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Preface

In the Hippocratic writings one finds the follow: *"Observe the nature of each country; diet; customs; the age of the patient; speech; manners; fashion; even his silence...one has to study all these signs and analyze what they portend."* These words are as true today in Canadian society as when they were written some three millennia ago. These words serve as reminders to health professionals that in order to help the suffering, one must fully appreciate the context and the culture of those that they seek to help. To do otherwise will simply limit the effectiveness of care, and in the long run will make the challenge of working with communities that much more difficult. The words also serve to find common ground between "western" medicine and health practices of eastern philosophies. Neither east nor west is exotic or peculiar; the cultures and practices in each must be understood and seen in their context. The medical practices in each must be examined within the context of effective treatment and care.

Canada is a country of immigration. It has richly benefited from the contribution of those individuals of Chinese heritage whose contributions span many generations of the Canadian Mosaic. Together with other Canadians, they have helped create Canada as a model to the world of how cultures and peoples can work together to the mutual benefit of all.

Chinese customs, religion, and health practices are rich and complex and have stood the test of time over many millennia. They have served their people well, and can also serve as knowledge to others. This manual will serve as an important resource for health professionals who choose to expand their own understanding, and to better serve those of Chinese background. The philosophies, traditions, cultural norms and practices of Chinese origin are carefully described, with case examples to facilitate discussions to further explore the variations within the community. The manual will serve as both a reference book and as a resource for workshops. Health professionals are well advised to take full advantage of the opportunity that this manual makes available. In both eastern and western medicine and health care, people have updated their knowledge, skills, values and practices. One should consider carefully the context of health care and medical practices, today and yesterday.

It is said that in learning of others, we learn of ourselves. This publication will afford health professionals an opportunity to explore a fuller understanding of health and healing, challenge pre-conceived notions and biases and help health professionals better understand health needs in a cultural context. It will serve as a valuable resource to any health professional interested in broadening their perspective and in providing more sensitive and appropriate health care service.

Ralph Masi, MD, CCFP, FCFP

Forward

This handbook was conceived as a means of helping health care providers understand Chinese attitudes, beliefs and behaviours relative to the health, medical and rehabilitation needs and services of their Chinese Canadian clients. It fulfills this expectation admirably through the use of specific examples which are linked to the experience of immigration, language and culture as well as Chinese philosophy.

What is fascinating is the fact that while some of the issues which arise are unique to Chinese culture, many are *not* unique to the Chinese population, but have a much wider application. Readers who have experience in multicultural settings will rapidly realize that values such as strong family ties, respect for senior family members, protection of children well into adulthood and abhorrence of euthanasia are common to many "traditional cultures". Other behaviours are related to being a new immigrant, or to the lack of familiarity with accepted practice in the new environment — experiences which are common to many newcomers. The handbook also addresses the challenge of conveying information through an interpreter, whether a family member or someone else, and how to optimize clear communication between the client and service provider.

The goal of the handbook is to sensitize the reader and encourage an atmosphere of understanding so that the individual client and family are seen within their culture and experience; at the same time, the health care providers must recognize that they must operate within the bounds of their profession. Offering reasons why clients and families behave the way they do, the handbook gives suggestions for the health care providers not only in terms of understanding, but also in managing, difficult situations.

Health services are most effective when they are culturally appropriate and respectful of the clients' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. The handbook stresses the principles of seeking information, and listening carefully to the responses so as to achieve better treatment, planning and improved compliance, in short, a more satisfactory outcome for all.

Nancy Christie
Convenor, Demonstration Projects
International Centre for the Advancement of Community Based Rehabilitation

Acknowledgments

My thanks go first to Mount Sinai Hospital of Toronto, Scarborough Grace Hospital, and Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care for giving me the opportunity to develop this much needed tool for front-line health care workers in our cherished multicultural society. Specifically I would like to thank Joseph Ng, Grace Liu and Kwong Yuen Liu from these institutions for their unreserved support and assistance from day one.

I am greatly indebted to members of the Advisory Committee, namely Amy Chan, Dr. Peter Chang, Nancy Christie, Dr. Ralph Masi, Trudy Molke, Suk Han Lai, Maria Lee, Dr. Joseph So, Dr. Ka Tat Tsang, and Dr. Karen Yoshida who provided insightful and constructive suggestions along the way that were essential in shaping the book. Together they provided valuable professional advice, sharpened my sensitivity that is so central to the project, and helped me tackle many of the dilemmas that health care workers are encountering on a daily basis. Their time, energy, and commitment to the project are unexcelled. Thanks also go to Dr. Simon So for authenticating the historical accounts in the book, and to Terry Woo and Maisie Lo for their discerning comments. Last but not least, I must thank Dr. Keith A. McLeod for helping with the painstaking job of editing the manuscript.

Most importantly my thanks go to the health care workers who share their experiences in the focus groups or interviews. Their input has generated the wealth of cases that became the guiding posts for the development of the book. While they represent only a very small portion of the army of health care workers working in the field, my surf through the vastness of the health care waves with them has allowed me to see the health care profession in a way I never had before.

It has been an enjoyable and inspiring journey.

Kwok-Keung Fung
June, 1998

Prologue

Heaven and Earth and the relationships between the Yin and Yang are vividly represented in the human body. Like Heaven, the body has 366 minor joints corresponding to the number of days of the year and 12 divisions of major joints corresponding to the number of months. All beings of the universe come from Heaven, Earth and Man. Heaven creates them, Earth nourishes them, and Man perfects them.

Dong Zhong Shu
[董仲舒] (179-104 B.C.)

Introduction

Filling a Gap

Multiculturalism is enshrined in the Canadian life and in the Canadian constitution. It has become not only an ideology but a reality. As Canadians embrace newcomers from all over the world, and immigrants continue to settle and give rise to new generations of multiple ethnicities, cross-cultural communication becomes a daily necessity.

Between 1986 and 1996, roughly 200,000 to 250,000 immigrants arrived in Canada each year, the majority of whom settled in major metropolitan areas like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. More than half of the 1.04 millions immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 1996 came from Asia and the Middle East. By 1996, a total of 4.7 million people of the country's 28.3 million population have a mother tongue other than English or French. The largest non-official language group is Chinese, with more than 860,150 people, or 3.0 % of the population. This represents a marked increase of 42 % in just five years.[1]

Whether speaking English or French or not, the newly arrived immigrants have to interact with the mainstream society. Shopping, banking, sending children to school, or visiting the doctor or health centre are just some of the essential activities they have to carry out as they settle in Canada. Increasingly both the public and private sectors have taken measures to meet the special needs of these new communities. For example, schools have hired teaching assistants who speak immigrants' languages to attend to the needs of recent immigrant students, and governments have increasingly utilized minority media to make public announcements. As well, public and private organizations are implementing sensitivity training to help their staff become more aware of the cultural diversity in the community.

In the health care field, it is impractical, and often impossible to match every patient with a health care practitioner of the same ethnic background. The challenges of making special efforts to serve ethnic groups confront the individual health care provider on two fronts:

1. **Language barriers**

   This fundamental barrier, while highly inhibiting, has been partially overcome through the use of interpreters, either provided by the patients or by the health care institutions, such as on-call interpreters. Others are exploring the use of phrase books or electronic translators to facilitate communication between patients and clinicians.

