



CHAPTER II

CHINESENESS AND CHINESE SOCIETY IN CHINA

2.1 Introduction

The Chinese traditional culture and philosophy are the root of Chineseeness. Culture influences people's attitude and behavior. Before we start to study the role of Chineseeness, it is necessary to study the historical and cultural background of China. In this chapter, we will analyze the Chinese ancient philosophy. The tenets of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and their influence and interconnection will be illuminated in detail. Chinese traditional culture and social rules, such as clan system, networks and *guanxi* also play a significant role to shape the Chineseeness.

2.2 Chinese History and Civilization

China is one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with written records dating back about 3,500 years and with 5,000 years being commonly used by Chinese as the age of their civilization. Successive dynasties developed systems of bureaucratic control, which gave the agrarian-based Chinese an advantage over neighboring nomadic and mountain dwelling cultures. The development of a state ideology based on Confucianism (100 B.C.) and a common system of writing (200 B.C.) both strengthened Chinese civilization. Politically, China alternated between periods of political union and disunion, and was often conquered by external ethnic groups, of which many were eventually assimilated into the Chinese identity. These cultural and political influences from many parts of Asia as well as successive waves of immigration and emigration merged to create the familiar image of Chinese culture and people today.

The Chinese civilization is different from the other great civilizations. The valley civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt were long linked, and the ancient civilizations of Indian valley and Babylonian had also some relations. But Chinese civilization is relatively independent Yellow River civilization which had not any close relations with them.

There were two outstanding features of China's feudal society. One was that it was closely connected with patriarchal clan system and it relied on a link of ties of blood to bring collective productive force into play. Another was a centralized feudal autocratic empire formed on the basis of agriculture and a superstructure with a perfect ethics for defending feudal patriarchal clan system.¹

Table 1. Chinese Historical Dynasties²

Chinese Dynasties	
Dynasty	Characteristics and History
Xia c.1994–c.1523 B.C.	Semilegendary Emperor Yu built irrigation channels, reclaimed land. Bronze weapons, chariots, domestic animals used. Wheat, millet cultivated. First use of written symbols.
Shang or Yin c.1523–c.1027 B.C.	First historic dynasty. Complex agricultural society with a bureaucracy and defined social classes. Well-developed writing. first Chinese calendar. Great age of bronze casting.
Zhou c.1027–256 B.C.	Classical age (Confucius, Lao Zi, Mencius) despite political disorder. Written laws, money economy. Iron implements and ox-drawn plow in use. Followed by Warring States period, 403–221 B.C.
Qin 221–206 B.C.	Unification of China under harsh rule of Qinshi Huangdi. Feudalism replaced by pyramidal bureaucratic government. Written language standardized. Roads, canals, much of the Great Wall built.

¹ Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua, A Concise History of China (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), pp. 5-150.

² Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua, A Concise History of China, pp. 5-84.

Chinese Dynasties

Dynasty	Characteristics and History
Han 202 B.C.–A.D. 220	Unification furthered, but harshness lessened and Confucianism made basis for bureaucratic state. Buddhism introduced. Encyclopedic history, dictionary compiled; porcelain produced.
Three Kingdoms A.D. 220–265	Division into three states: Wei, Shu, Wu. Wei gradually dominant. Confucianism eclipsed; increased importance of Taoism and Buddhism. Many scientific advances adopted from India.
Jin 265–420	Founded by a Wei general; gradual expansion to the southeast. Series of barbarian dynasties ruled northern China. Continued growth of Buddhism.
Sui 581–618	Reunification; centralized government reestablished. Buddhism, Taoism favored. Great Wall refortified; canal system established.
Tang 618–907	Territorial expansion. Buddhism temporarily suppressed. Civil service examinations based on Confucianism. Age of great achievements in poetry (Li Bai, Bai Juyi, Du Fu), sculpture, painting.
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 907–960	Period of warfare, official corruption, general hardship. Widespread development of printing; paper money first printed.
Song 960–1279	Period of great social and intellectual change. Neo-Confucianism attains supremacy over Taoism and Buddhism; central bureaucracy reestablished. Widespread cultivation of tea and cotton; gunpowder first used militarily.
Yuan 1271–1368	Mongol dynasty founded by Kublai Khan. Growing contact with West. Confucian ideals discouraged. Great age of Chinese playwriting. Revolts in Mongolia and S China end dynasty.
Ming 1368–1644	Mongols expelled. Confucianism, civil service examinations, reinstated. Contact with European traders, missionaries. Porcelain, architecture, the novel and drama flourish.
Qing or Manchu 1644–1912	Established by the Manchus. Territorial expansion but gradual weakening of Chinese power; decline of central authority. Increasing European trade; foreign powers divide China into spheres of influence. Opium War; Hong Kong ceded. Last Chinese monarchy.

