots,

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spears, knives, and wooden crossbows. Most of their weapons are made of bronze. One of their favorite weapons is the halberd. It is a big bronze knife that can hurt many soldiers at once. These tools help to make the Chinese lives much easier.

A Chinese abacus

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