2. **Cultural barriers**

   Cultural barriers, while more subtle, might have more profound effects on the interaction between the patient and the health care provider. Communication might not take place freely, even when the language barriers are removed. The patient might withhold information, affecting diagnosis, or he or she might seek alternate treatments concurrently, complicating the treatment prescribed by the health care provider. A therapist may wonder why a patient does not follow instructions. As health care providers have more contact with people of a particular cultural group, they might gain insight into these obstacles. How soon and how well one gains experience depends on how extensive the contact with a particular ethnic group is and whether there are peers around to furnish relevant information.

It was with the intent to address these barriers in health care services that this project was conceived. The goal is to provide a tool that will help health care providers better understand their patients of Chinese cultural background. During the development of this Handbook we have come across many dedicated health care providers who had the strongest conviction to provide the best service equitably to all patients but were at a loss trying to overcome the language barriers or accurately understand their patients' needs. We hope that this Handbook will help them gain some insight as to why some Chinese patients behave the way they do, so that the situation can be more sensitively and effectively managed.

Guideline for Frontline Care Providers

The Canadian Council on Multicultural Health put forward a document entitled "Health Care for Canadian Pluralism: Towards Equity in Health". Included in it are guidelines for both administration of health institutions and front line health care providers. The following excerpt will provide a good orientation for front line care providers:

> *When doctors, nurses, and other front line service providers deliver health care, they also deliver a message about how they, and the program or institution they represent, perceive individuals. Ideally, a culturally sensitive image of the "whole person" has been articulated by management and facilitated by administration; now, front line staff have the responsibility of actually delivering culturally appropriate care. Language is a key, both to understanding culture and to providing health care. Front line health professionals working with different cultural groups give top priority to overcoming linguistic barriers, but the availability of trained medical interpreters in Canada remains abysmally low.*
>
> *Care givers can:*
>
> - *document their need for and experience with interpreters; feed the information to administration*

- *experiment with non-verbal means of communication and with the use of skeleton vocabulary*
- *learn how to work with untrained, non-medical interpreters; read about it, practise it, practise it in reverse.*

It does not come naturally to communicate through a third party, or to use "sign-language", or to systematically note when and how linguistic barriers hamper the delivery of health care. These are learned skills, just as the skill of interpreting requires learning.

The provision of health services across cultures brings the significance of patients' rights into focus. Persons receiving care may not understand or even be aware that they have rights. Persons delivering care often find that explaining and ensuring rights across cultures presents new challenges.

Care givers can:

- *develop with community representatives working definitions of informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for religious beliefs.*
- *provide translations of patients' rights, and clarify them with interpreters and family members as well as with patients.*
- *make inquires if they suspect that an individual's race or culture has implications for the protection of his or her rights.*

For example, dietary restrictions may have implications for a patient's right to balanced nutrition. Ritual requirements, either at critical moments or on regular occasions, may impact on how the dignity of the individual is to be maintained.

Cultural beliefs and practices tend to be more subtle than language barriers or religious requirements, but they impact just as strongly on the provision of health care. They are more difficult to recognize and to deal with because, quite often, neither the service provider nor the service receiver is particularly aware of them.

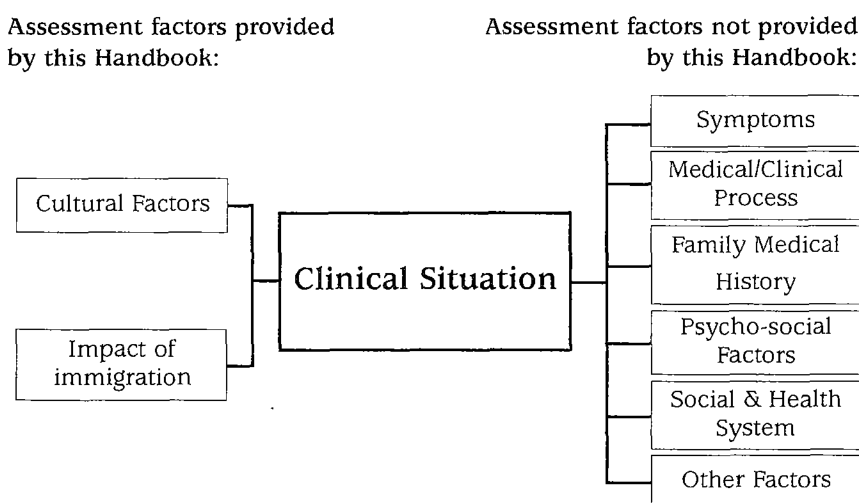
Care givers can:

- *discuss with each other their observations and understandings of culturally distinct health attitudes and behaviour*
- *prioritize for administration the cultural groups and cross-cultural skills to be addressed through in-service and other supports*
- *open a dialogue by asking "What is the custom in your community/country?" when attitudes or behaviour are puzzling or problematic.*

The responsibility for relating to the whole individual is shared by management, administration, and front line staff; but the task of ensuring that each person gets treated as a unique individual falls to the actual care giver. No matter how much knowledge and experience care givers have with a cultural group, they must check their understandings with each care receiver from that group. In the field of health care, probably more than elsewhere, actions based on cultural assumptions and stereotypes can be dangerous.[3]

It should be recognized clearly that this is not a book that will enable the health care providers to interpret and explain each behaviour in a clinical setting. Too many variables are at play at any one time that any singular interpretation is impossible and dangerous. The Handbook is set up to provide cultural perspectives and additional options to understand clinical situations. The readers are advised to continue to use other yardsticks and experiences in addition to what is provided in this book and weigh each factor to arrive at a more thorough understanding of the situation. Figure I provides a graphical scheme of the process.

Figure I: Assessment of a Clinical Situation



Overview and Layout of the Handbook

The Handbook aims to provide an overview and illustrations of some of the major cultural elements that have an impact on the daily life and health behaviour of some Chinese Canadians. Many of us have difficulty making sense out of the thinking and conduct of people of other cultures. Others overlook subtle behaviour that might carry significant implications for the people they are interacting. This Handbook will help the readers understand the background of Chinese Canadians and reflect upon their own culture. This background information is useful in alerting the health care provider to cultural behaviours that may complicate the clinical process. Such prior understanding is crucial. It will give the health care provider a perspective and help prevent misunderstanding and tensions which might otherwise develop. The health care provider will then be able to proceed with rational strategies and seek ways of resolving the situation.

The Handbook contains three parts:

Part I Establishing a framework of Chinese culture

Chapter 1

This Chapter traces the origin and development of some of the major religious and philosophical thoughts that have shaped the culture of the Chinese since the pre-historical time. The Chinese have been under the influence of a multitude of schools of thought over thousands of years. A number of the representative schools are explicated here and their development examined. Emphasis is placed on the interaction between different schools of thought. Defining culture is always difficult. The term culture is used loosely here to encompass all the philosophies, religions, values and norms that influence one's customs and daily behaviours. The attempt here is to provide a comprehensive, though by no means exhaustive, account of the underlying cultural factors that affect the behaviours of Chinese in health settings.

