

Confucianism



Origin/Founder: Confucianism was founded in China around 500 BCE. More of a philosophy than a religion, it is based on the life and teachings of Chinese philosopher Confucius.

History: Confucius, Kong Fuzi in Chinese, was born in 551 BCE. Confucius devoted himself to learning. At age 30, he turned to teaching others. He tried to convince warlords to lead their people by example, but they ignored him. He returned to his hometown to teach future leaders his ideas on ethics. Confucianism rose to the position of an official religion during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). It absorbed the elements of Yin (the female principle) and Yang (the male principle) found in Daoism, which had been based on Chinese folklore and tradition for a thousand years previously. With the fall of the Han, Confucianism fell into severe decline. Confucianism lay philosophically dormant for approximately 600 years until the establishment of the Tang dynasty (618–906), when Confucianism began to revive.



Symbols: Confucianism has no official symbol or standard icon. The symbol most commonly used to represent Confucianism is probably the Chinese character for water, which represents life. Other symbols associated with Confucianism include the Yin-Yang, which is shared with Daoism, and portraits of Confucius.

Tenets: Confucians seek to maintain domestic order, preserve tradition, and promote a constant standard of living for the people. Its followers are trained in benevolence, traditional rituals, filial piety, loyalty, respect for superiors and for the aged, and

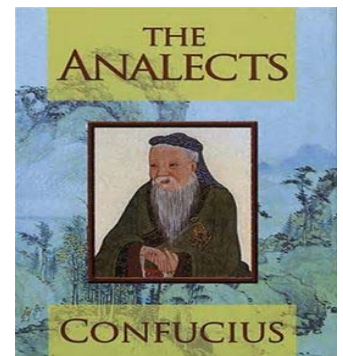
principled flexibility in advising rulers. There are five relationships followers must maintain to preserve balance in one's life:

1. Parent – Child: *Parents love children, children revere parents*
2. Husband – Wife: *Husbands fulfill duty to wife, while wife is obedient*
3. Older Sibling – Younger Sibling: *Elder sibling should be a kind teacher and the younger sibling should be respectful*
4. Friend – Friend: *Friend should be considerate and deferential to each other*
5. Ruler – Subject: *Rulers should be benevolent and subjects should be loyal*

Deity: There is no deity associated with Confucianism.

Afterlife: The concept of an afterlife is beyond the human capacity to understand, so you should concentrate on doing the right thing in this life.

Scriptures: Confucius himself never wrote down his own philosophy, although he apparently made an enormous impact on the lives and attitudes of his disciples, who compiled his teachings into a text that followers use today. The book, known as the Analects, records all the "Confucius said..." aphorisms. The Analects became the basis of the Chinese social lifestyle and the fundamental religious and philosophical point of view of most traditionalist Chinese intellectuals throughout history.



Practices: Confucianism is built on rituals of Chinese traditions. The main goal of a student of Confucianism is to promote harmony in all relationships. The most important of these rituals is practicing good manners, charity, and loyalty. Some of the major concepts of Confucianism include ancestor worship and filial piety. In China, the dead are treated with respect, as they control all the good things that happen to you in exchange for not embarrassing your family name. Filial piety builds on the First Bond, to respect your parents and elders and care for them in their old age.