

# Religion of Chinese-- Three Forms of Worship

Chinese theology is one of the most complex subjects under the sun. In fact, to speak of a Chinese system of theology is impossible, as there are three systems so engrafted upon one another as to leave the student in doubt as to the lines of demarcation between them. But one fact stands out with startling clearness, and that is that the popular idea of the Chinese idol worship is a popular delusion.

Students of Oriental religions have endeavored to prove that the primitive religion of China was the natural religion, or the worship of nature. Others have insisted that it was of western origin, a form of hero worship carried from the banks of the Caspian sea, which is generally accepted as the cradle of the Chinese races. Whatever may have been its primitive form, it is now one of the most intricate and artificial of religions.

The three forms recognized by the natives of China are the Buddhist, the Confucian and the Taoist, but in practice the forms of these religions are so blended as to be practically indistinguishable and none of them has the force of a living faith upon those who profess to believe in their dogmas.

The one active form of faith permitted by the laws of all three of the recognized religions and encouraged by the state is ancestor worship. This worship amounts to but veneration of a quality higher than is known to the Occidental world, but which, in the minds of the educated, is as distinct from worship as is the definition of the words in the mind of Europeans. As explained by an educated Chinese resident in this country, the theory of ancestor worship is based upon the love and affection held by the father for his family.

"In all countries parental love is recognized by law," said the believer. "In this country a father who assists at the escape of his son from the hands of justice cannot be punished, although another in his place would be considered an accomplice. In China this feeling is stronger. Without doubt the Mongolian races are the firmest believers in a state of future existence of any of the races of the earth. There has never been a Chinese sect which denied this dogma.

"We believe that the natural affection of the parent is as strong after death as it is before dissolution and that the parent watches over his children and his children's children forever. At the same time we believe that the parent is moved after death by natural impulses and if the children disregard the will of the parent he will in time give his offspring over to punishment, even as he would have punished them on earth for disobedience. As we believe this, we endeavor to show the spirits of our departed ancestors that they have not been forgotten. For this purpose we hold festivals, during which we commemorate the virtues of the departed, and if the words we use indicate worship in any sense you must remember that the practice of ancestor worship is older than the Hebrew worship of Jehovah, and, while the Chinese language is said to be crystallized, it was not always so. In 6,000 years even Chinese words have slightly changed their meaning.

"As an incentive to a lively feeling of the real presence of our forefathers in our home, we have carved, from bone, or wood, or ivory, images of our ancestors. These are set up in our houses and while seated or standing before the image we endeavor to feel as though we were in the presence of the departed. True, these figures may not be true images of the ancestor, but

of departed friends which they hold priceless?"

"But my people believe in good and bad spirits. The spirits of departed ancestors are the guardian angels of the household. They fight the evil spirits who would throw their influence about their descendants, and encourage the visits of the good angels. When a man has so far forgotten his fathers as to drive their spirits from his home we expect that he will fall victim to all forms of accident and misfortune.

"The religions of China impose cleanliness upon their followers. Even Buddhism has been so altered that a dirty fakir receives no praise. Before sacrificing to the gods the devotee is required to bathe several times and to devote the day before his sacrifice to purging his body and mind of all uncleanness."

According to the prevailing religions of the country, China has one great and overruling god, a being omnipotent and omniscient, but not omnipresent. He is supposed to be subject to the laws of time and space and, as such, requires assistants in carrying out his will. According to the civil law of China no one is permitted to address the supreme god except the emperor, because this god is too busy to be troubled with anything less important than the fate of the empire or the destinies of the family of the Son of Heaven.

For this reason a number of inferior gods are endowed with more or less of divine attributes, for the purpose of hearing the wishes of the people and granting such blessings as in their power to bestow. In the language of the native quoted above, "the supreme ruler and these lesser gods are like the president of the United States and his cabinet. There are some things which the cabinet officer can hear and determine and some which must be submitted to the head of all departments."

These gods are often the spirits of heroes who have become famous on earth before their advent in the Pantheon. The last of them was deified centuries ago. When he died his body was found upon the side of a hill, where his earthly friends were guided by his spirit. It was then learned that his body had been filled with a divine spirit and under the name which he bore on earth he is worshipped. His image can be found in all of the temples in the land. He is Quan Ku, the war god.

In naming the gods of China it is well to know that each province has a name of its own and each religion has a different name for the same god. The names given here are those of the educated Chinaman who identified the bronze gods of the Flowery Kingdom now in the bonded ware-



WEI LOUONG WONG—KING OF THE SEA.

house of the United States in Omaha, photographs of which are given.

These images are those of gods of the accepted Buddhist form and there is a slight difference in the orthodox figures of the gods of the same power in the other religions, although the people in China worship all indifferently.

Of the eighteen principal gods represented in the collection the most important is Daw Fah, the creator, who is the oldest god of all of the assistants. His eyebrows are long and white and he holds the ends in his hands. His work is completed and he spends his time in contemplation.