The last part of the Chapter summarizes the characteristics of Chinese culture. The importance of family orientation and ethnicity bonding is stressed. The ability of Chinese to accommodate and hybridize different religious and philosophical elements is examined. The *Dao*, the ultimate goal that all religions and philosophies strive for, is seen as the convergent point for all institutions, though each school's interpretation of it may vary.

Chapter 2

This Chapter gives an overview of traditional Chinese medicine. The concept of the human body as a miniature universe capable of regulating itself and keeping itself at optimal state is examined. The origin of diseases as a function of external and internal factors is also explored. The interrelation between body parts and functions and the concept of the Five Viscera and Six Entrails are expounded, followed by accounts of the rationale and mechanism of herbal medicine and acupuncture.

Chapter 3

This Chapter deals with the individual's reaction to the intertwining cultural influences and his efforts to harmonize them. Five attributes are identified which the individual is subject to. A hypothetical self finally emerges which, through internalizing and harmonizing the cultural and religious elements, is able to live in accord with all the cultural institutions.

Chapter 4

With massive immigration in recent years and the advances in cross-continental travel and electronic communication, no culture today is

immune from mutations resulting from the constant bombardment of new information and alternate values and life styles. Yet the old culture endures and continues to exercise its influence on one's daily life and social interactions. An individual living under these changing environments often has to deal with the conflicts resulting from the clash of incompatible and sometimes competing cultural and social values. The impact of immigration and some of the residual behaviours brought over from the home countries are also examined.

Part II Implications on health behaviour

Chapter 5

This Chapter puts the cultural elements in perspective and attempts to interpret health care and clinical behaviours in terms of the individual's acculturated beliefs and values. Two facts should be born in mind. Firstly, a person is under the influence of different and sometimes conflicting cultural doctrines and hence one should not necessarily expect consistency in an individual's behaviour. Secondly, sub-communities within the Chinese community are subject to cultural influence to differential degree, with some schools of thought exerting greater impact than others. The individual's place of origin and his or her upbringing will usually have a great impact. For example, the Buddhist influence on Chinese from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries would be much stronger than on people from Hong Kong or mainland China. It is therefore important to keep an open mind and consider all possibilities when trying to unravel a behaviour in terms of cultural background.

Part III Illustration of culturally influenced behaviour

Chapter 6

This Chapter aims to illustrate some of the concepts covered in the first two parts with real-life scenarios involving health care providers and patients. All the cases were collected through focus groups or interviews with health care providers in the field. The cases aim to enhance the reader's appreciation of the culture of the Chinese and pave the way for application of the ideas in the Handbook. Each situation is followed by alternative interpretations as to why the patient might have behaved the way he or she did. While it is difficult to lay down rules and guidelines that would suggest ways of handling these real-life encounters, we do from time to time furnish suggestions for more sensitive and effective management of the situations.

Using the Handbook

"Health Boxes" such as this one appear throughout this part to highlight accounts that directly relate to health beliefs or behaviour. A reader who wants to skip the background and historical development can simply glimpse through these health boxes to get a feel of the impact of the Chinese cultural institutions on health.

Part I

Readers who want to get a total appreciation of the Chinese cultures and their impact on the Chinese should read the Handbook from the beginning. In Part I the reader will get a comprehensive picture of the intertwining impact of different cultural elements on the individual. With this, the reader will be able to start to understand the complexity of the interdependency and interaction between the various cultural and religious thoughts and form a holistic picture of the Chinese as an individual. With such a prior understanding, the rest of the Handbook will fall into place naturally.

Part II

Readers who want to put the Handbook to immediate use can go directly to Part II of the Handbook. This part serves as a bridge between Part I and Part III. It can be considered as an inventory in which health-related behaviours are categorized under different topics for easy access by the health care providers. The reader can quickly go to a topic of concern (e.g. patient consent, treatment, etc.) and scan the possible influences the patient may be under. The reader is however encouraged to go back to Part I when time allows to get an overall appreciation of the underlying factors behind these behaviours.

Part III

Part III supplements Part I and Part II by providing real-life scenarios in clinical settings to illustrate the effects of culture on the behaviours of the patient or the family. The scenarios will enhance the reader's appreciation of how cultural beliefs or attitudes may translate into actual health behaviours. By seeing how an actual behaviour unfolds, the impact of the cultural factors become more vivid and easier to grip.

Limitations

To explain one's behaviour in terms of a 3500-year-old culture that governs a quarter of the world's population is no doubt an enormous job. For the Chinese, so many variables are at play at any one time that any interpretation is bound to simplify and be subject to challenge.

To provide a comprehensive account of the Chinese cultures is beyond the scope of this Handbook, and in fact any book. The Handbook is prepared as a tool for health care providers. It is not meant to be a complete authoritative account on Chinese cultures. The reader is encouraged to assess each situation individually, discuss options openly with the patient, and consult peers and professional guidelines in deciding the best management for any situation.

We see this Handbook as an example of the efforts needed to make the Canadian health care truly accessible and equitable. On the practical side, we would like to make the daily work of health care providers easier. In addition, we hope this project will bring to forefront some of the issues and dilemmas of cross cultural communications and some of the difficulties health care providers encounter on a day-to-day basis.

[1] Statistics Canada, 1996 Census

[2] Health Care For Canadian Pluralism: Towards Equity in Health, The Canadian Council on Multicultural Health/Conseil Canadien de la santé multiculturelle (CCMH/CCSM)

Part I

Framework of Chinese Cultures

Chapter 1

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CULTURES

Origin and Evolution of Chinese Religions and Schools of Thought

Culture is dynamic. This is particularly so for the Chinese. The development of Chinese cultures reflects an evolutionary process shaped by social and political changes over its history. No culture is immune from this perpetual modification. The term culture in Chinese is *Wen Fa* [文化]. *Wen* means literary civilizing force and *Fa* means transformation and assimilation. Therefore culture inevitably involves a process of continuous change, assimilation, and new interpretation.

It follows that the schools of thought that emerged 3,000 years ago, or the religions that found their way into China 2,000 years ago, were in a much different form than the way we know them today, though they might retain the same label. The Chinese are particularly adept in assimilating religions or beliefs to suit their special circumstances. For example, Buddhist doctrines, legends, paintings, temples, statues and shrines have all assumed such strong Chinese characteristics that there is hardly any trace of their Indian roots.

The following four sections attempt to trace the origin and development of different Chinese religions and philosophies and how they have shaped beliefs and thinking of the ordinary Chinese over time.

