

World wide yin and yang essay sample



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The Chinese culture has a variety of religions and philosophies; behind each one there is a core of theories and principles formed by its founders. The aspects of the yin-yang principal are the basis of the three major Chinese religions: Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism.

In China, people are aware of the importance of believing in the yin and yang principles. The Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender states, the Chinese view yin and yang as opposites, where yin is dark and yang is light. They are also known to be cool and warm, moist and dry, and decay and growth. Each complements the other and individual change through stages of their lives (“ Yin”, Encyclopedia). It is believed that the stages in a being’s life are either yin or yang. All of the steps and stages one under goes fit together like a puzzle. The two create an outstanding equilibrium. Furthermore, a primary principle is the existence of natural forces, “ Yin and yang are expressed in three forces of the universe: heaven, earth, and humanity. [...] Tao is the ultimate force or the reality behind everything” (Hartz 59). Allegedly, yin and yang came from Tao, which appears only through natural forces of the world.

Thus, occurring in three levels of the cycle of life, beginning in heaven and falling to earth where humanity lies. The forces are placed in one of two categories, “ Yang is the heavenly force. It is the force of movement, of light, fire, warmth, and life. [...] Yin [...] is yang’s opposite, but it cannot be separated from yang. [...] The two operate together, in the cycles that are a part or nature and of Tao” (Hartz 61). Yin and yang are always together. Their opposing forces work together to harmonize nature’s course of life. The two religions, Taoism and Confucianism, have their own view of how the forces shift; Taoists do not force change, they allow the Tao to guide it

naturally (yin) and Confucians try to be in control (yang) (Ross). Disciples of Taoism practice being passive, this ensures that nature takes its appropriate course.

On the other hand, disciples of Confucianism are more aggressive with change. It is evident that the Chinese use the complimentary forces to explain life, “ Everything in the world can be identified with either yin or yang. Earth is the ultimate yin object and heaven is the ultimate yang object” (Ross). All of the things the universe consists of are always yin and yang. Confucians and Taoists have a common perspective of the Earth as yin and Heaven as yang; these two are combining reciprocals. The yin-yang principle is widely spread among the globe,” It cannot be said to be uniquely Taoist or Confucian or folk-religious; rather it suffused all of these traditions” (“ Yin, Encyclopedia). All of the major Chinese religions are developed from yin and yang. It is not found solely in one single philosophy, but in many different aspects of life. Without the existence of the balanced yin-yang principle, Chinese philosophy would lack its central core beliefs.

The majority of Chinese philosophies acknowledge the presence of the Dao. It has many different names, but all have a single meaning; “ Confucians call it Great Ultimate, Taoists call it Golden Elixir and Buddhists call it Complete Awareness (“ Yin”, New). Each of the three; Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism believe in the Dao, which are one yin and one yang. In essence, the two: Yin and Yang form Dao, “ the Great Ultimate”. Without them there is nothing, but when together they give life (“ Yin”, New). In order to produce the one Dao, it is necessary to have both yin and yang. They are what create the state before and after Heaven.

This would go on to show, “[...] Dao is both a force beyond any single expression in nature and, at the same time, the force that flows within tangible nature, propelling it to change” (Sullivan 14). Dao is a continuous cycle that is in all things, material and natural. Everything is controlled by Dao, allowing them to interchange. According to the New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, yin and yang play a major role in the Dao; “ It is only in the alternation of yin and yang that the pneuma of the Dao can grow and maintain itself for innumerable eons without being damaged” (“ Yin”, New). Without yin and yang, the Dao would not exist. They must constantly be in operation to remain in equilibrium. If they were to be off in any way, the Dao would no longer be. All objects and beings change, either as yin or yang in the completions of the Dao.