The woman's god is Quen Youn, "madam of the sand," she who presides over all waste places. As the patroness of the home as well, husbands and wives worship at her shrine. Before her transition to heaven she was the daughter of a mandarin and became famous as a wife and mother.

The god with the dragon is Whi Leoung Wong, the king of the sea. In life he was a famous marine and invented the compass for the use of sailors.

Holding a trumpet to his ear is Yin Je, the Mercury of the Chinese system. He was a mighty leader in battle, a god-sent

adjutant of Quan Ku, the warrior whose victories on earth have given him a place in the Chinese Pantheon. At present he listens to the petitions of the people and lays them before the most high.

Most of the Chinese gods are supposed to have visited the earth at different times, becoming incarnate to teach some principle or demonstrate some truth. Hein Tsin, however, has always remained in his celestial abode and appears to be a sort of janitor of the celestial mansion. His name indicates "the God of Heaven."

The Chinese believe in salvation by works and that every good and evil act is recorded; that by the balance shown upon the ledger on the last day they go to their reward or punishment. A god keeps this record, Tuen Booh. In all of his images he holds a book in his hands, upon which appears a record.

In the land of the hills Fong Sing is one of the most popular of the gods. He is god of the mountains, a sort of Oriental Saint Julian who guides and guards the traveler. Oblations to Fong Sing and to Whi Leoung Wong are always offered by those who leave China for the land of the false foreign devils.

The titular divinity of the medical profession, Wah Ho, "he who heals," numbers his shrines among the most popular in the Flowery Kingdom, and many cures are attributed to his power.

Loe Sing and Foh Sing are the gods of thunder and lightning respectively. They ride upon the storm and are great friends of Suey Tsin, the rain god. It is this Suey Tsin who is causing most of the trouble in China with the missionaries and foreigners. He is believed to be a very patriotic god and a stickler for the rights of the members of the heavenly corps. According to his priests in northern China he has withheld the rain because the people are beginning to worship the gods of the Occident. Other priests say he will make a desert of the fields because the products thereof are enriching the merchants of other countries. According to either theory this god desires the deportation or extermination of the foreigners and the reconversion or death of the native Christians. He is the prince god of the Boxer today and the members of this brotherhood insist that he has



QUAN KU—GOD OF WAR.

made them invulnerable in their fight against the foreign foe.

Fong Sing is the fourth great storm god, he who presides over the wind. Usually he is a pleasant god, but he is often imposed upon by Suey Tsin, Loe Sing and Foh Sing, who climb upon his shoulders and make him carry them. His efforts to shake them off cause the tornado and the hurricane.

The god of the earth is Ai Dong Wong. He has power over all organic and inorganic life upon this globe. The animals are under his especial care and he carries a crook with which he guides them. He is a powerful god, as he protects his worshippers from death by wild beasts.

The second goddess of the Chinese Pantheon is Suey Weyh, the goddess of mercy, with special care for children, for whom she pleads with the other gods to alter their rigorous edicts in favor of those who devote themselves to her. She is goddess of the deathbed and the orthodox Chinaman holds her in the highest esteem.

The great protecting god is Bow Tsin. He took upon himself the form of man to teach the beauties of a pious life and its advantages. When he ascended to heaven his body was found upon a bleak rock and the images in his temples today are supposed to be reproductions of his mortal form.

The points of the compass also have deities dedicated to them. The principal one, Gong Tsin, the God of the North, holds in his hands the ice and snow. His reign is marked with merciless rigor and he is worshipped through fear and not through love.

Each of the gods mentioned have seasons set aside for their particular worship, but one is to be worshipped at all times. He is Hi Suey, the god of the year, or "he who presides over time."

The messenger god is Dow Mon Tsin. In his image he is represented as tying the strings of his sandal. He brings the blessings of the other gods to man and is frequently accused of being a "corble mes-

senger," who fails to bring the blessing to its destination.

The images photographed were sent to the Omaha exposition by a Chinese company, but were not taken out of the bonded warehouse because of the high duty. They are of papier mache, heavily bronzed. The whole lot invoiced in China at \$300 Mexican and are said to be perfect samples of Chinese art.

## Told Out of Court

Lord Russell of Killowen, late chief justice of England, has left behind him not only sympathetic memories, but a lot of anecdotes. Some of his mots are going the rounds of the press. Presuming on his long experience with the lord chief justice, a correspondent ventured to ask him only a couple of months ago how so active a jurist spent the wearisome hours of his frequent railway journeys and his reply was:

"Sometimes in reading, sometimes talking, sometimes dreaming—never smoking." Though an excellent raconteur, Lord Russell was not among the acknowledged wits of the bar. One of his mots has, however, attained some celebrity.

"What," asked a legal friend in a hurry



HI SUEY—GOD OF TIME.

in court one day, "is the maximum punishment for bigamy?"

"A second mother-in-law," was the reply.