- Beliefs of the Pre-historical Man: Prototype of Chinese Religions
- Cradle of Enlightenment: Birth and Development of Chinese Philosophies
- Doctrines from Abroad: Imported Religions
- Melting Pot: Assimilation of Religious and Philosophical Thoughts

Beliefs of the Pre-historical Man: Prototype of Chinese Religions

Ever since the dawn of human appearance on Earth, we have been wondering how we relate to our surroundings. There is no record of the state of mind of the first people on the Earth except some pictographs and the like. There are however, in all ancient civilizations, treasure of legends and myths that depict vividly the life and aspiration of these early people. The Chinese describe this pre-historical period as *Hun Dun* [渾沌] (chaotic, turbid, blended, abyssal) where the heaven and the earth were of one piece and all the elements of the universe were mingled together. The universe remained in such a state for unknown length of time until the legendary giant *Pan Gu* [盤古] separated the earth from the heaven to create land for people to inhabit. The pre-historical China is primarily made up of legends like this that show how the earth gave

rise to mankind and how different gods taught mankind the skills to live fruitfully and in harmony with nature.

This query into the origin of the universe is universal to all cultures. Each culture has its own legends to account for the beginning of the world and life. It arises from a sense of insecurity and an urge for rationalization that are common to all humans. According to this early cosmic-human view, the world was not created. It is always there, with no beginning or end. Nature simply recycles itself, with time as the vehicle for the process, as is the case of the recurring seasons. Humans, as part of the nature, must be an integral part of that process.

Cradle of Enlightenment: Birth and Development of Chinese Philosophies

In periods of political and social turmoil and personal suffering, people start to question the meaning of life and to theorize ways of restoring social order and eternal peace. This kind of quest reached its peak during the Spring and Autumn Period (722-481 B.C.) and the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.) and the time in between. For over 400 years lords were fighting with each other, bringing great suffering to the common people. In trying to find solutions to the suffering of people, great thinkers and philosophers emerged who formulated theories and came out with various notions on how society could achieve eternal peace and harmony. Some, Like Confucius and Mencius, concentrated on counseling the rulers on how to rule and on teaching people how to discipline themselves. Others, such as Lao Zi and Zhang Zi, devoted their time to exploring the relationships between Man and nature and to seek eternal internal peace. This period of "a hundred schools contend" represents the highest point of China's enlightenment and has given us some of the greatest thinkers and philosophers of all times. Their teachings and books were to exert a great impact on the thinking of Chinese for the centuries to come.

By the second century A.D., nine schools of thought had been identified:

- Literati Family (Confucianism)
- Daoist Family
- Yin Yang Cosmologist Family
- Legalist Family
- Names Family
- Mohist Family
- Diplomats' Family (Verticalists and Horizontalists)
- Mixed Family (Syncretists)
- Farmers' Family

Each of the above was to evolve further in the next 2000 years as a function of political, social and literary changes. Emperors in different dynasties endorsed various schools, either out of genuine belief or using them to consolidate their

dominion, or both. One emperor was so converted that he became a Buddhist monk himself. For most part of China's recorded history, it was Confucianism that dominated the Chinese society. It started with the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.) making Confucianism the state doctrine. Every mandarin official was selected from scholars who topped imperial exams, which primarily tested one's command of Confucian thoughts. Young men aspiring to be bureaucrats and serve the nation had to study and be well versed in the doctrine of Confucianism. This lasted almost without interruptions for two millennia. Towards the end of the 19th Century, China was subject to grave humiliation of repeated defeats in wars with western countries. Many Chinese, led by intellectuals, were determined to bring reform to the country and adopt the West's political system and technological orientation. Confucian thinking was thought to be an obstacle to China's modernization and in 1905 the examinations dominated by Confucian Classics were officially abolished.

Doctrines from Abroad: Imported Religions

Introduced to China around the first century A.D., Buddhism is no doubt the first and most influential foreign religion to have an impact on the daily life of ordinary Chinese. The influence of Buddhism reached its highest point during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), when much of the literature and arts were tainted with Buddhist flavour. At its peak, approximately 5500 Buddhist monasteries and nunneries had been built in the country with close to 100 in the capital city of Zhang An alone. The privilege that the Buddhists enjoyed invited criticisms from officials of other schools, which escalated to an anti-Buddhist campaign by the government in the year 841 to 845. According to Tang Shu (History of the Tang Dynasty), 4,600 large Buddhist monasteries and 40,000 small ones were demolished and 260,500 monks and nuns were forced to return to secular life.[1] Buddhism in China was never to recover its imperial status, though it remained popular among the ordinary people, well into the present day.

Although Christianity found its way into China as early as the 7th century through Central Asia, it was not until the early 16th century that it began to have a lasting influence on the Chinese. The Jesuits, who were particularly keen in spreading Christianity to Asia, no doubt played a major role in establishing a beachhead for Christianity in China. Rather than imposing the new and foreign religion on the Chinese, the Jesuits chose to work from within. They learned the language and the literature, studied the ethics and teachings of Confucianism, and adopted Chinese customs. This enabled them to cultivate friendship with educated Chinese officials. In 1601, Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit brother, was permitted to set up a missionary headquarter in the capital.

The Jesuits did not bring only religion, but also knowledge and technologies to China. Chinese officials were fascinated by such inventions as the clock and the telescope. The Jesuits' skills in mathematics, astronomy and ocean navigation also earned them respect in the imperial court. The Chinese, however, remained ethnocentric. When a map with Europe in the centre offended the Chinese, Ricci quickly prepared a new map with China in the centre, which, of course, was more favorably received.

The missionaries were quick to learn how to gain trust among the Chinese. They equated the Chinese term for Heaven, Tian, with the Christian God. They showed marked respect for Confucius and his teachings. They also accepted ancestor worship. Through these tolerant moves they were able to impress the Chinese, who believed one religion did not negate the truth of another.[2] When other Christians felt offended by the Jesuits' flexibility and tried to establish the monotheism of Christianity, the Chinese reacted by moving away from it, in effect putting a brake on the Christianity movement in China. Furthermore, toward the end of the 19th century when Western powers tried to establish trading posts by force and to colonize China, Christianity was seen by many Chinese as colonialism in disguise and was overtly rejected.

Moslemism also found its way into China. However its influence is limited mainly to certain minority groups.

Melting Pot: Assimilation of Religious and Philosophical Thoughts

A unique characteristic of Chinese religious thoughts is the amazingly seamless conglomeration of multiple beliefs and religions. Unlike disciples of most Western religions, Chinese are particularly able in finding common grounds and adopting compatible elements between religions. The metamorphoses of Buddhism and Christianity as seen above testify this ability.

Even for religions developed in China itself, permeability between religions is common. Almost all Chinese schools of thought have in one way or another borrowed or adopted religious concepts, practices and structure from other schools. For example, some influential Confucian scholars of the Han Dynasty incorporated the Yin-Yang and the Five Elements cosmology into Confucianism and gave it a metaphysical foundation. With this the bureaucrats were able to construct a philosophical and historical interpretation of the dynastic changes and a mandate for the ruling emperor.

Daoism similarly borrowed extensively from Buddhism such as its rituals, communal disciplines and rules, and charitable works and social services. The Buddhists likewise assimilated and accommodated some of the religious elements that the Chinese highly valued. For example, tathata (ultimate reality) was equated with the Daoist's concept of original non-being, *Ben Wu* [本無].

