


Comparative Religion I
World Religions

TAOISM




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TAOIST TEMPLE IN HONG KONG

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TAOIST TEMPLE IN PHILIPPINES

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Introduction

- One of the most difficult religions to grasp for Westerners
- Get into the flow of the TAO which cannot be defined
- Simplicity is stressed – an uncarved block of wood is a symbol
- “WU WEI” means to relax, let it happen, get out of the way

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Introduction

- Take the path of least resistance – water, another symbol illustrates this point
- They admire ravines
- Tendency towards immorality to be in the flow - Amoral

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SIX RECURRING THEMES IN ORIENTAL RELIGION

1. HEAVEN – sacrifices to heaven to honor the source of their power; emperors performed rituals for summer/winter solstices
2. TAO – The Way; the path to follow to be in the way; align self with the flow of the universe
3. YIN-YANG – Two energies that come together in different combinations to form all things in the universe

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Chinese characters for the Tao



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SIX RECURRING THEMES IN ORIENTAL RELIGION

- **YIN** – feminine, dark, winter, negative, passive, the tiger
- **YANG** – masculine, bright, summer, positive, active, the dragon

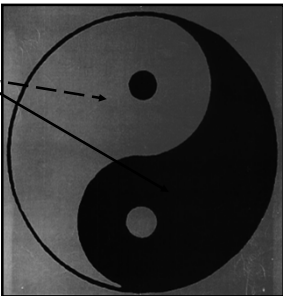
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YIN
YANG




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YIN
YANG



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SIX RECURRING THEMES IN ORIENTAL RELIGION

4. **MANDATE OF HEAVEN** – Divine sanction to the ruler; he was the son of the heaven, appointed by the gods
5. **FAMILY REVERENCE** – Respect for parents, particularly the father and leaders in general. Also, respect for ancestors shown by sacrifices
6. **ANIMISM** – Worship of the earth and things of the earth. Fertility gods – bonfires, firecrackers to keep the evil away


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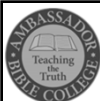
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LI PO YANG
OR LAO TZE
THE
FOUNDER
604-517 BC



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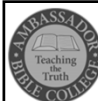
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TAOISM IN GENERAL

- **LAO TZE (TZU)** – Was credited as the founder (604-517 BC) Was a librarian who kept the royal archives. An intellectual who kept to himself. When leaving the province, a guard recognized him and made him leave a writing of wisdom for the guard. This was the Tao Te Ching – The Way and It's Power
- **TAO TE CHING** – The basic theme is that all achievements of the people are folly; particularly elaborate governments

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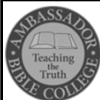
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TAOISM IN GENERAL

- **TAO** – The Tao has been described in numerous ways. Though, it is said that if you can define the Tao, you do not understand it. Becoming a babe in a mother's arms is a basic image for the relationship of a person to the Tao.

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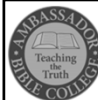
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TAOISM IN GENERAL

- A way of being that interacts with others in harmony with nature . One does not obstruct natural processes taking place. Non-interference with the natural order of the situation (**WU WEI**). "The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; The name that can be named is not the eternal name" (Hutchinson; pg. 224)

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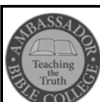
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IN GENERAL (continued)

- **TAOIST** – The goal of a Taoist is to live in harmony with the world and to apply the principles of his/her religion to his/her behavior.
- **WATER** – Is an important symbol since water is good; beneficial; does not compete, but seeks the way around obstacles; seeks the lowly places.
- **VALLEYS OR RAVINES** – These are looked to over high places
- **SIMPLICITY IS STRESSED** – Belief in non action rather than reaction

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IN GENERAL (continued)

- **GOAL** – Is to perpetuate the good life by being in the flow of the universe
- **RELIGION WITH FEW RESTRICTIONS** – To go with the flow, there are few restrictions so one may adapt to the "flow". Spontaneity is a key.
- **NO GOD** – Recognition of a supreme ultimate force and accept direct experience with the supreme. There is no personification of that force. They see god everywhere so they would be pantheistic.