Lord Russell was an enthusiast at the game of whist. An amusing story is told of him apropos of this weakness. His lordship was a guest at one of the Saturday night dinners of the Savage club and after the dinner, in accordance with custom, there was an impromptu performance by members. One of these, a well known conjurer, on being called on solemnly crossed the room, stood in front of the lord chief justice and invited him to a game of nap. There was general laughter—Savages had heard whispers of his lordship's delight in cards—but the guest of the evening nodded a grave head and picked up the hand which had been dealt to him, after he had shuffled and cut the cards.

"I go nap," he said, and he led the ace, king, queen and knave of clubs, to which his adversary followed suit. Then he played the nine, on which the other promptly placed the ten.

"The law is powerless among Savages," said the lord chief justice, and begged for a comic song.

There was a lull in the court proceedings, reports the Detroit Free Press, and the lawyers were telling stories to while away the time. This is the story that one of them told:

"When I look back at it now I am lost in admiration of my own nerve. But, after all, there is a good deal of bluff that goes to make up this struggle for existence that we call life. I am afraid that if we come down to a close analysis we will find that we are trying to create the impression that we are of more importance than we really are.

"My first case came to me after many days of weary waiting. One day when I had about given up all hope of ever getting a client I was sitting in my office gazing absently out of the window and wondering if I had not made a mistake by not making a farmer of myself, as my father wanted me to do. From where I sat I could see the office of the only other lawyer in the place, an old man who had a firm hold of all the law business in the town and evidently proposed to keep it.

"While I sat there thinking what a hard world this is I saw a well known citizen of the town leave the old man's office. It was very evident that he was mad and when he charged across the street in the direction of my office my heart leaped into my mouth. Hastily throwing every legal looking paper that I possessed on the desk before me I buried my nose in them and the party had to speak to me three times before I heard him.

"I'm through with that old fool across

the street," he roared, when I looked up at last, "and I want you—"

"Excuse me," I broke in. "I am very busy—call tomorrow—no, I'll be busy then—let's see, call a week from today at 3 o'clock. Good morning!"

"When he left I broke out into a cold sweat at my own audacity and for the life of me I couldn't remember whether he had promised to call or not. But he did, and neither one of us had cause to regret it



QUEN YOUN—MADAM OF THE SAND.

afterward. It was a cold bluff and it won out. But I wouldn't dare do it again under the same conditions."

## Short and Pointed

There is a little settlement of New Hampshire people in Kiowa county, Colorado. Among other things they brought with them the New Hampshire aversion to using any more words in conversation than are absolutely necessary. Two of them met on the road recently and indulged in the following dialogue:

"Mornin', Si."  
"Mornin', Josh."  
"What'd you give your horse for bots?"  
"Turpentine."  
"Mornin'."  
"Mornin'."

A few days later the men met again and here's the way a hard luck story was told in mighty few words:

"Mornin', Si."  
"Mornin', Josh."  
"What'd you say you gave your horse for bots?"  
"Turpentine."  
"Killed mine."  
"Mine, too."  
"Mornin'."  
"Mornin'."

## A Mighty Rich Man

A writer in the Outlook describes a ride he once took with an old farmer in a New England village, during which some of the men of the neighborhood came under criticism. "Speaking of a prominent man in the village, I said: 'He is a man of means?' 'Well, sir,' the farmer replied, 'he hasn't got much money, but he's mighty rich.' He has a great deal of land, then?" I asked. "No, sir, he hasn't got much land, either, but he is mighty rich." The old farmer, with a pleased smile, observed my puzzled look for a moment, and then explained: "You see, he hasn't got much money, and he hasn't got much land, but still he is rich, because he never went to bed owing any man a cent in all his life. He lives as well as he wants to live, and he pays as he goes; he doesn't owe anything and he isn't afraid of anybody; he tells every man the truth, and does his duty by himself, his family and his neighbors; his word is as good as his bond, and every man, woman and child in the town looks up to him and respects him. No, sir, he hasn't got much land, but he's a mighty rich man, because he's got all he wants."

## Holds the Record

Pittsburg Chronicle Telegraph: "Your Majesty, Sunshine of the Universe," said the Mandarin of Nineteen Buttonholes, as he prostrated himself before the emperor of China, "a bunch of newspapers has reached your temporary capital. Will you deign to hear the news of the outside world?"

"What is the chief item of interest?" asked the monarch, languidly. "Are Europe and America sending more troops to the Flowery Kingdom?"

"They are, O, Royal Sunflower," replied the courtier. "Another item that may interest you," Rainbow of the Orient, is the news that the king of Italy has been assassinated."

"Has he?" replied Kwang Su, with a deep show of interest. "Still," he added, though speaking in a modest manner, "I believe that I hold the record in the monarch mortuary line."



YIN JE—CHINESE MERCURY.

what of that? It simply means that our artists have not reached a degree of proficiency where they can reproduce exact likenesses. I have even seen photographic caricatures in America. And has not every American family a lot of pictures