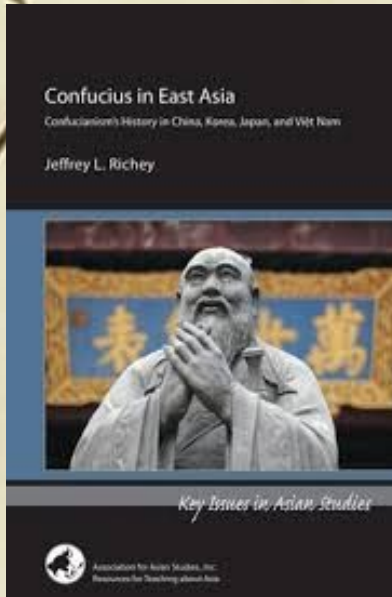


# Confucius in East Asia

Confucianism's History in China, Korea, Japan, and Việt Nam

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NCTA2021

# Confucianism in China, Korea, Japan, and Việt Nam

- The Origins
  - Self-Cultivation
  - Society
  - State
- 
- For East Asians, Confucius is a historical personality and spiritual symbol that combines three core elements: lifelong learning, social relationships, and moral integrity into daily life.
  - The influence of Confucius in these four East Asian countries, China, Korea, Japan, and Việt Nam, is discussed in relation to the historical development, spiritual significance, social impact, and political role of Confucius in East Asia.
  - To understand East Asia, its people, and its role in history, it is important to know something about Confucius and Confucianism.
  - Throughout Chinese history, Confucius teachings and philosophy formed the basis of East Asian culture and society, and continue to remain influential across China, Korea, Japan, and Việt Nam today.

# Confucius in China



- Kong, Qiu → “Master Kong”, 551-479 BCE, during the East Zhou dynasty during a period of social instability and violence.
- He used West Zhou dynasty culture to articulate his understanding of the Way and formulate his teachings.
- Confucius’ teachings:
  - Cultivate the self
  - Regulate the family
  - Serve community and state
  - Lead the world to peace

# The influences of Confucianism: Self cultivation

Three core elements of what now is known as Confucianism:

- dedication to learning as a lifelong spiritual calling,
- emphasis on social relationships, and
- moral integrity despite the temptations of fame, power, and wealth.





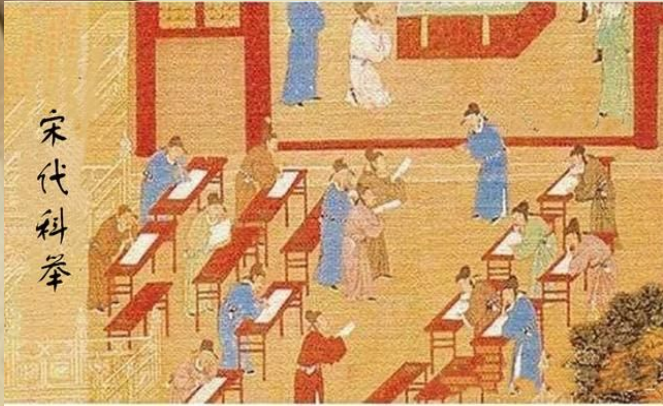
# The influences of Confucianism: Regulate the family

## Filial Piety:

- establish a strong family loyalty
- venerate ancestors
- children respect and care for elders
- spouses respect each other
- lead to maintain harmonious relations in workplace and government







# The influences of Confucianism: govern the state



- In 136 BC, Confucian texts became the basis of the imperial government's civil service examinations and was taught in the academic institutions.
- Throughout the Chinese history, almost all of the Chinese emperors (except Qin) embraced Confucianism as the Way of governing the state and building a strong moral society.
- During the early 20th century and the cultural revolution, Chinese Communists condemned Confucianism, but now the Chinese government endorses the Confucian ideology, and people see Confucianism as a source of hope for their future.



