

The second great philosophy to come out of China's time of trouble was Daoism. Like Confucianism, it tried to give answers to the problems of right living and good government.

According to tradition, the great sage, or wise man, of Daoism was Laozi (also spelled Lao-tzu). He was said to be the author of the *Dao De Jing* (The Classic of the Way and Its Power).

Old stories of Laozi's life tell how he came to write the *Dao De Jing*. These stories say that Laozi worked as an advisor to the

The *Dao De Jing* preached a return to a simple and natural way of living. For example, one passage says:

The Teachings o

Daoism was based on
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living in harmony,

To the Daoists, yin and yang are light and dark, the two opposite forces of nature. Yin is "dark," and yang means "light." The whole made up of yin and yang is not bad, beauty with


The Daoists taught by living simple lives how nothing in nature. Similarly, people should not cling to possessions or honors. Like a blade of grass, which comes, like a blade of

The Daoists belie themselves. Too many of living naturally and rulers were those who “Governing a large country with too much poking things alone.”

The Influence of D

Daoism encourage more important influence on Chinese art. In time, Daoism d

Laozi was leaving China on a water buffalo when he met a border guard who asked him to write down his thoughts.

A black and white photograph of a statue depicting Laozi, an elderly man with a long beard, riding a water buffalo. The statue is set on a rocky base.



Religious Daoists believed in

immortality, or eternal life. This painted scroll shows a Daoist scholar sleeping in his thatched cottage. The scholar dreams that he has gained immortality. On the left side of the painting he is shown happily floating away over a mountain.

The Teachings of Daoism

Daoism was based on the ancient Chinese idea of the Dao, or "the Way." Dao was the force that gave order to the natural universe. Daoism taught that people gained happiness and peace by living in harmony, or agreement, with the way of nature.

To the Daoists, nature is full of opposites, like life and death or light and darkness. True harmony comes from balancing the opposite forces of nature, called **yin** and **yang**. Yin means "shaded," and yang means "sunny." In the same way, human life is a whole made up of opposites. It is impossible to have good without bad, beauty without ugliness, or pleasure without pain.

The Daoists taught that people followed the way of nature by living simple lives of quiet meditation. Notice, they said, how nothing in nature strives for fame, power, or knowledge. Similarly, people should avoid feeling self-important or striving for possessions or honors. Instead, they should accept whatever comes, like a blade of grass that bends when the breeze blows. The Daoists believed that everyone must discover the Dao for themselves. Too many laws and social rules only got in the way of living naturally and following the Dao. Therefore, the best rulers were those who ruled the least. The *Dao De Jing* says, "Governing a large country is like trying a small fish. You spoil it with too much poking." It also tells rulers, "Be weak. Let things alone."

The Influence of Daoism

Daoism encouraged rulers to rule less harshly. But Daoism's more important influence was on Chinese thought, writing, and art. In time, Daoism developed into a popular religion.

yin one half of the Daoist concept of opposing forces of nature; the opposite of yang
yang one half of the Daoist concept of opposing forces of nature; the opposite of yin



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ommended by Legalists for
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21.5 Legalism

The third major philosophy that came out of China's time of trouble was Legalism. It gave very different answers to the problems of order and good government than either Confucianism or Daoism.

The Founder of Legalism

Legalism was based on the teachings of Hanfeizi (also spelled Han-fei-tzu). Hanfeizi lived from 280 to 233 B.C.E. He was a prince of the royal family of the state of Han. Hanfeizi lived to see the end of the Warring States period and of the Zhou dynasty.

Like Confucius, Hanfeizi was very concerned with creating peace and order in society. But he did not think the Confucian teachings about proper behavior were the answer. Many of his ideas survive today in a book named after him, *Hanfeizi*.

The Teachings of Legalism

Legalism was based on the idea that most people are naturally selfish. Left to themselves, Legalists said, people always pursue their own self-interest. They could not be relied upon to have a good influence on one another. Therefore, it was not enough for rulers to set a good example. Instead, they should establish strict laws and enforce them with rewards for good behavior and harsh punishments for bad behavior. Civil servants should be watched carefully and punished for doing a poor job. People caught criticizing the government should be banished to China's far northern frontier.

In Hanfeizi's time, rulers were frequently overthrown. To solve this problem, Hanfeizi said that rulers must have absolute power backed up by military might. Rulers should trust no one, not even their own families. Hanfeizi wrote, "He who trusts will be controlled by others."

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Influence of Legalism

Legalist philosophy had an almost immediate influence on government in China. At the end of the Spring and Autumn period, the Qin dynasty seized control of China. Qin rulers read and admired Hanfeizi's writings. They wanted to build a strong central government and a well-organized society. To achieve these goals, they adopted strict Legalist ideas. People were forbidden to criticize the government. Anyone caught doing so was severely punished. Many people were put to death for disloyalty and other crimes. You'll learn more about Legalism under the Qin in the next chapter.

1.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you read about three Chinese philosophies, Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. Three schools of thought developed in the later Zhou dynasty.