2.3 Chinese Philosophy and Religions

Chinese philosophy is a collective designation for the various schools of thought originated by Chinese scholars and sages. Chinese philosophy has a history of several thousand years. Its origins are often traced back to the *Yi Jing* (the *Book of Changes*), an ancient compendium of divination, which introduced some of the most fundamental terms of Chinese philosophy. Its age can only be estimated, but it certainly draws from an oracular tradition that goes back to neolithic times.³

Chinese philosophy has passed through three distinct historical stages: the classical age, a creative period from the 6th to the 2nd century B.C.; the medieval age, from the 2nd century B.C. to the 11th century, a period of synthesis and absorption of foreign thought; and the modern age, from the 11th century to the present, a period of maturation of earlier philosophical trends and introduction of new philosophies from the West. Throughout all these periods, Chinese thought has tended toward humanism rather than spiritualism, rationalism rather than mysticism, and syncretism rather than sectarianism.⁴

Early Shang thought was based upon a cyclic notion of time, corresponding to the seasons. This notion, which remained relevant throughout Chinese history, represents a fundamental distinction from western philosophy, in which the dominant view of time is a linear progression. During the Shang, fate could be manipulated by the great deity God, most frequently translated as "Lord on High". Ancestor worship was also present,

³ Yang Rongguo, Chinese Anticent Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiangshi) (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1973), p. 134.

⁴ Li Zehou, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiang Shilun) (Anhui, Anhui Wenyi Chubanshe, 1994), p. 300.

as was human and animal sacrifice.⁵

When the Shang was overthrown by the Zhou, a new political, religious and philosophical concept was introduced called the "Mandate of Heaven". This mandate was said to be taken when rulers became unworthy of their position, and provided a shrewd justification for Zhou rule. During this period, archaeological evidence points to an increase in literacy and a partial shift away from the faith placed in God, with ancestor worship becoming commonplace and a more worldly orientation coming to the fore.⁶

In around 500 BC, after the Zhou state end and China moved in to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), the classic period of Chinese philosophy began. This is known as the *Hundred Schools of Thought* (百家, bǎijiā). Of the many schools founded at this time and during the subsequent Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), the four most influential ones were Confucianism, Daoism (often spelled "Taoism"), Mohism⁷ and Legalism⁸. The short founder Qin Dynasty, where Legalism was the official philosophy, quashed Mohist and Confucianist schools. Legalism remained influential until the emperors of the Han Dynasty adopted Taoism and later Confucianism as official doctrine. These latter two became the determining forces of Chinese thought until the 20th century, with the introduction of Buddhism negotiated largely through perceived similarities with Taoism.⁹ The respective influences of Taoism and Confucianism are often described this way: "Chinese are Confucianist during the day, while they are Taoists at night"¹⁰.

⁵ Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua, A Concise History of China, pp. 6-9.

⁶ Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua, A Concise History of China, pp. 10-17.

⁷ Mohism is a school of philosophy pioneered by Mo Zi (478-392 B.C.)

⁸ Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua, A Concise History of China, pp. 6-9.

⁹ Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua, A Concise History of China, pp. 24.

¹⁰ Feng Youlan, Chinese Philosophy History (Zhongguo Zhexue Jianshi) (Beijing, Beijing

When the Communist Party took over power, previous schools of thought, excepting notably legalism, were denounced as backward, but their influence on Chinese thought remains. Although, China is atheist state today officially, there are only 50 million Communists. There are still 1, 95 million of population practices animism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, in syncretism with a few million Christians and Muslims.

Chinese major philosophical ideologies and religions in history can be generalized into 8 types as follows¹¹:

1. "Animism", ancestors: 3,000 B.C.
2. "Dualism", the "Yang and Yin": 2,000 B.C.
3. "Taoism": 604 B.C.
4. "Confucianism": 551 B.C.
5. "Buddhism": Second Century B.C.
6. "Christianity": Fourth Century A.C.
7. "Islam": Eighth Century A.C.
8. Atheist Communism: 1950 A.C.

Of all these kinds of ideologies and religions originated or developed in China, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are most important and influential.

University Press, 1985).

¹¹ Tao Liming, Chinese Ancient Philosophy (Zhongguo Gudai Zhexue) (Shanghai: Xuelin Chubanshe, 2001), p. 22.

2.3.1 Confucianism in China

2.3.1.1 Confucius

Confucius, in Chinese is *Kong Zi* or *Kong Fuzi* (551?-479? B.C.), is the most important people in Chinese philosopher and also one of the most influential figures in Chinese history.

Confucius was born in the state of Lu (present-day Shandong Province) of the noble Kong clan. His original name was Kong Qiu. His father, commander of a district in Lu, died three years after Confucius was born, leaving the family in poverty. But Confucius nevertheless received a fine education. He was married at the age of 19 and had one son and two daughters. During the four years immediately after his marriage, poverty compelled him to perform menial labors for the chief of the district in which he lived. His mother died in 527 B.C., and after a period of mourning he began his career as a teacher, usually traveling about and instructing the small body of disciples who had gathered around him. His fame as a man of learning and character and his reverence for Chinese ideals and customs soon spread through the principality of Lu.¹²

Living as he did in the second half of the Zhou dynasty (1045?-256 B.C.), when feudalism degenerated in China and intrigue and vice were rampant, Confucius deplored the contemporary disorder and lack of moral standards. He came to believe that the only remedy was to convert people once more to the principles and precepts of the sages of antiquity.¹³ He therefore lectured to his pupils on the ancient classics. He taught the great value of the power of example. Rulers, he said, could be great only if they themselves lead exemplary lives, and were they willing to be guided by moral

¹² Zhong Bingnan, *Biography of Confucius (Kong Zi Zhuan)* (Jilin: Jilin Wenshi Chubanshe, 1989), pp. 1-25.