# Confucianism in Korea

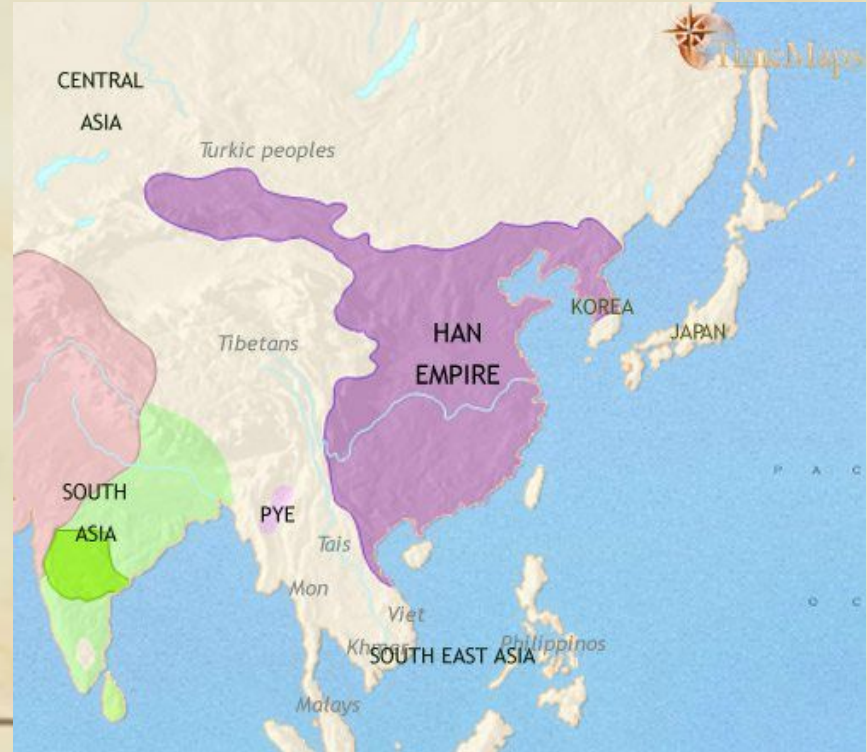
TRIGRAM	VIRTUE	ROLE	ELEMENT
HEAVEN 	goodness	father	wood
WATER 	wisdom	daughter	water
EARTH 	modesty	mother	fire
FIRE 	righteous- ness	son	metal





When did Confucian ideas come to the Korean peninsula?

Confucianism came to the Korean peninsula during the Han dynasty in the second century BCE alongside Buddhism (24).





# How did Confucianism manifest itself in Korea?



Confucius handing over Buddha to Laozi

- Syncretism
- Blending of Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist traditions (26)
- These different traditions merged to become the foundation for political and social unification of Korea

# How did Korea and China relate to each other?

Over time, Confucian teachings reinforced the connections between Korean elites and Chinese culture but also the hierarchies that dominated Korean society (27).





# How did Confucianism in Korea change over time?



- Was only for elites at first
- Eventually spread as a way of self-cultivation for the masses
- Neo-Confucianism: became more blended with Daoist principles of vital energy (the material or physical) and cosmic force (the spiritual world)
- Anti-Catholic/ Western sentiment in the 1600's
- Communism ran counter to elements of Confucian belief

Statue of Sambong at Dodam Sambong recreation area, North Chungcheong Province, South Korea.  
From commons.wikimedia.org

# Confucianism in Japan

Japanese had a Chinese-style government

Provided support for Confucianism and Buddhism

Infused Chinese language into Japanese language

Continued to practice their own religion (Shinto)

They reflected Chinese influence but developed along its own path





# The Timeline of Confucianism in Japan

Confucianism occurred in Japan.

Early Japanese texts were written in classical Chinese.

Emperor Kotoku implemented the Confucian legal system (Rirsuryo).

Neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi Interpretation) introduced to Japan (Shushigaku).

108 BCE

400s

600s

604

645

1100 CE

1603 CE

Young Japanese men were being sent at government expense to study Buddhism and Confucianism in China.

Shotoku had established diplomatic relations with China, implemented the Confucian court rank hierarchy, and converted the Japanese calendar to the Chinese system based on the Five Processes.

Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu establishes a bureaucratic government based on Neo-Confucian principles.

# Cultures, politics and religions



While starting to embrace Confucianism, Japan transited the country from an isolated and disunified island into a centralized imperial regime connected with other countries in East Asia.

# Examples

“Empress Suiko, Shotoku had established diplomatic relations with China, implemented the Confucian court rank hierarchy already in use in Sui dynasty.” (p 43).

“Interwoven tapestry of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto that characterized Japanese religious culture.” (p 53)



“Phrases customarily uttered by Japanese during moments of crisis, such as gaman (putting up with it) and ganbatte (do your best!), reveal a deeply Confucian faith in the healing and redemptive power of suffering as an occasion for both the strengthening of collective bonds and the development of personal character.” (p 41)

“The bureaucrats of the Tokugawa regime received their training in Confucian institution in 1797.” (p 52)

“Confucian legal system known as Ritsuryo” (p 44)



# When did Confucian ideas come to Việt Nam?

**In Việt Nam, like China and Korea, Confucianism has been practiced for more than 2000 years.**

**Confucianism had acquired state support in Việt Nam by the 100s BCE (XVII).**

**Vietnamese have sought to create a distinctively Vietnamese Confucianism (64). While mixed with Buddhism and Daoism, the traditions of Confucianism in learning, relationships, and integrity remain strong in Việt Nam today.**

