# The influences of confucianism and christianity

The historical Jesus and Confucius both existed on earth for several decades, but the principles which have their respective names keep on reverberating through humanity up-to-date. Although Christianity and Confucianism have had an uncommon influence that has endured the tests of time, there are vast differences between the two religions. Jesus was born in Jerusalem while Confucius was born in china around 550 BCE a few years earlier. The traditions of Confucianism are intensely deep-seated in most nations of East Asia, but for the simplicity purposes this essay will mainly focus on West-Europe as it relates to Christianity and China's history as it relates to Confucianism.

In accordance with Strayer (2008), Confucius was a young man with a humble background who became extremely influential such that his teachings greatly inspired religion, way of life, and philosophy in China up-to-date[1]. China developed a political system, philosophy, and a social system that was based on merit, harmony, and tolerance[2]. Confucius talents were highly recognized during the era of Duke Ding's leadership and he was then appointed as the Minister of Public Works and later the Minister of Crime. Apparently, Confucius offended the Lu nobility members and was dismissed from office and send to exile. At long last, in 484 BCE Confucius returned to Lu and spent most of his time teaching, and sorting out the Book of Documents, Book of Songs, and other early classics.

On the other hand, the gospels suggest that Jesus was born around 6 BC revealing the Christian era chronology. It is believed that the ministry of Jesus lasted between AD c. 29-33. The beginning of Christianity is associated with his birth since the religion involves following the teachings of Jesus.

However, Christianity spread widely in the world starting from 500 BCE. The early West-Europe was one of the world's regions whose culture and foreign policy was greatly influenced by Christianity[3].

According to Strayer (2010), Confucianism established deep roots within East Asian and Chinese societies[4]. Moreover, Confucianism emerged during an ancient period of Chinese history when the country was struggling between changing periods of national unity and unrest. Confucius presented his societal fulfilment and harmony philosophy in China during the era of internal turmoil between (771-221 BC)[5]. This principle took hold since it was good for China's society during that time. The history of China of imperial autocratic rule and dynasties offered an excellent basis for Confucius philosophy founded on respectful citizenry and social class hierarchies that were strict. Moreover, Confucianism provided the guide light of Chinese moral and ethical principles in the beginning of the 2nd century BC.

However, the ideas of Confucianism slowly spread via cultural influences and trade throughout china[6]. Similarly, Christianity spread in Europe replacing the ancient warrior religion altering the way of life and giving it an original meaning. Christian monks worked tirelessly to preserve the ancient literature of West-Europe and popular cultural works. As a result of the rapid growth and spread of Christianity, the West-Europe citizens achieved a right conduct, common faith and system of morality. Moreover, Christianity resulted to the birth of English in ancient Europe. Basically both Confucianism and Christianity formed the basis of Chinese and Europe's culture and foreign policy respectively.

According to Sullivan (1838), in the second century BC, The government of China first referred to Confucianism as its certified ideology[7]. Ever since, Confucianism remained as the conventional culture to mould the society and the people's way of life for over two thousand years, actually, until the early 20th century during which the first Chinese republic was founded[8]. Theodosius who was a Roman Emperor made Christianity the religion based on the teachings of Jesus the official religion in Europe, and ever since Christianity remained as the main ideology to model the ways of life and society in Europe for over a thousand years.

If culture and its people were perceived as men, the two strong men stood firmly for thousands of years, one in Europe and the other in China, without being moved by the strong winds of several ideologies and cultures. These ideologies were based on the teachings of Jesus and Confucius. The successes of these great men were as a result of the humanist soul contained in their teachings, which represents the climax of humanism in the ancient time. Christianity contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire which practiced slavery[9]. Actually, Christian leaders fulminated against amphitheatre and theatre entertainments. Christian aristocrats steadily redirected their money to places of worship, which were so many in 400s and 500s. Additionally, they funded orphanages, aged persons homes, and hospitals for the first time in the history of Europe.

For thousands of years, Christianity remained as the major culture that united Europe and kept the social order. In contrast, humanism in China developed through a different historic pathway. In relation to Sullivan (1838) Confucius, Lao Tzu, and other great Chinese thinkers considered the ancient

society to be the perfect model[10]. Natural humanism existed in china and it was as a result of human heart and nature. Consequently, Chinese humanists showed up in an earlier civilization stage as compared to Europe[11]. Both Confucius and Jesus greatly contributed to humanism with Confucianism leading to abolition of the human sacrifice culture in China. Both Jesus and Confucius have been criticized in modern history, however, such criticism cannot wipe out their remarkable contributions in the history of humanism.

Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences between the history of China in relation to Confucianism and that of Europe in relation to Christianity. First and foremost, Confucius was quite different from Jesus considering that the latter was more like Mo Tzu[12]. For instance, Confucianism in China's history started as a practice that was highly depended on government whereas Christianity in Europe begun as a movement authority of government.

Moreover, Confucius and his devotees kept away from spirits and gods, but Jesus and Christians depended heavily on mysterious phenomenon and miracles to preach. Christianity's organization was very strict and involved reaching out for non-believers through preaching whereas Confucianism remained at the self-cultivation and academic thought level. Another significant difference between the two ideologies is that Confucius believed that men ought not to form political parties nor compete with one another, but Jesus Christ portrayed his followers as exceptional by criticizing other people, and strived to acquire a larger social liberty for Christianity[13].

In relation to Strayer (2008) during the times of Confucius, most political, social, and religious leaders in ancient China emerged from families in the low level ruling class which was equal to scholars or intellectuals who held high positions in the government[14]. Contrary, the leaders in ancient Europe were from families of any social status considering that Jesus was a carpenter's son. Confucianism had profound effects on China's history. Historically, the Chinese emphasized on titles, seniority, education, and moderation. The Chinese society was perceived as a hierarchal pyramid of duties with norms that have been established to govern relationships and behaviours. However, it was not acceptable to challenge the social order except if leaders were broadly seen as having moved away from the policies of moral and ethical leadership. These qualities reflected key Confucian intentions to produce people who had respect for traditional culture, scrupulously discharged moral duties and obligations, and insisted on regular behaviours and good manners.

In reference to Aiken (1908). Christianity had very minimal influence on politics in Europe although the region was Catholic-dominated[15]. Nevertheless, Christianity has served as unifying factor in both historical and modern Europe. Basically, the religion integrated and influenced cultural development in Europe. For instance, marriages were performed in a Christian manner whereby it was supposed to be sacred. Most couples were joined together in church ceremonies and alternative ways were considered unholy. Considering that in China there existed three dominant religions, such ceremonies were conducted either in the Buddhism, Confucianism, or Taoism way.

Confucius principles greatly influenced the cultural and political systems in China because he had the support of political philosophers referred to as legalists. In historical China, there were several dynasties that were formed and ruled under Confucianism. In line with Strayer (2008), the Chinese peasants formed the Han dynasty between 206BC and 220 DC[16]. Apparently, this dynasty was worse than the Tang and Song dynasties founded by bureaucrats. After the emperor acquired military power, the only thing that could overthrow it and its court in the event of human policy departure was only through uprisings from peasants or foreign invaders. However, foreign powers joined the Chinese politics through peasant uprising. According to Hucker (1995) Confucianism affected the political systems in China in the sense that it led to leadership that did not emphasize on laws, virtuous rule, and believed that sufficient food, trust, and adequate dense were vital government components[17]. Moreover, Confucian philosophy strongly emphasized on benevolence.

Lastly, Confucianism led to the development of Bureaucracy since it emphasized on social interaction and family values that local governments were based on. As a matter of fact, it became a compulsory requirement for all government officials who had to excel on the Confucianism test[18]. On the other hand, the crusading policy in West-Europe became inextricably tangled with the nation's foreign policy. However the religion of Jesus Christ formed the basis of most foreign policies in West-Europe. It was expected of foreigners in the land to follow the set rules which were based on Christian values. This was quite difficult for the minority non Christian groups who were denied the chance to carry on their own practices. The non Christian

people had minimal opportunities to leadership[19]. During the era around 550 BCE China had three dominant religions which comprised of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism unlike West-Europe which had Christianity being the only dominant religion and basis of the laws of the land[20].

Generally, ancient China and West-Europe had certain similarities considering that Confucianism and Christianity greatly affected the nation's social values and foreign policies respectively. However, the political systems in the two counties were quite different since China had several dynasties under different leadership while West-Europe practiced the Empire system of government Such as the Roman Empire. Confucianism which was started by Confucius spread widely in most parts of China while Christianity which was based on the teachings of Jesus dominated most of West-Europe. It can therefore be concluded that Confucius and Jesus held different believes and value to an extent leading to the differences in social culture and foreign policies in the two nations. These effects have extended to modern China and West-Europe although civilization put a great challenge to traditional culture.