The Buddhists also realized that they had to accommodate the tradition of ancestral worship and the Confucian social ethic based on filial piety to be better in line with the Chinese thinking.[5]

The acknowledgment that each religion has something good and valuable in it led to the affirmation that all religions are harmonious in having the same origin or goals. The unity of all religions has been one of the unwritten decrees for Chinese believers. In fact, many Chinese openly acknowledge their inter-faith practice, as they overtly assert that "All three religions belong to the same family" (*San Jiao Gui Yi Gia*) [三教歸一家], referring here to Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.

Major Institutions of Chinese Culture

It can be seen from above that the Chinese are under the influence of many religions and schools of thought. For the purpose of this Handbook, only the following schools will be examined. Under each, attention will be drawn to health beliefs and behaviours that are likely rooted in that particular school.

- Confucianism
- Daoism
- Yin-Yang and Five Elements Cosmology
- Qi (Vitality Energy)
- Buddhism
- Heaven and Heavenly Mandate
- Astrology and Feng Shui
- Christianity

Confucianism — Fabric of the Chinese Family and Society

There is no doubt that Confucianism has been the most influential philosophy in China. One major reason is that it has been, without major interruptions, the state doctrine and basis of education for China for over 2000 years. During this span of Chinese history, it dictated the social structure and one's role and relationships to others within that structure. Confucianism, after all, arose from Confucius' quest to realize his vision of a harmonious society made up of citizens of utmost morality. Hence it contains notions of how a ruler can best rule and set example for his subjects. In this aspect, the philosophy is both political and pragmatic.

While Confucius' thoughts were not accepted by the rulers of his time, emperors of later dynasties were attracted to his work that they made Confucianism the state doctrine. Scholars who wanted to become bureaucrats

had to excel others in the imperial examinations that primarily assessed one's command of Confucian teachings. The status of Confucianism as an official doctrine and the mechanism for selecting only those well-versed in its teaching to become mandarins served to maintain its prevalence in the Chinese society. On the other hand, it also served to consolidate the power of the ruling class. The emperors, for example, found utility in the teaching of filial piety — the unconditional respect and obedience of children to their parent, as they saw themselves as the father figure of the *Guo Jia* [國家] (nation-family) and thus should receive the same obedience and loyalty from the subjects as the father would do from his children.

Confucianism, because of its state indoctrination and dominance in the education system, is closely associated with the intelligentsia and the gentry class. In fact the Chinese name for Confucianism is the Literati Family. Confucius spent much of his life writing and editing ancient books. Therefore much of his thought was inherited from the life of the ancient China before his time. In fact, Confucius' utopia existed in the ancient society of the pre-historical saga. Some of the early values and customs he referred to included the importance of rituals, ancestral reverence, the dichotomy in gender role within the family, and the preference and favouritism of boys over girls. The books compiled and edited by Confucius, together with those that collected or expanded his thoughts continued to gain imperial status and eventually became the "must read" for Chinese scholars. These works, often referred to as the Confucian Canon, include the Four Books — the Analects, Mencius, Great Learning, and Doctrine of the Mean, and the Five Classics — Book of Poetry, Book of Documents, Book of Changes (I Ching), Spring and Autumn, and Book of Rites.

The Five Great Relationships: The Basis of Familial and Social Relationships

Confucius defined the Five Great Relationships as the basis of the society: the ruler and the subjects, the father and son, the husband and wife, the elder brother and younger brother, and between friends. Except for that between friends, the Great Relationships are all hierarchical. Confucius carefully prescribed the codes of behaviour in each relationship: how the superior (ruler, father, elder brother, and husband) should responsibly direct and mentor the subordinate (subjects, son, younger brother, and wife) and how the subordinate should respect and obey the superior. Through the years, the Chinese have developed a hierarchical frame of reference where one assumes a dominant or submissive position by virtue of one's sex, age and seniority in the family or society.

Chinese are trained from early childhood to be submissive to authority and

avoid confrontations. Yet history has demonstrated that Chinese are as tenacious and refractory as any other people. In both the political and literary arenas, Chinese have constantly challenged authority and establishment. Few dynasties enjoyed protracted stability; insurrections and uprisings have been the rule rather than the exception in Chinese history. Likewise Chinese scholars and their works are highly subverting and relentless. The "a hundred schools contend" period mentioned earlier attests that Chinese do not accept things indiscriminatorily, in spite of their upbringing that emphasizes constraint and modesty. The threshold of tolerance for the Chinese is high. However when that threshold is reached, they would often strike with a vengeance.

The ideal man: Ren [仁] and Jun Zi [君子]:

Central to Confucianism is the concept of *Ren* [仁]. This word has been translated variously into English as "benevolence", "kindheartedness", "humaneness", "magnanimity", and others. All convey part of the meaning but none captures the whole meaning of *Ren*. Welty prefers the word "sympathy", as it captures the main inner drive that is implicit with the term. Sympathy is the entering into and sharing of the feelings and interest of another person.[4] Only when one is capable of doing this will he or she be able to think and act for the benevolence of others. Most Confucians believe it is a universal quality possessed by all humans. Implicit in *Ren* is the desire to aid others to achieve their ends. An action motivated by this is called an act of *Yi* [義] (act of just), which can involve sacrificing one's own life. *Ren* to Confucius is the basis of human relations and building blocks of society. Without it the family and society will inevitably disintegrate. In the Analects, Confucius talks extensively about *Ren*, with the following being a few excerpts:

> *One achieves Ren through conquest of self and conformation to rituals.*
>
> *Being able to practice five things constitutes Ren... These five things are respect, tolerance, trustworthiness, earnestness, and benevolence. With respect, one avoids abuse; with tolerance, one wins the hearts of others; with trust-worthiness, one is entrusted; with earnestness, one achieves; with benevolence, one is fitted to lead others.*
>
> *In his desire to develop himself, the man of Ren would develop others; in his desire to achieve, he would help others achieve. From his own self he is able to see a parallel in others. This may be called the way to attain Ren.*

While the family is the building block of the society, Confucians maintain that all virtues necessarily have to start with the self. This is where the concept of *Jun Zi* [君子] (Gentleman) came about. *Jun Zi* is someone who always put *Ren*

in the forefront in his thought and conduct. Confucius meticulously compared between the *Jun Zi* and the *Xiao Ren* [小人] (Petty Man) in diametrical terms and it is through these contrasts that Confucius' vision of the ideal man comes vividly into being. The *Jun Zi* is constantly self-cultivating, tireless in learning, adheres to rigid moral standards yet is at ease in all situations and modest at all times:

> *Jun Zi is always concerned with virtue, Xiao Ren with his own security. Jun Zi always thinks in terms of rules, Xiao Ren in terms of benefits.*

> *Jun Zi does not seek satisfaction in eating nor security in lodging. Instead he is concerned with being earnest in his work and prudent in his speech. He actively associates with people of principles against whom he can rectify his own behaviour.*

> *Jun Zi does not act contrary to Ren, not even for a brief moment at meal. In moments of haste, he acts according to it. In times of despair, he still acts according to it.*

In social encounters, adhering to the code of ethics of Jun Zi, or at least maintaining an image of such, is of utmost importance for many Chinese. Challenging or confronting another person is highly undesirable. A Chinese may prefer to avert disagreements to avoid dispute situations in which he may risk losing his "gentlemanness".

Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong Yong)

Another important thesis of Confucius is the Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhong Yong*) [中庸]. *Zhong* means "centrality" and "equilibrium" and *Yong* means "normality" and "consistency". The central theme of the Mean is that one should know one's position in the universe and keep one's relationship with all others in harmony and equilibrium, regardless in what situation one is. Accordingly, the dichotomy between the temporality of earthly time and the eternity of the universe, and between the finite mundane place and infinite space is totally reconcilable. The mind at such a state is said to have achieved complete sincerity, which is the essence of *Yong*.

The following excerpts from the Doctrine of the Mean illustrate how one should deal with one's feelings and one's situation:

> *Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy are aroused,*

It is unusual for Chinese to show extreme passion or temperament, even with persons close to them. Physical signs of affection in public is even more rare. This does not indicate Chinese are reserved or dispassionate. They may simply be behaving in line with the Doctrine of the Mean.

the person is at an equilibrium state and is said to be in the central position. When these feelings are aroused, they should be contained in their moderate degree so that the person can maintain the state of harmony. Equilibrium is the principle of all beings and harmony is the path to realize Dao. When this is achieved, everything in Heaven and Earth will be in their proper positions and all things shall flourish.

In keeping one's health, likewise, extremes are to be avoided. Most of the physical exercises of the Chinese, such as Tai Ji (Tai Chi) and Qi Gong, involve modest and smooth movements of the body. The choice of herbal medicine, believed to be mild and work on the body by restoring its equilibrium, is therefore preferred by many Chinese who think western treatments such as surgery and radioactive therapies are drastic and radical.

Jun Zi always behaves according to his position and does not go beyond it... In a superior position, he does not harass the people below him. In a subordinate position, he does not make himself liable to the people above him. He rectifies himself and asks for nothing from others. He never complains, not against Heaven above, nor the people around.

The life of the Gentleman is an exemplification of the Mean; the life of the inferior man is a contradiction of it. [The Gentleman] constantly holds to the centre. [The inferior man] knows no restraint.[5]

Family Structure

Of the Five Great Relationships, three are concerned with the family and all are hierarchical: father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife. The relationship between each pair was explicitly defined, with code of conduct clearly spelt out. Primarily, the superior was responsible for mentoring and ensuring the well-being of the subordinate and the subordinate owed the superior respect and obedience. These codes were instituted from childhood explicitly through teaching and implicitly through modeling. For most people they were deeply imprinted by the time they reached teenage. The girl was taught about her role as a daughter and a future wife, who must pay respect to the parents and later to the husband and his family. Anybody who did not fulfill his or her role was considered deviant and was frowned at, if not more severely punished. Welty considers this continual process of individual adjustment to a well-defined traditional role as a distinctive feature of Chinese society.[6]

Filial Piety

One deep-rooted influence on all classes of Chinese is filial piety (*Xiao*) [孝]. Taken to the extreme, children are expected to be in absolute obedience to their parents. The parents dictate the child's education, their course of careers,

and even their marriage. Children are expected to serve the parents with docility and respect. The parents, in turn, must sustain certain solemnity to keep up the status as parents. The reverence for parents is carried into adulthood. Adult children are expected to serve their parents and inform them of their major decisions. When the bride is married "into" the home of the groom, she is expected to follow suit and do the same to the parents-in-law.

When a parent becomes sick, all the children will, and are expected to exhaust their resources to do whatever they can to help the parent. The eldest son, in particular, is expected to assume major responsibility and to make decisions if the parent has lost his or her ability to do so. To neglect one's parents is an unthinkable violation of the filial piety principle.

The parents' role and sacrifices in bringing up and nurturing the children are reiterated to the children, who are expected to provide for the parents when they are unable to take care of themselves or otherwise in need of help. A very strong family bond is thus cultivated.

Gender Role

The society Confucius lived in was a male-dominated one. Long before his time, the Chinese favoured male over female children. This might be rooted in China's agricultural background where physical strength was essential for growing food and supporting the family. Even at birth, boys and girls got different treatments, as is indicated by a very old poem which depicts a newborn boy being put to sleep upon a bed and given a jade scepter to play with whereas a newborn girl was put upon the ground and given only a loom-whorl to play with. Confucius' view on gender role is a reflection of this established thinking of the ancient Chinese society.

Even today, boys are preferred over girls by many Chinese. Boys are seen to carry the name and hence the line of the family and are often given more privileges and power, such as the opportunity for higher education. What is unfortunate is that many women themselves have come to accept this favouritism over boys as the norm. The killing or abandonment of baby girls under the one-child-per-family policy in mainland China attests tragically to this mentality among Chinese families.

The parents are obliged to train and discipline their children to behaviours expected of them in the family and later in the society. A child who commits a socially unacceptable activity or otherwise misbehaves brings disgrace to the whole family. The father, considering himself as the head of the family, bears the bulk of the disgrace. In an effort to ensure that the children's behaviour

adheres to social expectations and standards, the father might become inflexible and sometimes resort to harsh punishment. Over time, he might assume a solemn image and become distant from the children. This gives the mother an intermediary role in between. Out of love she would protect the children from the father's harshness. As this becomes habitual, the mother develops a much closer relationship with the children. In a very subtle way, she would assume increasing power, even though this is not her original intention. It is therefore not uncommon to find families in which the woman is the major stakeholder, even though the "official" status of household head remains with the man in all social activities and rituals. Thus, the status and roles related to gender may be complex.

The roles of men and women are so deep-rooted in both the family and the society that they are often rigidly followed. Men have to be rational, solemn, global and outward-looking, leaving the women to provide affection and kindness and attend to details. When the Buddhist sage of mercy and salvation was introduced into China, he was somehow transformed into a female goddess, *Guan Yin* [觀音]. Apparently, the idea of a man capable of giving tender love and mercy does not sit well with the mental state of the Chinese. It has to be a women for people to make sense out of it.

Family as an Institution

For the Chinese, the family extend both longitudinally and laterally. Longitudinally, the Chinese pay special reverence to their ancestors. Many Chinese families keep their family trees back to over a thousand years. Tablets with the ancestors' names are kept in shrines to remind the descendants of their roots and for them to pay reverence. Many Chinese also believe that the ancestors continue to live in another world as spirits and depend upon their descendants for certain necessities of life. These ancestor spirits have the power to help the descendants if the proper rites are performed. Otherwise the ancestors would cease to live or might roam about as hungry ghosts. The descendants would suffer as a result.

When someone in the family falls severely ill, family members may turn to the ancestors for help. Those who believe that the illness is a result of one's wrongdoing or one's negligence of the ancestors may seek pardon from the ancestors in hope of recovery from the sickness.

It is of utmost importance that the family continue to propagate indefinitely to maintain the family line so that the ancestors will continue to be served with rites. As it was the male descendant who would conduct the proper rites for the ancestors, it was important for the family to have at least a boy to become

the future head of family. When the father passes away, the eldest son will assume his responsibilities to take care of and make decisions for the family. In fact Mencius stated that the most unfilial act was to leave no posterity. Therefore getting married and giving birth was more a familial responsibility than a person's own desire.