¹³ Carl Crow, *Master Kung: The Story of Confucius* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937), pp. 75.

principles, their states would inevitably become prosperous and happy.¹⁴

Confucius had, however, no opportunity to put his theories to a public test until, at the age of 50, he was appointed magistrate of Zhongdu, and the next year minister of crime of the state of Lu. His administration was successful; reforms were introduced, justice was fairly dispensed, and crime was almost eliminated. So powerful did Lu become that the ruler of a neighboring state maneuvered to secure the minister's dismissal. Confucius left his office in 496 B.C., traveling about and teaching, vainly hoping that some other prince would allow him to undertake measures of reform. In 484 B.C., after a fruitless search for an ideal ruler, he returned for the last time to Lu. He spent the remaining years of his life in retirement, writing commentaries on the classics. He died in Lu and was buried in a tomb at Qufu, Shandong.¹⁵

Confucius did not put into writing the principles of his philosophy; these were handed down only through his disciples. *Lun Yu (The Analects)*, a work compiled by some of his disciples, is considered the most reliable source of information about his life and teachings. One of the historical works that he is said to have compiled and edited, the *Chun Qiu (Spring and Autumn Annals)*, is an account of Chinese history in the state of Lu from 722 to 481 B.C. In learning he wished to be known as a transmitter rather than as a creator, and he therefore revived the study of the ancient books. His own teachings, together with those of his main disciples, are found in the *Si Shu (Four Books)* of Confucian literature, which became the textbooks of later Chinese generations. Confucius was greatly venerated during his lifetime and in succeeding ages.¹⁶ Although he himself had little belief in the supernatural, he has been revered almost as a spiritual being by millions.

¹⁴ Zhong Bingnan, Biography of Confucius (Kong Zi Zhuan), pp. 58.

¹⁵ Zhong Bingnan, Biography of Confucius (Kong Zi Zhuan), pp. 236.

¹⁶ Tao Liming, Chinese Ancient Philosophy (Zhongguo Gudai Zhexue), p. 25.

2.3.1.2 Confucianism

Confucianism is one of the major systems of thought in China and it developed from the teachings of Confucius and his disciples, and concerned with the principles of good conduct, practical wisdom, and proper social relationships. Confucianism has influenced the Chinese attitude toward life, set the patterns of living and standards of social value, and provided the background for Chinese political theories and institutions. Confucianism has spread from China to East Asia countries, such as, Korea and Japan, and even some countries in South East Asia, especially Vietnam. People living in these areas got influence from Confucius unconsciously. Confucianism has also aroused interest among Western scholars.

Although Confucianism became the official ideology of the Chinese state for a long time, Confucianism is quite different with some other religions. In fact, it has never existed as a real established religion. There is no church or priesthood for it, but only some temples and these temples are just some public places designed for annual ceremonies, especially on Confucius' birthday, but is not the place in which people gathered to worship or had community activities. Chinese people honored and respected Confucius as a great and wisdom teacher but not a personal god. Confucius himself never claimed divinity either.¹⁷

The principles of Confucianism are contained in the nine ancient Chinese works handed down by Confucius and his followers or disciples, who lived in an age of great philosophic activity. These writings can be divided into two groups: the *Wu Jing (Five Classics)* and the *Si Shu (Four Books)*.

The keynote of Confucian ethics based on the five virtues of “Ren” (kindness),

¹⁷ Yang Rongguo, Chinese Anticent Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiangshi), p. 99.

“Yi” (uprightness), “Li” (decorum), “Zhi” (wisdom) and “Xin” (faithfulness), which constitute the whole of human duty.¹⁸

“Ren” means kindness, humaneness, love, goodness and human-heartedness.¹⁹ Ren is considered the supreme virtue representing human qualities. In human relations, construed as those between one person and another, Ren is manifested in faithfulness to oneself and others, best expressed in the Confucian golden rule, “Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.”²⁰ Ren also has a political dimension. If the ruler lacks Ren, it will hardly be possible for the subjects to obey and behave humanely. Politically, Confucius advocated a paternalistic government in which the sovereign is benevolent and honorable and the subjects are respectful and obedient. The ruler should cultivate moral perfection in order to set a good example to the people.²¹

“Yi” means uprightness, morality. One should have right conduct and duty to one’s friends, neighbors, colleagues.²² “Li” means propriety, good manners, politeness, ceremony, worship. In a narrow sense, it means ritual; in a generalized sense, it simply means good manners; in its highest philosophic sense, it means an ideal social order with everything in its place, and particularly a rationalized feudal order.²³ It could be translated as “rules of propriety”, sometimes as “regulations”, sometimes as “the rule of proper conduct”.²⁴ “Li” is a very important topic in Confucianism, the word “Li”

¹⁸ Li Zehou, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiang Shilun) (Anhui, Anhui Wenyi Chubanshe, 1994), pp. 11-55.

¹⁹ Richard Wilhelm, Confucius and Confucianism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 97.