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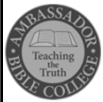
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IN GENERAL (continued)

- **YIN** – They stress the yin or feminine side since women are generally softer, less confrontational than men are as well as for other characteristics
- **NATURE** – They pay a lot of attention to nature.
- **RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY** – It is both a religion and a philosophy according to their own statements.

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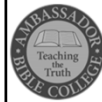
AN IDEAL COMMUNITY

The Ideal community would be a village with simple, hardworking, prosperous farmers, so unsophisticated that they did not keep any records in writing. They would use knots in ropes to mark events.

They would be so content that if they heard sounds in the next village, they would not even go to find out what was going on

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AN IDEAL COMMUNITY (cont.)

Rules and regulations are necessary when people lose sight of how to live. Here is a quote about why the deterioration takes place:

“When people lost sight of the way to live, came codes of love and honesty, learning came, charity came, hypocrisy took charge; when differences weakened family ties came benevolent fathers and dutiful sons.”

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The TAO TE CHING

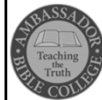
Some quotes from the TAO TE CHING by Lao Tze.

Referred to as the “book of five thousand characters.” (p. 7)

Description of the TAO...”Its upper part is not dazzling; Its lower part is not obscure. Dimly visible, it cannot be named And returns to that which is without substance. This is called the shape that has no shape, the image that is without substance. This is called indistinct and shadowy. Go up to it and you will not see its head; Follow behind it and you will not see its rear.” (p. 17)

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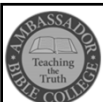
The TAO TE CHING

“Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.” (p. 59)

“Turning back is how the way moves; Weakness is the means the way employs.” (p. 101)

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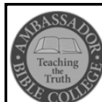
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What am I?

1. AMORAL
2. WU WEI
3. AFTERLIFE CONCEPT
4. BELIEF IN THE TAO TE CHING
5. EMPHASIZING THE YIN

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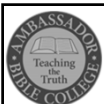
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What am I?

1. AMORAL –
Proverbs 14:12 – Way that seems right, ends in death
Proverbs 3:5 – Lean not to your own understanding
Philippians 2:12 – Work out your own salvation
Deuteronomy 30:19 – Must choose to do right

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TAOISM What am I?

2. WU WEI –

Matthew 5:48 – Becoming perfect

James 1:22 – Be a doer

Hebrews 12:1 – To run the race

Revelation 3:21 – To be an overcomer

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3. AFTERLIFE CONCEPT -

I Corinthians 15:19, 51-54 – Flesh and blood cannot inherit Kingdom

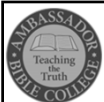
Romans 6:23 – Eternal life contrasted with death

John 5:28-29 – All to have a chance through being resurrected

Hebrews 2:7-8 – What God has in store

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4. BELIEF IN TAO TE CHING –

II Timothy 3:16 – All Scripture is for our edification

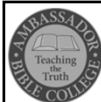
Matthew 15:9 – Watch for traditions that fly against the commands

John 6:63, 14:6 – Christ teaches us the way

Isaiah 8:20 – If not according to the law and testimony, then false

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5. EMPHASIZING THE YIN –

Daniel 2:44 – God's Kingdom pictured as a mountain

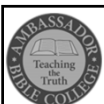
Micah 4:1-2 – Again, a mountain

Ephesians 5:8 – God created all things, not merely the passive

Philippians 4:8 – Things to think on

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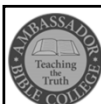
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ESSAY QUESTION

WHAT MIGHT BE THE APPEAL OF TAOISM TO INDIVIDUALS IN OUR WESTERN WORLD?

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THE END

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THL 331 - WORLD RELIGIONS
Fall Semester
Gary E. Antion

Name: _____

Box: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____

WHAT AM I?

TAOISM

1. Amoral.
2. Belief in "Wu-Wei"--non-action (rolling with the changes or "flowing").
3. No real concept of afterlife.
4. Belief in the Tao-te-ching as writings that enlighten and instruct one about the "tao" or "the way".
5. Yin/yang philosophy, emphasizing the yin.