Under this kind of family development, power and respect will come with age. The aged were respected for their cumulated knowledge, and for having contributed to the family for a long time. Also they are the ones who are closest to becoming ancestors themselves. Their wills are usually respected and accommodated.

The Chinese family also extends laterally. To facilitate this, the Chinese keep good records of the closely knit kinship. It is no surprise that the Chinese have a very intricate system of naming uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins. Until recently, adoption between extended families and even friends was practiced customarily. So a childless family may receive a child as a gift from a brother or cousin who has more children than he needs or can manage. Accordingly, filial piety therefore is not directed only to one's own parents. It is extended to the ancestors as well as other senior members of the extended family. Kitagawa maintains that it is this prototypic communal human bonding of the Chinese family that has enabled it to maintain its vitality to the 20th Century.[7]

The familialism has great impact on the help seeking behaviours of the Chinese, as they consider both the core and extended families as part of the communal circle. All members of that circle are expected to come to each other's rescue when needs arise. Decision making might involve a much larger group than the core family. When a member becomes sick, others will come to help, making suggestions on treatment or taking turn to take care of the sick. It is worth mentioning that food is a very important social vehicle for expressing care and love, in good time and in bad time. Hence a home-made soup or fresh fruits will probably come to mind before a bouquet or a get-well card.

Family as Basis of Society

Confucius saw the family as a miniature moral community of the larger society. It was considered as the training ground for one's behaviour in the society. It was in the family that the morality of individuals was cultivated so that they would become responsible elements of society later in life. Confucians saw "Cultivate oneself, manage the family and rule the state to order" as the three stages of one's maturation. The obedient and submissive attitude toward senior members of the family was later carried to the society. The benevolence of the family, and later the state, took precedence over that

of the individual. When decisions had to be made, the individual's benefits would be forsaken, if they were in conflict with those of the family or the state. This submission to the family or the state is in great contrast to the Western society where the individual is the primary stakeholder of society.

The classic example of the individual submitting to the parents and the state is the case of *Yue Fei* [岳飛], the famous national military hero of the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) who devoted his whole life to defending the empire again the invasion of a northern tribe. *Yue's* mother inscribed the words "Reserve nothing in serving the state" on his back when he was first enlisted to the army. On the verge of victory, *Yue* was recalled by the prime minister, *Qin Hui* [秦檜], who secretly negotiated with the northern tribe for a peace settlement which would benefit himself. *Yue* surrendered himself to the state and was sentenced for execution without verdict at age 39, together with his son.

Yue remains a national hero. Children are told of his bravery and military leadership and his loyalty to the state before they learn to read. He has become a symbol of *Zhong* [忠] (loyalty) and *Yi* [義] (righteousness). To this date, commoners and celebrities alike come to his tomb every year to pay tribute. Kneeling in front of his tomb are the statues of *Qin Hui* and his wife — an icon of conspiracy and betrayal forever damned. Children are allowed to spit, stone and do other nasty things to the statues. In few places is the dichotomy between the good and the bad as clear cut and vivid as here.

Social Structure and Rule by Rituals

As mentioned earlier, Confucius regarded the family as a miniature moral community of the larger society. It follows that a lot of the codes of conduct of the family were extended to the larger society, as Mencius put it: "The root of the empire is in the state. The root of the state is in the family."

One of the main forces governing social conduct is *Li* [禮] (ritual). Originally, *Li* referred to sets of rituals or rites for ceremonial functions and daily mannerism, such as being cultured or respecting others. Increasingly, *Li* became publicly recognized behaviour norms. When one behaves according to the rituals, one's behaviour is correct and proper. In this respect, rituals are the same as laws. While laws are enforced through state power, rituals are maintained by tradition. Rituals can be as powerful as laws. They coordinate social behaviours, as all actions taken have to be in concert with others. When everybody follows the rituals, social order is realized.[8]

Many observers have noticed that for most part of China's history, the central government's control was greatly diminished as it was passed down to the

local level. Here disputes and issues are settled in the hands of the local people, or clans, who are largely related by blood or marriage. An act is judged to a large extent by the perception of the local community, which in turn is greatly influenced by the position taken by the elders or senior members. The process involved is based primarily on human relationships within the clan and the benchmark of the local ethics. The legal laws become irrelevant. Instead the behavioural norms determine what is right and what is wrong. Confucius said: "In hearing litigation, I am like any other person. What is necessary, however, is to cause the people to have no litigation." If everybody internalizes the rituals, there indeed is no need for laws.

Chinese parents may not understand why they are denied access to the medical reports of their teenaged child. The law that protects privacy of patients may be something they have never heard of and may indeed be seen as interfering with their moral responsibility as parents in making the best decision for their children.

Euthanasia and abortion have touched off much public debate in Canada and to a large extent the controversy is around the rights of the individual or the fetus. The one-child-per-family policy of China presents a conflict between allegiance to the family and to the state. Surprisingly, for an issue more central to the family than anything else, public discussion is conspicuously absent. Yet millions defy the law covertly, risking losing their social rights (such as housing or income supplement), or even the lives of their babies.

Fei Xiaotong, an early and famous sociologist in China, refers to this pattern of rule by people as a "society without litigation". The laws of the western societies are to protect the rights of the individual, which the society values. The judge's main role, particularly in civil cases, is to determine if an individual's rights have been violated. The Chinese process, instead, is concerned more with the moral implications and the benefits of the society. Fei predicts that modern judicial system will face difficulty taking firm hold in China, as long as people cling to the old ideas about litigation.[9]

Class Structure

Confucius' harmonious society was made up of two classes, the rulers and the subjects. Mencius said this clearly: "Those who earn their living by labour are destined to be ruled." This had resulted in two distinct and profound classes in China: the gentry and the peasantry. The two classes followed very different ways of life. The gentry class was powerful, educated, sophisticated, and assumed a life style of comfort and sometimes excessive luxury. The peasantry, on the other hand, was without power, mostly illiterate, earthy and leading a life constantly under the mercy of natural disasters and exploitation by the gentry class.

Two-way mobility between the two classes was common throughout the history, though. Members of the gentry class were displaced as a result of political upheavals, loss of office, or one's becoming disillusioned with the system. There were of course members of the gentry class who spoke of the plights of the peasantry class and fiercely advocated for them. Members of peasantry class, on the other hand, could move up the social ladder through studying, excelling in public exams, and becoming government officials. The lavish life-style of the gentry and the power associated with it had attracted many to devote much of their energy to becoming part of the gentry class. To say the least, parents of the peasant class would like to see their children depart from the struggling life that many of their generations had gone through. Education, as the main vehicle to achieve and sustain the gentry class, is therefore so much emphasize by parents of all classes.

Even today, this dichotomy of society is still very apparent in many Chinese communities, regardless of the political systems they are in. Education is no longer the only means to bring one to the gentry class, which has expanded to include any successful groups that have attained political or economic power. The peasant class, likewise, is no longer limited to the "peasants". Instead, any person who earns their living through labour, as Mencius defined it, remains in the peasant class.

In all Chinese communities, the intelligentsia class is well respected. When the training of doctors changed from the herbalists' tradition of apprenticeship to the modern institutionalized education, the medical profession's position as a prestigious fraction of the intelligentsia class was established.