²⁰ The Analects, 5,2,2.

²¹ William H. McNeill and Jean W. Sedlar, Classical China (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 56.

²² Yang Rongguo, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiangshi), p. 110.

²³ Chen Jingpan, Confucius as a Teacher (Malaysia: Delta Publishing Sdn Bhd, 1993), p. 266.

²⁴ Chen Jingpan, Confucius as a Teacher, p. 270.

appears seventy-one times in *Lun Yu (The Analects)*. “Li” was practically the supreme standard of judgment for all political, social and individual affairs.²⁵ It is necessary for everybody to know and obey Li as social regulations. “The Master said, ‘Respectfulness, without Li, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without Li, becomes timidity, boldness, without Li, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without Li, becomes rudeness.’”²⁶

“Zhi” means wisdom, prudence.²⁷ “Xin” means faithfulness, loyalty and mutual trust. One should be loyal to others, and should trust other people as well. Trust and loyalty are the basis for building anything.²⁸

Another important topic and conception in Confucianism is “Zheng Ming”, means “rectification of names”, means regulate one’s role and duty in society.²⁹ There is a place for everyone in the society, and everyone has his or her place and role to play in society. Confucius thought that the person in society is seen in different relationships to others rather than as an isolated individual. Thus, the relationship between people is the theme problem discussed in Confucianism. Confucianism concentrates on six relationships. The six relationships, from superior person to inferior person, occur from:

1. Sovereign to Minister
2. Father to Son
3. Husband to Wife
4. Older to Younger
5. Teacher to Student

²⁵ Chen Jingpan, *Confucius as a Teacher*, p. 273.

²⁶ The Analects, 8,2,1.

²⁷ Chen Jingpan, *Confucius as a Teacher*, p. 323.

²⁸ Chen Jingpan, *Confucius as a Teacher*, p. 387.

²⁹ Feng Youlan, *Chinese Philosophy History (Zhongguo Zhexue Jianshi)*, p. 223.

6. Friendship

These "Six Relationships"³⁰ or "Six Relations" are supposed to be the basis of all social connections among persons in society. All six are based on the fundamental relationship between parents and children. In each of the relationships, there are objects and subjects. The superior member (parents, husband, ruler, old brother etc.) has the duty of benevolence and care for the subordinate member (children, wife, subjects, younger brother etc.). The subordinate member has the duty of obedience. The only exception might be the relationship between friend and friend, which may actually involve equality -- unless, of course, one is older than the other, which would turn it into a relationship like that between older and younger brother.³¹ These individuals' interactions within society lay the basis for the connections and networks of Chinese people.

2.3.2 Taoism in China

Taoism (Daoism), one of most important and influential Chinese philosophical and religious systems, dating from about the 4th century BC. Among native Chinese schools of thought, the influence of Taoism has been second only to that of Confucianism. Taoism and Confucianism have to be seen side-by-side as two distinct responses to the social, political and philosophical conditions of life two and a half millennia ago in China.

Taoism is almost entirely different from Confucianism, but not contradictory. Whereas Confucianism urged the individual to conform to the standards of an ideal social system, greatly concerning with social relations, conduct and human society,

³⁰ Yang Rongguo, Chinese Anticent Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiangshi), p. 184.

³¹ Li Zehou, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiang Shilun), pp.178.

Taoism has a much individualistic and mystical character, greatly influenced by nature. Taoism maintained that the individual should ignore the dictates of society and seek only to conform to the underlying pattern of the universe, the Tao ("way"), which can neither be described in words nor conceived in thought. Taoism ranges over entirely different concerns, so that it is common for individuals, philosophers to be both Confucianist and Taoist.

2.3.2.1 Lao Zi: Father of Taoism

Lao Zi (570?-490? B.C.) is Chinese philosopher and reputed founder of Taoism. The name, 'Lao Zi', literally means 'The Old Man'. Some believe he was a man named Li. According to legend, He was born in the province of Henan and was a recorder, historiographers, keepers in charge of the Zhou dynasty's archives. Foreseeing the decay of this dynasty, he gave up his office, and undertook a journey; at the Han-kou Pass, Henan Province, a watchman, Yin Hi, begged him to write his thoughts for his own instruction before he retired from the world; consequently, Lao Zi wrote his work in two parts in the *Tao* and the *Te*, and having entrusted it to Yin Hi, he disappeared; the time of the death of the philosopher is not known.³²

Dao de jing (Tao Te Ching) is a philosophical treatise, composed by 5,000 characters. By far the most translated Chinese literary work, this small book has had an enormous influence on Chinese thought and culture. The central vehicle of achieving peacefulness was the *Tao*, a term which has been translated as "the way" or "the path". *Te* in this context refers to virtue and *Ching* refers to laws. Thus the *Tao Te Ching* could be translated as The Law (or Canon) of Virtue and its Way.³³ The *Tao* was the central mystical term of the Lao Tzu and the Taoists, a formless, unfathomable source of all things. *Tao Te Ching* teaches that "the way" (Dao, or Tao) is realized through

³² Tao Liming, *Chinese Ancient Philosophy (Zhongguo Gudai Zhexue)*, p. 67.