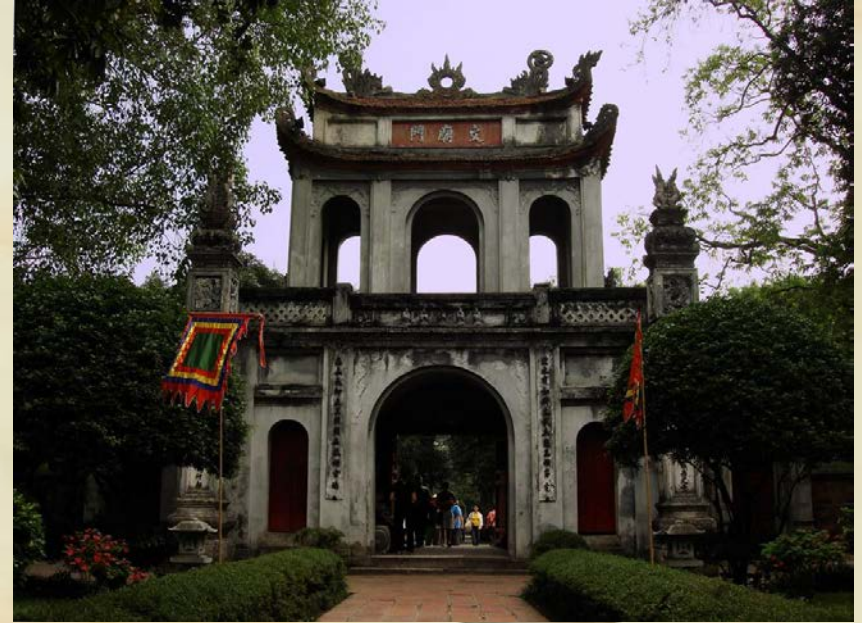




# How did Confucianism manifest itself in Việt Nam?

Việt Nam's National Poetry Day, held on the 15th day of the first lunar month, is a modern example of the continuing influence of Confucian tradition in Việt Nam (59). In February 2012 the event was held in the capital city, Hanoi, at Hanoi's Confucian Temple (Van Mieu).

This Confucian temple has been significant for about 1000 years, and is still important today.



Entrance to The Temple of Literature (Van Mieu)



A word cloud on a black background. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape. The largest word is 'VIRTUE' in the center. Other prominent words include 'CHARACTER' above it, 'ETHICS' to its left, and 'INTENTION' to its right. Smaller words include 'CONFUCIUS' at the top, 'ARISTOTLE' on the left, 'MORALS' and 'MOTIVATION' at the bottom, and 'BUDDHA' and 'GODNESS' on the right.

CONFUCIUS  
CHARACTER  
INTENTION VIRTUE  
ARISTOTLE ETHICS BUDDHA  
INTENTION MORALS GODNESS  
MOTIVATION

Throughout its history, Vietnamese Confucianism has sought to have its own identity; “a cultural identity separate from that of China” (65). “So”, personal destiny, influences Vietnamese life today. “So” has “produced a uniquely Vietnamese vision of self-cultivation that blends Confucian notions of filial piety and moral perfectibility with the Buddhist theory of karmic retribution and Daoist cosmology” (66).

# How has Confucianism manifested itself in Việt Nam's society?

The traditions of Confucianism in learning, relationships, and integrity remain strong in Việt Nam.

National customs in Việt Nam have traditionally given women greater status than is common in other Confucian cultures.



In 40 CE the Trưng sisters sought to keep Viet Nam independent of China.



# How has the state influenced Confucianism in Việt Nam?

At times Confucianism has seemed “doomed to extinction” (72) in Việt Nam. This has been due to influences of the state system in control or due to outside influences from the West. Still, the tradition of Confucianism has continued in Việt Nam.

“Recent census data indicates that up to 80 percent of the Vietnamese population participates in the combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism known as Tam Dao (Three Teachings)” (77).

National Poetry Day and the Confucian Temple in Hanoi displayed on the hundred-thousand-dong notes, shows Confucian influences present in Việt Nam today.

Việt Nam’s deeply rooted Confucian past will likely continue into its future (77).



**Jeffrey L. Richey concludes his book by explaining that Confucianism has been a cultural glue holding the diverse people of East Asia together.**

**The complexity and interdependence of Confucian ideas, institutions, and practice are what will likely assure Confucianism's future in China, Korea, Japan, and Việt Nam (84).**

Confucius Peace Prize statuette





## Presentation II: Confucius' teaching

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12cxOydXLZHqJqRltbKz2d-GCTzRiugGwwYsaydHBXX4/edit?usp=sharing>