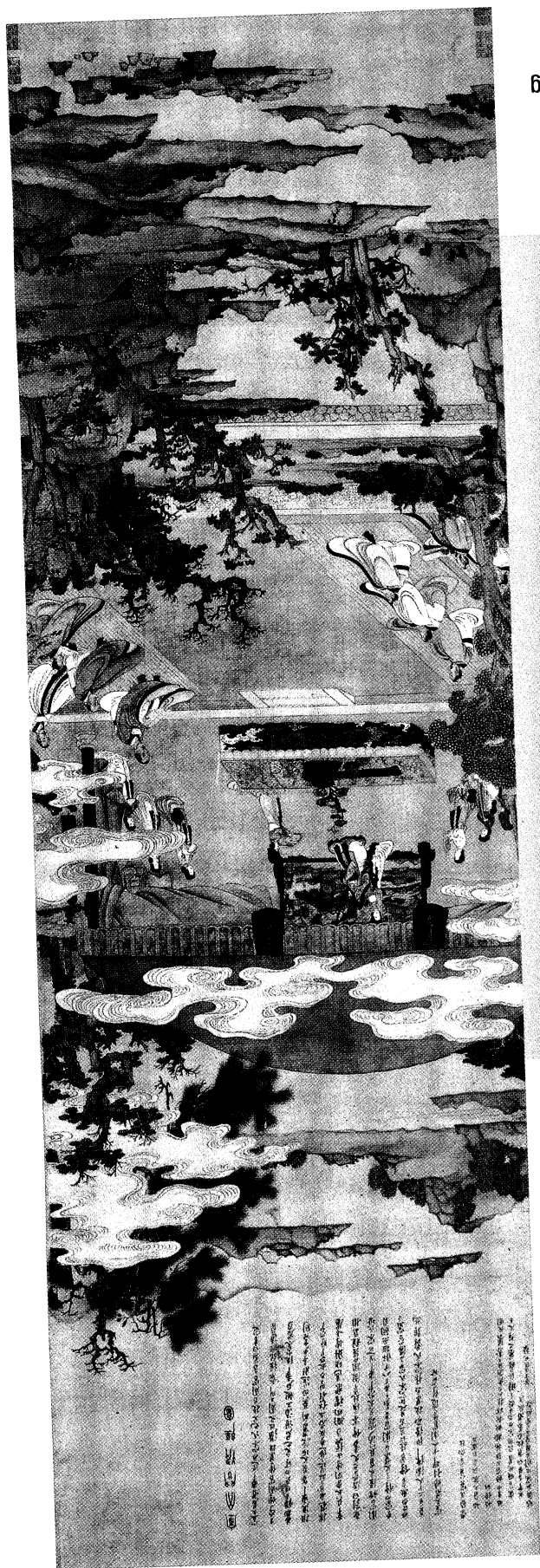
For a time, feudalism helped to stabilize China. But during the dynasty's later years, political instability led to the collapse of the Zhou dynasty.

Many scholars to debate the proper way to rule. Confucius taught that peace and order depended upon proper behavior. Those in authority must lead by example. Those below them must obey. Daoists believed that people should live simply and in harmony with nature. They said the best rulers were those who ruled the least. Finally, Legalists like Hanfeizi believed that people were driven by their own self-interest. They taught that rulers could create order only through strict laws and harsh punishments.

In the next chapter, you will meet China's first emperor, Qin Shihuangdi. You'll discover how he used Legalist ideas to unite China's warring states.

This silk scroll shows women instructing other women in the teachings of Confucianism.





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Confucianism is based on the teachings of Kongfuzi, who is called Confucius by westerners. This philosophy deeply influenced Chinese government and culture.

Confucius lived from 551 to 479 B.C.E. He was born in the small state of Lu in eastern China. He experienced firsthand the disorder that erupted when lords fought for power. Between 722 and 481 B.C.E., his own state was invaded many times.

The Teachings of Confucianism

According to Confucianism, there are five basic relationships: ruler and subject, husband and wife, father and son, older sibling and younger sibling, and friend and friend. All people must respect and obey those above them. In particular, they must respect their elders. In return, those with authority, such as rulers, fathers, husbands, and older siblings, must set a good example. They should be kind, honest, wise, and faithful. Confucius taught, "Do not do to others what you would not want done to you."

Confucianism has a later dynasty, the 1 ernment are called c traditionally the son ability and wisdom of Confucianism, ci basis of their ability

The teachings of culture. Values such as the love of scholarship and the pursuit of knowledge. Even today, the saying "Knowledge is power" is still true. These are two examples from the past that are still relevant today.

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That is knowledge*



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The Influence of Confucianism

Confucius attracted many students who spread his teachings.
After his death, some of them collected his sayings in a book
called *The Analects*. Later scholars further developed

Confucianism.

Confucianism had a very practical effect on government under

a later dynasty, the Han dynasty. People who do the work of gov-

ernment are called **civil servants**. In China, civil servants were

traditionally the sons of nobles. They might or might not have the

ability and wisdom to do their jobs well. Because of the influence

of Confucianism, civil servants under the Han were hired on the

basis of their ability. Before being hired, they were expected to

know the Chinese classics in detail. For example, they had to

know the proper behavior for people in various roles, from labor-

ers to government officials. To prove they had this knowledge,

they had to take exams that the emperor himself might grade.

The teachings of Confucius had a major influence on Chinese

culture. Values such as respect for elders, proper behavior, and

love of scholarship became deeply woven into Chinese society.

Even today, the sayings of Confucius are wise and practical. Here

are two examples from the *Analects*:

Confucius said to his follower:

The gentleman first practices what he preaches

and then preaches what he practices.

Confucius said to his student:

Shall I teach you what knowledge is?

When you know a thing, say that you know it;

when you do not know a thing,

admit that you do not know it.

That is knowledge.



Under the Han dynasty, candi-
dates for government positions
had to pass a lengthy exam.
Here candidates wait for the
posting of their exam results.

civil servant a person who
works for a government