

Name: _____ Date: _____

Chinese Philosophies

Directions: Read about the three Chinese philosophies on this side, and then complete the graphic organizer and notes sheet.

Part I: Confucianism

Confucius was revered as the greatest of sages throughout most of China's history. His teaching, **Confucianism**, was the state teaching from the beginning of the Han Dynasty in 202 BCE to the end of the imperial period in 1911.

Disturbed by constant warfare among the states, Confucius taught that most of the ills of society happened because people forgot their stations in life and rulers lost virtue. Confucius' primary concern lay in social relations, proper conduct, and social harmony. Confucius defined five cardinal relationships: between ruler and ruled, between husband and wife, between parents and children, between older and younger brothers, and between friends. Except for the last case, all of the defined relationships are between superiors and inferiors. He emphasized the complete obedience and loyalty of the inferior to the superior but also mentioned the benevolence of the superior to the inferior. The ideal Confucian family was an extended one of three or four generations, in which authority rested with the elderly male members.

Filial piety (obedience to parents) was one of the most important virtues emphasized by later Confucians. Also, Confucius' teachings were compiled in a book called *The Analects*, which were the subject of civil service examinations for over 2,000 years.

Part II: Daoism

Daoism is a system of philosophy and religion that began in ancient China. It is sometimes spelled Taoism. Along with the philosophy called Confucianism, Daoism has helped to shape Chinese culture. Confucianism focuses on human society and the duties of its members. In contrast, Daoism emphasizes nature. It is more joyful and carefree.

Daoism began more than 2,000 years ago. It was based on a book called the *Daodejing* (or *Tao-te ching*). Lao Zi has traditionally been named as the author of the *Daodejing* (*The Way of Virtue*)...

For Daoists, the most important thing in life is to find the Dao. The Dao is not easy to define. It is the unchanging reality that is the source and end of everything. This means that all beings and things are one. Because all is one, life and death merge into each other. A Daoist does not fear death because it is only part of an eternal cycle.

“Dao” also is translated as “the Way,” meaning the way to think and act. Followers are taught to act in harmony with the natural course of things. They try to avoid disturbing the natural order. This often means that they take no action at all. Daoists believe that striving for power and wealth is a waste of energy. Such things distract people from searching for the Dao.

Part III: Legalism

The school of Chinese philosophy known as Legalism attained prominence during China's Warring States period (475–221 BC). Through the influence of the philosopher Han Feizi, it formed the ideological basis of China's first imperial dynasty, the Qin (221–207 BC). The Legalists believed that human beings are inherently selfish and short-sighted and that political institutions should be modeled in response to the realities of human behavior. (Their beliefs are located in a book called *Han Feizi*). Thus social harmony could be assured not through the people's recognition of the virtue of their ruler, but only through strong state control and absolute obedience to authority. The Legalists advocated government by a system of laws that rigidly prescribed punishments and rewards for specific behavior. They stressed that all human activity be directed toward increasing the power of the ruler and the state. The brutal implementation of this policy by the authoritarian Qin Dynasty led to that dynasty's overthrow and the permanent discrediting of Legalist philosophy in China.

Resources:

"**China.**" Compton's by Britannica. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition. 8 Nov. 2009

"**Daoism.**" Britannica Elementary Encyclopedia. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition. 8 Nov. 2009

"**Legalism.**" Encyclopædia Britannica. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition. 8 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.school.eb.com/eb/article-9047627>>.