

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Chinese Religion

Religion in China has been characterized by pluralism since the beginning of Chinese history. Taoism is the indigenous religion in China. Taoism probably took shape as a religion during the second century, based on the philosophy of Laozi. Buddhism was introduced to China from India approximately in the 1st century AD, and became increasingly popular and the most influential religion in China after the 4th century. Besides, since China is a country with 56 ethnic groups, there is a great diversity of religions and faiths, such as Islam, Christianity, Shamanism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Dongba religion.

Questions

1. How were other religions, like Islam and Christianity introduced to China in history?
2. What are the four most famous Buddhist Mountains in China?
3. What are the most famous Taoist mountains?

Heaven Worship and Ancestor Worship

The Heaven worship was the bureaucratic belief system subscribed to by most dynasties of China until the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty (1911). The ancient Chinese believed that Heaven manifested itself through the powers of the weather and natural disasters. Its dogmas supported the basements of the imperial hierarchy.

Chinese veneration of ancestors dates back to the prehistory. Chinese culture, Confucianism, and Chinese Buddhism all value filial piety as a top virtue, and the act is a continued display of piety and respect towards departed ancestors.

Questions

1. Where is the Temple of Heaven? And what did it function in the feudal Chinese society?
2. Who was regarded as the ancestor of all Chinese people? In what way do they worship him?

Reading

Dingmin Wu, *A Panoramic View of Chinese Culture*, Nanjing: Yilin Publishing House, 2010

Lang Ye & Zhu Liangzhi, *Insights into Chinese Culture*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research press, Beijing, 2008

Ebrey Patricia Buckley, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd Ed, 1993