

Confucianism



Confucianism

Confucius (551 – 479 BCE) was born during the decline of the Zhou Dynasty (1050 to 256 BCE). He studied the lives of the founders of the Zhou to develop a strategy that would restore harmony and prosperity to Chinese civilization.

In China, he is called Kongzi, meaning “Master Kong.”

Unknown artist (China), *Portrait of Confucius*, late 14th century, ink and colors on silk, 98.65.1 (not on view)



Confucianism

Confucius believed embodying ancestral wisdom through ritual conduct was key to maintaining social and political stability in China.

Confucianism received state support in the Han Dynasty and provided a structure for Chinese society for 2,000 years!

Unknown artist (China), *Portrait of Confucius*, late 14th century, ink and colors on silk, 98.65.1 (not on view)



Confucianism

Confucius believed that people should follow established rules of ritual conduct (*li*) with authoritative and moral character (*ren*). There are 5 Constant Relationships in life to which you apply *li*:

1. Parent - Child
2. Husband - Wife
3. Elder Sibling – Younger Sibling
4. Elder Friend – Younger Friend
5. Ruler - Subject

Confucius believed every man, regardless of birth, had the ability to develop into a *junzi*, an educated and enlightened superior man



Confucian virtues embodied in art...

Sarcophagus of Prince Yuan Mi, 524,
Unknown artist, China, black limestone,
46.23.1a-d.

“In the early sixth century, the
fundamental Confucian virtue of **filial
piety** reemerged as a favorite subject of
northern carvers.”

Filial Piety: The attitude of
obedience, devotion, and
care toward one’s parents
and elder family members
that is the basis of
individual moral conduct
and social harmony.

<http://www.britannica.com/topic/xiao-Confucianism>



Confucian virtues embodied in art...

Scenes from *Sarcophagus of Prince Yuan Mi*, 524, Unknown artist, China, black limestone, 46.23.1a-d. (Story of Lao Laizi.)



Confucian virtues embodied in art...

Scenes from *Sarcophagus of Prince Yuan Mi*, 524, Unknown artist, China, black limestone, 46.23.1a-d. (Story of Guo Ju.)



Look at the scene. How might this reflect Confucian beliefs?

*Civil
Dignitary,
618-906,
97.137*



Kowtow, a position of extreme respect.

“Figures such as this reflect the high value placed by the Chinese on education and bureaucratic service. Government service, either civil or military, was the primary goal of most Confucian-trained scholars.”

Confucianism

Confucian virtues were valued by wealthy Chinese families and are embodied in the Reception Hall of the Wu Family, early 17th century.



Confucian temple and cemetery

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/704/video>