The bond between the three philosophies is known as the three truths. Over time, the Asian culture has integrated their many beliefs; people of China follow Buddhism as one of “ the Three Truths”, along with Confucianism and Taoism (Wangu 13). The majority of Chinese practice Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism at once. They believe they are all truths and see them to be complementary opposed to contradicting. Proceeding on, Paula Hartz, confirms these truths, “[...] the threads of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have become intertwined, each absorbing aspects of the others. As the Chinese say, ‘ the three teachings flow into one’” (12). Just as all things yin and yang join as one, so do the three philosophies. Each of which contributes something that helps create the Chinese way of life. If one were to look further, they would see Taoists, Confucians, and Buddhists do not believe in a higher being or the immortality of souls, instead they feel that

the love of people is God (Hartz 13). All of the religions follow the same concept of looking up towards the love of man, rather than a supreme, immortal soul. The formation of The Three Truths is a master religion.

Taoism is the philosophical system of living a simple life and noninterference with the course of natural events. In the spectrum of yin and yang, "Taoism celebrates yin, the femaleness of the universe, in which quiet and "letting be" are more fruitful than strife and direct action" (Hartz 13). Taoism takes the role of yin, as it focuses more on the female nature of the world. It is peaceful rather than the concept of yang. Being that Taoism is a philosophy, it has some ethical principles, "[...] such as flexibility, humility, embracing the feminine side, and above all, taking no action contrary to nature (wu-wei) - were gradually and harmoniously combined with [...] Confucianism and Buddhism" (Oldstone-Moore, Taoism 53). There are many principles that Taoist followers must practice.

They are very important in the process of creating the balance of yin and yang. Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism have similarities in their ways through yin and yang. In addition, Taoists have various practices; Taoism includes both mystical and magical techniques in their religious performances. They believe the human body is an image of the universe and its energy is what keeps it going (Sullivan 7). Followers of Taoism physically take care of their bodies and exercise their minds through meditation and philosophy. This peaceful balance of the mind and body reflects how the world is. The traits of Taoism are just one portion of the Three Truths.

As for Confucianism, it has differences in its teachings and can be viewed as an opposite to Taoism. Thomas Hoobler suggests that Confucius' teachings are based on harmony, people treating others the way they would like to be treated (8). Confucians remain in balance by the way they behave towards one another. One receives what they put forth. This ties to yin and yang as it focuses on the humanity base. However, "Confucianism demands that all people be treated with humanity, but with a well-articulated hierarchy" (Oldstone-Moore, Confucianism 53). Supporters of Confucianism are taught to treat others in their social ranking with respect. In order to have an effective society everyone has to behave appropriately.

This is the rule that represents humanity as one of the forces of yin and yang. Additionally, The Chinese believed that China was the highest kingdom under Heaven. All followers need certain morals to obtain order and harmony (Hoobler 54). Confucians perform good actions to better their morality. Everyone knows their place in their civilizations in accordance to Heaven. Later in the history of Confucianism, Confucians started becoming influenced by Taoists. This made them contemplate the philosophical questions of being and problems in human existence (Hartz 49). Taoism has the power to challenge beliefs of Confucians. This strength helps bring the two religions closer. Taking the role of yang, Confucianism is the second of the Three Truths.

Later in the history of Chinese culture, people began adapting to another major religion. According to the Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender, "Buddhism entered China; it too incorporated the dynamic yin-yang understanding of the cosmos into its own vision of cosmic change" ("Yin" Encyclopedia).

Buddhism was the third major Chinese religion to follow the principles of yin and yang. They each have their own unique thoughts about the change of nature. Madhu Wangu notes that Confucianism is based on proper relationships bringing harmony to society and government, Taoism lies on the belief that harmony comes from following the way of nature, and Buddhism does not contradict nor replace them (42). Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are like a tri-pod, each philosophy has different teachings, but they all conjoin. They balance one another; complementary in yin and yang. Moreover, Confucianism and Taoism teach that humans are basically good; people just need to be guided to their wisdom. Confucians keep their minds in the present, while Taoists follow their own nature (Wangu 63). The different mind sets of the two philosophies are as yin and yang. Buddhism conjoins the two with a down-to-earth perspective. Buddhism is the last religion that pieces the Three Truths together; it is the outcome of Taoist and Confucian beliefs combined.

If one were to begin studying the Chinese culture, they would find that it very much revolves around philosophy and religion. The three most popular Chinese philosophies, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism all exist in the presents of yin and yang. To conclude, if there was not a balancing force of nature nothing would be as it is.