The majority of China's 1.2 billion people live in the rural areas. Medical service in most of these communities is extremely inadequate. In the 1960s, "bare-foot doctors" were sent to villages to provide very basic health services to the villagers. These include formally trained doctors, makeshift paramedics, or locally trained people. The primitive nature of the service provided will be beyond the imagination of any western trained health worker. Yet this is the only choice for these rural people.

Even today, medical service in many remote communities remains rudimentary. An immigrant from one of these areas is likely to be overwhelmed by the sophistication in service, technologies, and administrative procedures that we are so used to.

Daoism — Integration with Nature

Daoism as a Philosophy

In a nutshell, Daoism is the belief in Nature, and Nature's laws and mechanism. Lao Zi was widely accepted as the founder of Daoism and his book *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*) [道德經] has been regarded as the Bible of

Daoism. In merely 5000 words, Lao has summarized the essence of Daoism in the most poetic and aesthetic form. For Lao, it was not Heaven that was the supreme but *Dao*. *Dao* is the cosmic principle which permeates the universe in infinite ways. The Daoist philosophers believed that each being inherited potency of *Dao* within itself which they called *De* [德] (potency for virtue). The ultimate *Dao* is realized to the extent *De* is fulfilled.

Taoists find solace in the romantic paradise of nature where silence, emptiness, non-activity, simplicity and spontaneity prevail in maintaining its harmony. They were critical of the Confucians' artificiality in their worldly politics and social ethics. Their thesis is that the nature, of which Man is a part, follows its own primordial order.[10] One should never do anything with the intention of doing it, give with the intention of being generous, or smile with the intention of pleasing. We simply follow our natural and primitive instincts and *Dao* will emerge by itself.

A Daoist Chinese may choose this "let-nature-take-care" approach in dealing with illness. For the strong believers, even pain can be averted. This may also explain delay in seeking treatment for some Chinese.

The Universe is sacred.
You cannot improve it.
If you try to change it, you will ruin it.
If you try to hold it, you will lose it.

Observers of the Dao do not seek fulfillment.
Not seeking fulfillment, they are not swayed by desire for change.

One must know when to stop.
Knowing when to stop avert trouble.

He who knows he has enough is rich.
Perseverance is a sign of will power.
He who stays where he is endures.
To die but not to perish is to be eternally present.

If men are not afraid to die,
It is of no avail to threaten them with death.

The great Dao flows everywhere, both to the left and to the right.
The ten thousand things depend upon it; it holds nothing back.
It fulfills its purpose silently and makes no claim.[11]

Daoism as a Religion

Daoism, with its firm belief in simplicity, is ironically an extremely abstract and mystical philosophy. Daoists speak of the usefulness of the useless, the importance of the unimportant, the intelligence of the stupid, and the sight of the sightless, which are all concepts that are hard for the ordinary people to grasp. As the philosophy permeated the society, the philosophy got transformed to become more appealing to the common people. For one thing, many of the notions of the indefinite nature got impersonated. Finite human sages and gods with magic power were created to make it easier to comprehend. Gradually it became a religion that promised, among other things, to be capable of exorcising the spirits and pacifying the dead. In fact, it became to a large extent a brokerage between the living and the dead. It engaged more and more in ritualistic practices such as selecting lucky days for weddings and funerals. Temples and shrines were set up and Daoist monks came into being. The claim of knowledge about the world after life and ability to placate the dead made them very popular among Chinese, who, like any other peoples, are in constant fear of death. In fact, much of the ritual and divination practices of the Chinese can be attributed to this school of Daoism.

Yin Yang Cosmology — Laws of Nature and Human Body

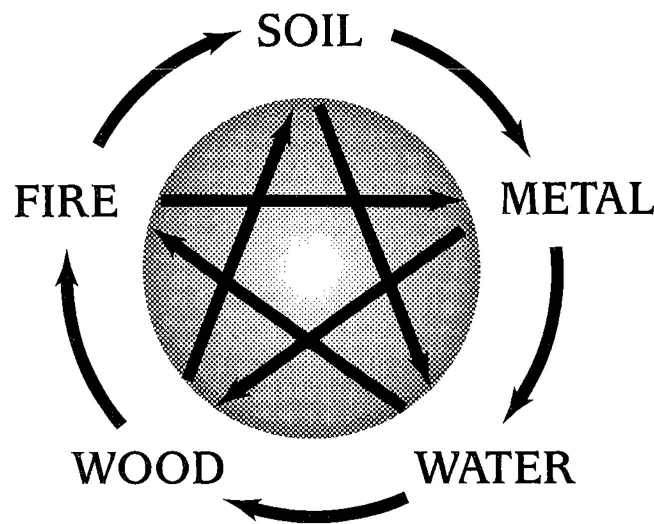
The Yin-Yang Dualism

The belief in the *Yin-Yang* [陰陽] cosmic forces and Five Elements and their interaction had existed long before Confucius and Lao's time. *Yi Jing* [易經] (The Book of Changes) is the authority of this school of thought. The Yin-Yang dualism depicts a natural phenomenon. The Yin and Yang signify the shadowy and sunny sides of the same object and indicate the two sides of the same existence. Everything in the world has these two diametrically opposite forces which interact and complement each other. This forms the foundation of all beings of the universe, including humankind. Thus the universe has heaven and earth, day and night, the sun and moon, land and ocean, and humankind has male and female, the strong and weak, the virtue and vice, the old and young, the healthy and sick, and life and death.

The Yin-Yang duet manifests in the body in terms of a number of dimensions, the major ones being hot and cold, and wetness and dryness. When one element becomes excessive, the body loses equilibrium and illness results. Most food and medicine are classified as hot, cold, or neutral. When the body is skewing toward the cold, hot food and medicine must be taken to restore the balance, and vice versa. Similarly, some food and herbal medicine are used to balance off excessive dankness while others taken to replenish wetness to the body.

The Five Elements

The ancient Chinese believed that the world was made up of five elements, each of which was related to others in a cyclic fashion of reciprocal generation and reciprocal conquer. The generation relationship goes this way: fire produces ashes (soil), soil produces ores (metal), metal when melted produces liquid (water), water nourishes wood, and wood produces fire. The conquer relationship goes this way: fire melts metal, metal cuts wood, wood digs into soil, soil dams water, and water quenches fire.[12] The following figure illustrates these relationships.



Generation relationship:	**Fire → Soil → Metal → Water → Wood → Fire**
Conquest relatiohship:	**Fire → Metal → Wood → Soil → Water → Fire**

The term used for the five elements is *Wu Xin* [五行] (five movements or five goings), which depicts more a force or process than a static element. This augments the notion that the ancient Chinese saw the worldly materials more as dynamic force than as static substance. Graham prefers the term "Five Processes".[13] In a startling similarity, The Chinese consider the body organs (heart, liver, spleen, lungs, kidneys, etc.) more as functions than as body parts.

The five elements cycle re-affirms the impermanency in the universe where nothing is unconquerable and remains in power for ever. A person is always a part of that cycle where he or she is at the same time superior and inferior to others.