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During the pre-modern East Asian society, the ideologies such as Confucianism and Buddhism became the two of the most influential and central philosophies that made difference to the East Asian region and the people included in this region. In fact, this region embraced that society that became part of Chinese cultural sphere due to the dominance of Chinese society during that time.

Confucianism, as a complicated system of moral, political, social, and philosophical ideologies, has always been considered and part of the development and growth in East Asian region due to the governmental promotion of Confucianism conducts and needs. This can be drawn back from religious beliefs and practices found in earliest history of China, the country which is considered the center of East Asian Region, its development and cultural growth. For example, the two features of Shang Era (1575-1050 B. C. are based on the ideals of Confucianism that are considered foundational: the first is the Shang outlook on the reciprocity between the living and the dead creation in the Earth and the second is the faith that there is easy connection, communication, and access between the dimensions of the living and the supernatural being.

Because, it is believed that divinities are great part of the human lives and the activities and phenomena they experience in daily basis (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). In the midst of militarism, starting with the Chou Dynasty in 1027 B. C. the ideals envisioning society and humanity arose and in turn became the central pillars of East Asian life and well-being. Principally, as one of these great ideologists, Master K’ung (or Confucius) developed the concept of righteousness wherein the ethical aptness, right conduct, and certain customary performances embody the state of being fully developed human. Unlike any other Western teachings, Confucianism does not depend on deductive reasoning in convincing his listeners.

Rhetorical figures had be used instead, like analogy and aphorism, to profound the ideals and teachings of Confucianism. Among those conducts taught by Confucius, the conduct within the family and family relations are considered the most important because for him, the relationship between the parent and the children corresponds to the most fundamental human connection and relational bonds. In fact, Daoism, another ideology popularized by Lao Zi that revolve of the ideal human conduct of non-interference, complemented the other side of Confucianism (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). In all corners of the society during pre-modern era in East Asia, Confucianism had incorporated some concepts included in Daoist and Buddhist ideologies. With this, during the governance of Han Dynasty (205-200 B.

C. ), it had became supported by the state causing the Confucian ethics to become center on hierarchy and mutual obligation, just like the parent-child relationship, in pervading the Chinese society by virtue of proverbs, theater, songs, and storytelling. Actually, the ideology reflects on spiritual life that became the center of family unit and the community as well, with courtesy to the ancestral worship and spirit reverence. This means the essence of giving high respect given by the Chinese followers to the ancient traditions, pasts, and culture that became part of the society already before.

By this, a truly unique East Asian tradition and way-of-life evolved and influenced the society and the region as a whole (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). Buddhism, which originally started in India, spread to the China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan through merchants, missionary monks, and travelers. In Japan, for instance, the Buddhism did not undergo difficulties in permeating the Japanese Society because during its first 500 years, it became supported nationally and faithfully incorporated in the religious activities and rites for the country an the region as well (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). Because of this, the Japanese made it to be the state religion because they knew and understand the values and ideologies of Buddhism that will suit and help the spiritual, moral, and psychological thinking and growth. Because of the success of Buddhism spread in existence even in China, Emperor Wu-zong of China ended the entrance and toleration of other ideologies and religious philosophies in China, aside from Confucianism and Daoism. With, it means that Chinese society considered Buddhism as threat for spread of Chinese beliefs and ideologies; thus a big competition, cultural revolution, and anti-Buddhist policy occurred. After the end of the term of Emperor Wu-zong, Buddhism got difficulty in reviving and recovering because this time, Confucianism was again the reigning center of Chinese religious life. Until, Confucianism developed in Korea and Japan because of the popularity of the principle of the person as center of relatedness by considering the involvement of culture and community in human life and growth.

China, as the center of pre-modern East Asian civilization emphasized the promotion in the long run of Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as the Daoism, which proved the existence of the unity of the three faiths. Because of this incorporation, in the end, most of the people utilized compartmentalization in some degree just to treat equally the three existing philosophies. After the end of Ming era (1368-1644), Buddhism regained its identity and firmly became part of the Chinese society given the fact that it might cause some conflict with Confucianism in terms of ideals and philosophies within its context. It did not end here, the progressive development of Buddhism in the depth of Chinese society emerged better even in the sangha’s outside community to be ready to accept and answer some social and political expectations (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). Also in the end of that era, Europeans had became a regular contact with the Chinese. Since Chinese were not fond of making good relationship with these barbarians, this became a problematic stage and confrontational relations during that colonial era. In Japan, the Buddhism also had problematic situations in dealing with anti-Buddhist campaign by most of the shogun Nobunagas due to the spread of the teachings of Jesuit missionaries, which in turn became unmatched to the lifestyle, tradition and culture of most East Asian nations.

That’s why, the popularity of Buddhism still prevailed, and in the end, the Christianity was banned within the region in the year 1606 because of hatred of most missionaries in local political struggles (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). The influences of Buddhism, as results of its philosophy of leading a better life, dominated some East Asian nations like Japan and Vietnam. These include mainly the improvement of education due to versatility of Buddhist monks to teach mathematics, farming, and other majors that are taught also in some typical universities. Beside, these monks are considered famous scholars and teachers due to its wide range of experiences because of lots of experiences for travel and teaching activities. Moreover, the Buddhism ideals made more improvement on human life, like the promotion of yoga and other psychological practices (Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis). The influence of Buddhism, mainly in Japan, Korea, and China, could be seen in the works of art that have been made and developed within the region. For instance, in paintings, most of the works during Six Dynasties (222-589) were influenced by Jodo Shinto (Pure Land Buddhism).

Moreover, forms of arts like in sculptures, architectures, and others were also influenced that brought a truly Buddhist identity (Japan Fact Sheet). References: Esposito, John L. , Darrel J. Fasching, and Todd Lewis. 2007.

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