³³ William H. McNeill and Jean W. Sedlar, *Classical China*, p. 184.

recognition and acceptance of nothingness; that is, wisdom is understood that weakness truly equals strength, that happiness depends on disaster, and that passivity is the greatest action.³⁴

2.3.2.2 Basic Tenet of Taoism

The Taoist has no concern for affairs of the state, for mundane or daily matters of administration, or for elaborate ritual. On the contrary, Taoism encourages avoiding public duties in order to search for a vision of the transcendental world of the spirit and look for balance in this world.

Taoism is based on the idea that behind all material things and all the change in the world, there is one fundamental, universal principle: the Way or Tao. The Tao is the natural order of things. It is a force that flows through every living and sentient object, as well as through the entire universe. When the Tao reaches balance, it is possible to find the perfect happiness. Thus, the purpose of human life, is to live according to the Tao, which requires passivity, calm, non-striving (*wu-wei*), humility, and lack of planning.³⁵

Taoism encourages working with natural forces rather than against them. Lao Zi taught that all straining, all striving are not only vain but also counterproductive. One should endeavor to do nothing (*wu-wei*). But what does this mean? It means not to literally do nothing, but to discern and follow the natural forces, to follow and shape the flow of events and not to put oneself against the natural order of things.³⁶ In this sense the Taoist doctrine of *wu-wei* can be understood as a way of mastering circumstances by understanding their nature or principal, and then shaping ones actions in accordance

³⁴ Yang Rongguo, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiangshi). p. 265.

³⁵ Tao Liming, Chinese Ancient Philosophy (Zhongguo Gudai Zhhexue). p. 72.

³⁶ Tao Liming, Chinese Ancient Philosophy (Zhongguo Gudai Zhhexue). p. 73.

with these. Teachers of the Tao often use examples of the bending reed or grass blowing in the wind to illustrate this important point. Reed and grass has to be bending in strong wind to avoid fracture.³⁷ A Taoist would encourage an individual to work with their obstacles and problems instead of fighting adversity at every turn.

Understanding this, Taoist philosophy followed a very interesting circle. On the one hand, the Taoists rejected the Confucian attempts to regulate life and society and counseled instead to turn away from it to a solitary contemplation of nature. On the other hand they believed that by doing so one could ultimately harness the powers of the universe. By 'doing nothing' one could 'accomplish everything.' Lao Tzu writes:

*“The Tao abides in non-action,
Yet nothing is left undone.
If kings and lords observed this,
The ten thousand things would develop naturally.
If they still desired to act,
They would return to the simplicity of formless substance.
Without form there is no desire.
Without desire there is tranquillity.
In this way all things would be at peace.”*³⁸

The most common graphic representation of Taoist theology is the circular *Yin Yang* figure.³⁹ It represents the balance of opposites in the universe. When they are equally present, all is calm. When one is outweighed by the other, there is confusion and disarray. Yin and Yang can represent the Sun and the Moon, heaven and earth, male and female, fire and water, etc. The world is in perfect statue when the balance was

³⁷ Li Zehou, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiang Shilun), pp. 94.

³⁸ Zhang Yi, Simplified Interpretation of Lao Zi (Lao Zi Baihua Jinyi) (Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian Chubanshe, 1992), p. 35.

³⁹ Tao Liming, Chinese Ancient Philosophy (Zhongguo Gudai Zhexue), p. 76.

reached between these pairs of opposite objects. The Yin and Yang are a model that the faithful follow, an aid that allows each person to contemplate the state of their lives.

Figure 3: Circular Yin Yang figure



Taoists believe that nature and the earth is constantly in flux. Simply, the only constant in the world is change. When individuals learn that growth and movement are natural and necessary, they can become balanced.⁴⁰ Reality is perpetual change. Taoism asks that each person focuses on the world around them in order to understand the inner harmonies of the universe.

2.3.3 Buddhism in China

Buddhism, a religion originated from India, has affected and been affected by Chinese culture, politics, literature and philosophy for almost two thousand years. It is undoubted that Buddhism is one of the most important and influential ideologies in China. Buddhism entered China gradually, first primarily through Central Asia and, later, by way of the trade routes around and through Southeast Asia.

⁴⁰ Li Zehou, Chinese Ancient Ideology History (Zhongguo Gudai Sixiang Shilun), pp. 98.

2.3.3.1 Basic Teachings of Buddhism

Buddhism was founded in India about 500 B.C. by Buddha, a religious teacher and leader. Buddha believed that there was a continuous cycle of death and rebirth and that each person's position and well-being in life was determined by his/her behavior in previous lives. A person's good deeds and acts might lead to a rebirth as a wise and wealthy person or as a heavenly being. A person's bad deeds and evil acts might lead to a rebirth as a poor and sickly person. Buddha also believed that the experiences of pain and suffering are very much a part of a person's life, and he taught that the only way to escape human suffering was to give up worldly desires such as power, wealth, and beauty. Thus, one could gain perfect peace and happiness.⁴¹

2.3.3.2 The History of Buddhism in China

2.3.3.2.1 The Early Years of Buddhism in China (25-317)

Although there are reports of Buddhists in China as early as the 3rd century BC, Buddhism was not actively propagated in the country until the early centuries of the Common Era. Buddhism was first introduced to China about 65, by two Indian monks, Moton and Chufarlan, who had been invited by Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty to establish a monastery in China. In the beginning Buddhism did not have much influence in China due to the prevailing traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucius. Around 148, An Shigao, a Parthian prince and Buddhist monk, arrived in China and proceeded to translate many Buddhist works in to Chinese.⁴²

The Buddhism that first became popular in China during the Han dynasty was deeply colored with magical practices, making it compatible with popular Chinese Taoism. Instead of the doctrine of no-self, early Chinese Buddhists taught the

⁴¹ Friedhelm Hardy, The Religions of Asia (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 224.

