

Name: Date:

Class: ECS

**Society and Culture in Ancient China**

***Chinese Philosophies***

Between 500 B.C. and 200 B.C., Chinese thinkers developed three major philosophies. They were confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. The philosophies were different from each other. Each philosophy, however, aimed to create a peaceful society.

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| **Chinese Belief Systems** | Confucianism | Daoism | Legalism |
| **Founders** | Confucius | Laozi | Hanfeizi |
| **Important Ideas** | People should put the needs of their family and community first. | People should give up worldly desires in favor of nature and Dao, the force that guides all things. | Society needs a system of harsh laws and strict punishments. |

Confucius believed that all men should be able to serve in the government. This led to a system of examinations to choose government officials. Confucius is honored as a great teacher. After his death, **Confucianism** spread across China.

Like Confucius, Laozi aimed to create a peaceful society. Confucius thought people should work hard to make the world better. Under **Daoism**, however, people turn away from society and towards nature.

Hanfeizi introduced the ideas of **Legalism** during the 200s B.C. He believed that humans are naturally evil. He thought only strict laws and harsh punishment would get people to do what they should do. Many aristocrats supported Legalism. Under Legalism, rulers did not have to think of the wishes of their people.

***Chinese Life***

Chinese society was made up of four **social classes.** A social class is a group of all the people in a society with the same economic and social position.

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| **Chinese Society** |

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| **Aristocrats** | **Farmers** | **Artisans** | **Merchants** |
| * Small number of people * Wealthy * Owned large plots of land and lived on large estates | * Most people * Worked on land owned by aristocrats * Paid rent in the form of crops * Paid taxes * Served as soldiers * Worked one month a year on public projects, such as roads | * Skilled workers who made useful objects * Learned skills from fathers and taught them to sons | * Shopkeepers and traders * Lived in towns * Provided goods and services to aristocrats * Some wealthy, but not respected because merchants just made money for themselves |

The family was the basis of Chinese society. Chinese families practiced filial piety. **Filial piety** is the responsibility children have to respect, obey, and take care of their parents.

Men and women had very different roles in early China. Men grew crops, ran the government, and fought wars. Women raised children and saw to their education. They also managed household affairs and family finances.

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