Confucian thought across East Asia: and what constitutes Confucianism?

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Introduction

Discovering China - Confucius - YouTube
Outcomes...

How did Confucianism unify East Asia?
What makes up East Asia?
Does Confucianism still thrive?
East Asia
Unifying factors

Language
Social/Political thought
Education & Examination system
clothing
food and mode of eating
Confucianism was official policy:

In China for 2,000 years
In Korea for 500 years
In Japan for 250 years
In Vietnam for 1,000 years (111BCE to 938CE)
Scholars & Monks traveled

Therefore ingrained into East Asian thought
Ethico-political doctrine
Basic value system
Useful in maintaining a stable Chinese state
Broadens the scope of our compassion, adding moral dimension to the Golden Rule, offering options to Enlightenment mentality.
Enlightenment (18th cent intellectual movement)

rise of modern nation state
rise of capitalism
individualism
World View
philosophical ideas of being, a culture’s beliefs about its place in the cosmos; beliefs about the nature of humanity; manifested in...

Philosophy
Religion
History
Art
Literature
In U.S. Individual is more important than group

Materialistic
Future time orientation
Doing rather than being
Belief in Supreme Being
Science and Technology important
Get identity from work
Chinese World View

influenced by Confucianism
Group more important than individual
relationships more important than goods
Orientation in the past
Being rather than doing
Compassion through patience, courtesy, & kindness
The middle way--restraint & moderation

East Asian World View informed by
East Asian World View informed by 3 streams of thought

Confucianism teaches:
  relationship with others

Buddhism teaches:
  Inner cultivation

Taoism teaches:
  Relationship with nature
Tu Wei Ming

www.youtube.com

Bill Moyers: a Confucian Life in America
The Confucian Ethic places...

Emphasis on Family
The family teaches us how to interact with the larger world

Emphasis on Education
Education brings honor and financial stability to the family.
Dimensions of Confucianism

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/at/conf_teaching/ct01.html
Human Dimension

Self-cultivation: the fully realized human (junzi)

“A person who is able to carry into practice five attitudes in the world can be considered authoritative... deference, tolerance, making good on one’s word, diligence, and generosity.
Self Cultivation based on “ren” (human radical made of “person” & “two” for Confucius, unless there are two humans beings, there can be no human beings. 49
Family/Social Dimension

The Five Relationships---always reciprocal

Subject~Ruler
Children~Parents
Wife~Husband
Elder brother~Younger brother
Friend~Friend
Education Dimension
The Fully developed human (Junzi)

“Even when walking in the company of 2 other men, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them and identifying their weaknesses I reform myself accordingly” 7.22 Analects

Education based on Confucian Classics

2:15, 17
Moral Dimension

“Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire” 12.2 A

SHU
Why the reverse?

West has transcendent God who sets boundaries: 10 commandments, etc
East does not have those religious guidelines
therefore, Asians do not purport to know what is right for others, only what hurts others.
Zhong & Shu
give coherence to Confucian
philosophy
Zhong = doing one’s utmost
Shu = putting oneself in the other’s place
shared “heart-mind”
compassion from the heart
doing from the mind
Daodegandong
Qingjie Wang’s paper
being moved AND acting
Sichuan earthquake
compassion not enough in those circumstances

Political Dimension
“If you lead by doing what is proper, who would dare do otherwise?” 12.17
http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/a
Options

Tu Wei Ming--Harvard
Enlightenment mentality has pushed humanity to brink of self destruction environmentally & economically
Confucian Humanism tries to “moralize” politics--articulating needs of people to government responsibility of students & intellectuals

Confucian commitment to
Confucian commitment to

self cultivation

family cohesiveness

social stability

political order

world peace...

Confucian commitment
Confucian commitment is predicated on vision which regards secular world as sacred...ultimate meaning of life is realized through ordinary practical living.

Lack of claim to ultimate truth
Lack of claim to ultimate truth
reflection of strong & pervasive
conviction that the Way is pluralistic
religious tolerance is a natural
outcome of Shu--Do not do to
others what you would not want
others to do to you.

Western military challenge changed
Chinese ideas.
Chinese ideas
May fourth Movement, 1919 was response to Western domination
Blamed traditional culture & Confucianism for making China stagnant & backward
Leaders of May 4 movement chose to obliterate old culture in order to modernize

Cultural Revolution,
1966-76, further eroded Confucian thought

Families separated

Education demeaned

Western influence expunged

Recent Confucianism
Late 1970s – open door policy
1986 Contemporary Confucianism designated a national project
Now Confucianism believed commensurate with Protestant ethic in terms of role in rise of capitalism
China is returning to its Confucian roots to ameliorate lack of moral compass
South Korea is most Confucian of all
Japan lost some Confucian values in rush to capitalism
Vietnam lost some Confucian values

Contemporary Confucianism
Leadership has declared a “harmonious society”
Beijing Olympics: “is it not good to have friends come from afar”?
Analects 1:1
Yu Dan’s (BNU professor) book on Confucianism is selling like dumplings