⁴² Kenneth. K .S. Chen, Buddhism in China, a History of Survey (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 57.

indestructibility of the soul. Nirvana became a kind of immortality. They also taught the theory of karma, the values of charity and compassion, and the need to suppress the passions.

With the downfall of the Han Dynasty in 220 and the troubled chaotic period that followed, Buddhism was able to spread to different regions of China. Since the period from the later Han dynasty to the fall of Western Chin,⁴³ Buddhism had been introduced into China by immigrants from Persia, Central Asia, and India constantly by the way of the silk road, the main trade route connecting China with the Middle East and India.⁴⁴

During this long period, Buddhism was first considered as an insignificant cult practiced by immigrants, but after it drew more and more attention from native Chinese followers, it finally asserted its own independent identity.

2.3.3.2.2 The Years of Growth (317-589)

After the fall of the Western Chin dynasty, the Chinese established the Eastern Chin dynasty in Nanjing⁴⁵, which was succeeded by a series of weak governments. At the same time, the conquered North was occupied and divided between various sinicized but non-Chinese peoples, who soon were warring with one another. Then the 'North and South Dynasties' period began and last for 264 years.⁴⁶ In the Southern region of China, Chinese rulers who were dissatisfied with traditional Confucian beliefs began to take an interest in Buddhist thought. The upper classes and aristocrats who

⁴³ Later Han (25-220), followed by Three kingdoms period (220-265), then succeeded by Western Chin (265-317).

⁴⁴ Friedhelm Hardy, *The Religions of Asia*, p. 225.

⁴⁵ Nanjing, big and ancient city in Jiangsu province, in the east of China.

⁴⁶ North and South Dynasties period in Chinese history (317-581).

were interested and devoted their lives to academics and literature began to explore and study Buddhism. Meanwhile, in the northern region, those non-Chinese rulers did not propagate nor trust the traditional combined philosophical concept of Confucianism and Daoism, so Buddhism was actively adopted and promoted by many of the occupying dynasties in the North, where it eventually achieved popularity near the status of a state religion. By the late 4th century, 90 percent of the people in the northwest region of China (closest to central Asia and the Silk Road) were Buddhists.⁴⁷

One of the most important contributions to the growth of Buddhism in China during this period was the work of translation. The most important of the early translators was the learned monk Kumarajiva, who arrived at China and established the first Imperial translation bureau in the North, while a well read sangha in the South studiously examined the scriptures and developed the first beginnings of a Chinese Buddhism theology. This period closes with the reunification of China under the Sui dynasty.⁴⁸

2.3.3.2.3 The Years of Acceptance (589-907)

During the short-lived Sui dynasty (581-618), the North and South traditions of Buddhism were united. During Sui dynasty, Buddhism flourished as a state religion.

The golden age of Buddhism in China occurred during the Tang dynasty (618-907). Though the Tang emperors were usually Taoists themselves, they tended to favor Buddhism, which caused Buddhism to be extremely popular. Under the Tang dynasty, the government extended its control over the monasteries and the ordination and legal status of monks. From this time forward, the Chinese monk styled himself simply Shen,

⁴⁷ Bulcsu Siklos, "Buddhism in China", The Religions of Asia, p. 226.

⁴⁸ Bulcsu Siklos, "Buddhism in China", The Religions of Asia, p. 226.

or “a subject.”

During this period several Chinese schools developed their own distinctive approaches. Some of them produced comprehensive systematizations of the vast body of Buddhist texts and teachings. There was a great expansion in the number of Buddhist monasteries and the amount of land they owned. It was also during this period that many scholars made pilgrimages to India, heroic journeys that greatly enriched Buddhism in China, both by the texts that were acquired and by the intellectual and spiritual inspiration that was brought from India. Buddhism was never able to replace its Taoist and Confucian rivals, however, and a major persecution was started in 845. According to records, 4,600 Buddhist temples and 40,000 shrines were destroyed, and 260,500 monks and nuns were forced to return to lay life.⁴⁹

2.3.3.2.4 Decline and Revival (907-present)

After the mortal blows of two extensive persecutions and the general anarchy and warfare at the end of the Tang dynasty and throughout the Five Dynasties period (907-960), Chinese Buddhism declined and would never recover the vitality and creativity it enjoyed at the height of the Tang dynasty. It did maintain much of its heritage, however, and it continued to play a significant role in the religious life of China. On the one hand, Buddhism retained its identity as Buddhism and generated new forms through which it was expressed. These included texts such as the *yü lu*, or “recorded sayings”, of famous teachers that were oriented primarily toward monks, as well as more literary creations such as the “Journey to the West” (written in the 16th century) and “The Dream of the Red Chamber” (18th century). On the other hand, Buddhism coalesced with the Confucian- Neo-Confucian and Taoist traditions to form a complex multi-religious ethos within which all three traditions were more or less comfortably encompassed.

