

Ancient Chinese Religions

Umesh Kumar

Associate Professor of Mathematics

Abstract

Confucianism, taoism, and the early folk religions combined to form the basis of Chinese culture. This paper gives an introduction about ancient Chinese religions and history of religion in china with culture.

Introduction:

History of religion in china:

Prior to the formulation of Chinese civilisation and the spread of world religions in the region known today as East Asia local tribes shared animistic, shamanic and totemic worldviews.

Connected to ancient neolithic cultures such as the Hongshan culture.

Ulrich Libbrecht traces the origin of some features of taoism to what Jan Jacob Maria de Groot called wulism that is Chinese shamanism.

Libbrecht distinguishes two layers in the development of the Chinese theology and religion that continues to this day traditions derived respectively from the shang (c 1600-1046 BCE) and subsequent Zhou dynasties (1046-256 BCE).

The religion of the shang was based on the worship of the ancestors and God kings who survived as unseen divine forces after death already in the shang theology the multiplicity of gods of nature and ancestors were viewed as parts of Di and the four fang and their feng as his cosmic will.

The shang dynasty's identification of shangdi as their ancestors. God had asserted their claim to power by divine right, the Zhou transformed this claim into a legitimacy based on moral power the mandate of Heaven. In Zhou theology tian had no singular earthly progeny but bestowed divine favour virtuous rulers.

John C Didier and David pan kenier related the shapes of both the ancient Chinese characters for Di and Tian to the patterns of stars in the northern skies either drawn in Didier's by connecting the Constellations bracketing the north celestial pole as a square.

Culture in other parts of the world have also conceived these stars or constellations as samples of the origin of things the supreme godhead divinity and royal power besides the waning zhou rituals systems what may be defined as wild traditions or traditions outsidess of the official systems developed as attempts to access the will of tian.

The traditions of the nine fields and of yijing flourished Chinese thinkers faced with this challenges to legitimacy diverges in a Hundred school of thoughts each proposing its own theories for the reconstruction of the Zhou moral order.

According to the Zhou youguang the word for Confucius occupations originally referred to shamanic method holding rites and existed before Confucius times but with Confucius it came to mean devotion to propagating such teaching to bring civilisation to the people.

The competing factions of the Confucius and the fangshi regarded as representation of the ancient religious traditions inherited from previous dynasties concurred in the formulations of Han state religion the former pushing for a centralisation of religion political power around the worship of the god of heaven by the emperor while the latter emphasising the multiplicity of the local gods and the theology of the yellow emperor.

In china religious beliefs are evident in the yangshao culture of the yellow river valley which prospered between 5000-3000 BCE.

The Yangshao culture was matrilineal meaning women were dominant in society this religious figure would have been a women based on the grave goods found. Evidence of strong beliefs in ghosts in the form of amulets and charms goes back to at least the shang dynasty and ghosts stories are among the earliest form of Chinese literature.

Ghosts were the spirits of deceased persons who had not been buried correctly with due honours or were still attached to earth for other reasons.

Conclusion:

This article contains details about ancient Chinese religions and history of religions in china with culture.

Keywords

Religion, cultures, theology, history.