**RELI 10023: CHINESE RELIGIONS**

In traditional China, no word for “religion,” no single God, scripture, or church

different myths, doctrines, ethics, rituals than West

focus on family and ancestor veneration, practical, utilitarian, pluralist/syncretistic

Key elements of worldview: harmony in universe and society, universe as organism

*Dao/Tao*: right “way” or “path”, source and structure of all; cycles natural, nature cyclical

*yin/yang*: complementary forces (dark/light, earth/Heaven etc.) making up *Dao*

*qi/chi*: vital energy in body and world, life-force

*Shang Di/Ti or tian/tien*: Heaven(ly) Ruler, moral will, agent of *Dao*

many supernatural beings within *Dao*, human/divine continuum, nearby spiritual realm,

ancestor spirits, gods of community/trade, divine bureaucracy, ghosts (*gui/kuei*)

human behavior: harmonious ethical action key, family/lineage relations fundamental and hierarchical (age, gender, status), state as big family, ruler/elite ethical models

elite/textual ”orthodox” tradition vs. popular/syncretic ”folk” tradition

Shang dynasty*:* theocracy,*Yi Jing* and divination of flow of *Dao*, impersonal order

*li*: propriety and *junzi/chun-tzu*: noble/gentle man, inborn “good heart” (*xin/hsin,* Mencius)

then Qin Legalists and Han Confucian imperial system, Buddhism and Daoism rise

Tang and Song dynasties: neo-Confucianism, reform self by meditative “investigation of

things,” realize relation to moral Heavenly Principle (Zhu Xi/Chu Hsi), syncretism

Modern period: Taiping Rebellion, upheaval of modernization

Communism: Mao Ze Dong and Cultural Revolution, anti-religious “religion”

later turn to nationalism and capitalism (also Taiwan), social service (Ciji/Tzu-chi)

Confucian imperial system: emperor as Son of Heaven, “father” of people, holds

Mandate of Heaven (*tien ming*), performed ritual (Ministry of Rites). Led large

imperial bureaucracy, chosen through competitive exams on Confucian classics

Religious Taoism: spirits in body, shamans/mediums attend, alchemy (Ge/Ko Hong)

nourish *qi/chi* by diet, exercise, breath and sexual control, become immortal

healing by *chi gong*, Way of Celestial Masters and priestly rituals

Buddhism (vs. Confucianism): “otherworldly,” individualist, no self, downplays traditional

family/social duties, mixed loyalties to state and faith

Pure Land Buddhism: salvation for all by Amitabha’s grace, merciful Guanyin, chant

White Lotus Millenarians: worship Maitreya, challenged state, egalitarian, dualist

Religion and arts: *Dao* revealed in arts, *li* generates reverence, show harmony with nature

Confucius/Kongzi: *Analects/Lunyu*, on proper ordering of self, family, and state by *li*, follow

Heaven’s Way (*Dao*), filial piety (*xiao/hsaio*), importance of education

*ren/jen*: being human(e), moral example set by ruler and *junzi*, anti-utilitarian

they possess *de/te* (virtuous power, charisma)

Laozi/Lao-Tzu and *Daodejing*/*Tao-Te-Ching*, teaches “natural” way of being and ruling,

*Dao* mysterious and vast, ground of all

ruler leads by *wu-wei* (non-action), effortless, force creates opposite (*yin/yang*)

against Confucian morality (artificial, dominating), true sage “goes with flow”

festivals: New Year, offerings to ancestors and “hungry ghosts”, Lord of Stove, Ma-zu/tsu

temples: non-exclusive, community centers, many altars and offerings

family: central, filial piety and lineage continuity vital, ancestral rites at home altar

patrilineal, woman primarily wife and mother, becomes part of husband’s lineage

death=becoming an ancestor, safe passage to afterlife by big funeral and mourning

Buddhist monastery: new family, social refuge, diverse roles taken by monks and nuns

Ch’an/Zen: Bodhidharma and meditation, *koans*: paradoxical, disorienting “riddles”