⁴⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, The Buddha and Buddhism: China, 1995.

But the sangha did recover after the unification under the Song dynasty (960-1279). There was, however, a culling and consolidation of the wide array of lineages which existed before the persecutions. Various schools of Chinese Buddhism emerged. Among the various schools the two that retained the greatest vitality were the Chan School (better known in the West by its Japanese name, Zen) which was noted for its emphasis on meditation, and the Pure Land tradition, which emphasized Buddhist devotion. The former school exerted the greatest influence among the cultured elite. It did so through various media, including the arts. For example, Chan artists during the Song dynasty (960-1279) had a decisive impact on Chinese landscape painting. Artists used images of flowers, rivers, and trees, executed with sudden, deft strokes, to evoke an insight into the flux and emptiness of all reality. The Pure Land tradition exerted a greater influence on the population as a whole and was sometimes associated with secret societies and peasant uprisings. But the two seemingly disparate traditions were often very closely linked. In addition, they were mixed with other Buddhist elements such as the so-called “masses for the dead” that had originally been popularized by the practitioners of Buddhism.⁵⁰

During the early decades of the 20th century, China experienced a Buddhist reform movement aimed at revitalizing the Chinese Buddhist tradition and adapting Buddhist teachings and institutions to modern conditions. However, the disruptions caused by the Sino-Japanese War and the subsequent establishment of a communist government have not been helpful to the Buddhist cause. The Buddhist community was the victim of severe repression during the Cultural Revolution (1966-69). Since 1976 the Chinese government has pursued a more tolerant policy, but the extent of continuing Buddhist vitality is difficult to determine.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Bulcsu Siklos, “Buddhism in China”, *The Religions of Asia*, p. 228-229.

⁵¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *The Buddha and Buddhism: China*, 1995.

2.3.4 Interrelations Between Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and Their Influences in China

The Confucian tradition has a long historical legacy in East Asia extending from China across Korea and Japan and into Vietnam. The influence of Confucianism has been significant in political thought and institutions, ritual exchange, educational philosophy moral teaching, cultural attitudes, and especially social relationships. Indeed, Confucian values still play an important part in East Asian life despite the striking inroads of modernization and westernization. The potential positive contribution of Confucianism is significant for continuing to shape East Asian societies in their quest for sustainable development and environmental integrity.

Although this Confucian tradition has enormous historical variations, cultural particularities, and national differences in the region, there are certain central ideas and values which have spread across the area. These values constitute key elements of the tradition which have endured despite historical and political changes. These include: a dynamic cosmological context or worldview for promoting harmony amidst change; the embeddedness of each person in concentric circles of relationships and ethical responsibilities; the importance of the family relations including past, present, and future generations; the function of a hierarchical social system where loyalties to elders and to teachers; the significance of education in cultivating the individual, enriching the society, and contributing to the political order; the role of government in establishing a political bureaucracy for ruling large numbers of people, and the value of history as an element of civilizational continuity and moral rectification.⁵²

Western traditions tend to underscore the importance of the individual, highlighting

⁵² Mary Evelyn Tucker, Confucianism and Ecology: Potential and Limits, 1998.

her or his rights and freedoms. While Confucianism places its entire emphasis on proper behaviors of men and men's place in society. The central role of Confucian philosophy goes to human social interactions.

Besides Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism represent two other strong influences on Chinese culture and society. These three streams of thought fused together to form the Chinese view of man's place in society and influenced the Chinese character's and personality's development.

Buddhism and Taoism both emphasize the oneness of nature and mankind's position with that oneness. Buddhism emphasizes creating an ideal of human nature, which people can achieve by learning and acts of will. Taoism focuses on the duality of all nature, and gaining an understanding of nature through knowledge of that duality and its implications.⁵³

Taoism and Buddhism are almost entirely different from Confucianism, but they are not contradictory. Confucianism and Taoism are mutually complemented and co-existed in Chinese society for several centuries. People use Confucianism to guide their daily work and live, while inclined to Taoism when they encounter obstacles in life. Confucians believed that men should strive to advance themselves as much as possible, so long as they maintained all the proper ritual behaviors for each stage of their lives' progression. Confucians encourage people to work with diligence and make contributions to their family and society. But when Chinese people face the troubles and difficulties on their way of endeavor, they will change to use Taoism to find the way out. Since the Taoists encourage an individual to work with their obstacles by according to the natural principles, to drop back for saving the strength, rather than fighting adversity

⁵³ George T. Haley, Chin Tiong Tan, Usha C. V. Haley, New Asian Emperors: The Overseas Chinese. Their Strategies and Competitive Advantages, p. 31.

at every turn. Therefore, Chinese people have the unique characteristics of elasticity and flexibility in their life.

There is a famous parable saying that to Chinese people, Confucianism is a grocery store that men have to enter everyday; Taoism is a drugstore, men would get in only when they fall sick; while Buddhism is a supermarket, containing all kinds of commodities, but men have to spend a lot of time to find the stuffs they need because the supermarket is too large.⁵⁴

2.4 Chinese Traditional Culture and Social Rules

2.4.1 Clan and Clan System in China

A clan is a group of people united by kinship and descent. Generally, a clan is quite large. Members of a clan share an apical ancestor several generations back. They may share the same great grandparents, great-great grandparents or even more distant ancestor.

Kin group is another important concept. Kin group indicates the people who share the same grandparents and they are generally called extended families, but not clan. In another way, kin groups are usually smaller than clans.

Some clans are so large and have so long history that they have no evidence of the ancestor. In other words, they merely share a “stipulated” or “specified” common ancestor, and he or she may be factual or fictional, being considered as merely a symbol of the clan’s unity. In some certain societies, this ancestor is not even human being; he or she may be an animalized totem. Some clans are patrilineal, meaning its members are

⁵⁴ Said by Nan Huaijin, a famous Chinese historian.

related through the male line, while others are matrilineal, its members are related through the female line. Still other clans are bilateral, consisting of all the descendents of the apical ancestor through both the male and female lines. Whether a clan is patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral depends on the kinship rules of the culture in which the clan lives. Some clans have an official leader such as a chieftain, matriarch, or patriarch.⁵⁵ The distinguishing factor is that a clan is a smaller component of a larger society, such as tribe or state. Examples include Scottish clans, Chinese clans and Japanese clans which exist respectively as kin groups within Scottish, Chinese, and Japanese society.

People who live in a same clan always share common live style, custom, religion beliefs and spoken dialect. They have a closer relationship with the people inside the same clan than people who does not belong to this clan.

A Chinese clan is a group of related Chinese people with a common surname and sharing a common ancestor and ancestral village. Clan loyalties tend to be very strong and to a large extent are reinforced by ties to the ancestral village and often a common spoken Chinese dialect, which can be unintelligible to people outside the village.⁵⁶

When the Chinese immigrants spread into abroad, the clan organizations were established consequentially. To cope with the new environment, the Chinese immigrants formed groups, namely the so-called *bangs* based on dialects, and within the *bang*, they organized clan associations based on locality and surname. Among the Chinese in Southeast Asia, there were mainly Cantonese *bang*, Teochow *bang*, Hokkien *bang*, Hakka *bang*, and Hainanese *bang*. Such clan organizations were the pillars of the early

⁵⁵ Available from <http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/encyclopedia/c/cl/clan.htm>.

⁵⁶ Qiu Liben, "The Chinese networks in Southeast Asia: Past, Present and Future", Chan Kwok Bun, (ed.) State, Economy and Culture: Chinese Business Networks (Singapore: Singapore National University Press, 2001), p. 194.

economic networks of the overseas Chinese. These clan organizations played significant roles in enhancing friendship, harmonizing relations, promoting public welfare and maintaining traditional cultural values. Another important function of clan associations among the Chinese in Southeast Asia was to provide them easy access to facilities, making it easier for them to obtain labors, capital, information, credit and markets.⁵⁷

2.4.2 Networks and *Guanxi* in China

Network can be viewed as an interpenetrated form of market and organization. It is an organization with a structure marked by loose linkages and with both weak and strong ties between constituent members. The network enables corporations to identify emergent opportunities for linking flexible specialization across boundaries of firms, and for triggering continuous innovation.⁵⁸ A network is composed of relations between actors (individual, organizations). This relation or link possesses both content (information or resource flow, social relations in general) and a form (intensity of relationship).

Guanxi means connections between individuals or organizations. Different kinds of networks are operating among the Chinese society and trust and *guanxi* are the bases for building networks. Trust constitutes the primary factor required for the formation of the networks. Four other traditional foundations for Overseas Chinese networks include the clan grouping, localities of origin, the dialects or sub-dialects spoken, and the traditional guilds.⁵⁹ The overseas Chinese participate in more than one type of network.

⁵⁷ Qiu Liben, "The Chinese Networks in Southeast Asia: Past, Present and Future", Chan Kwok Bun, (ed.) State, Economy and Culture: Chinese Business Networks, p. 197.

⁵⁸ This definition was made by two Japanese researchers, Imai and Baba in 1991.

⁵⁹ Francois Gipouloux, "Networks and Guanxi: Towards an Informal Integration Through Common Business Practices in Greater China", Chan Kwok Bun, (ed.) State, Economy and Culture: Chinese Business Networks, p. 58.

Table 2. Bases for Chinese networks⁶⁰

Network type	Basis for network
Clan grouping	By family surname
Locality grouping	By locality of origin in China
Dialect	By dialect/sub-dialect spoken
Guild grouping	By craft practiced
Trust grouping	By prior experience/recommendation

Networks and *Guanxi* are the most important concepts and characteristics in Overseas Chinese. The importance of networks and *guanxi* will be explained more in detail in Chapter five.

⁶⁰ George T. Haley, Chin Tiong Tan, Usha C. V. Haley, New Asian Emperors: The Overseas Chinese, Their Strategies and Competitive Advantages, p. 14.