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|  | Chinese Folk Religion |
| Founder | 1250 BC (evidence) possibly 7000 BCE. |
| Where and When founded |  |
| About the founder | Shang people (?) |
| Founder’s birth culture | N/A (not applicable) |
| Influenced by | Animism - Animism is the belief that spirits or souls dwell within nature (people, objects, natural effects) "animating" them (giving them life). This may imply that things are 'ensouled' or 'animated' by a universal 'world soul', or by individual spirits of various kinds.  Today it refers to the belief that inanimate objects mostly in nature e.g. rocks, trees, thunder, mountains…have spirits. In Asia, the word often refers specifically to the idea that rivers, mountain, trees, and so forth were originally parts of immortal beings.  Shamanism - The animist belief that some people among them are able to communicate directly with plants, minerals, and animals; to journey deep into the earth, or visit distant galaxies. They were able to invoke, through dance and ritual, elemental and supernatural powers, and enter into ecstatic union with them. The class of people most adept at such techniques became known as the wu – the shamans of ancient China. Shamans are magician-religious professionals who deliberately alter their consciousness in order to obtain information from the 'spirit world.' They use this knowledge and power to help and to heal members of their community, as well as the community as a whole  These are traditional belief systems which consider the entire universe to be alive and interconnected. |
| Symbols | Yin Yang  Here is how the symbol was created and what it represents: <http://beholders.org/mind/artshistoryculture/100-meaningyinyang.html> Click through and read the article. |
| Texts | I Ching – Book of Changes – ( 2,000 BCE - 0 BCE)  The text of the I Ching is a set of oracular (predictive) statements represented by 64 sets of six lines each called [hexagrams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hexagram_%28I_Ching%29) (卦 guà). Each hexagram is a figure composed of six stacked horizontal lines (爻 yáo), each line is either [Yang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_Yang) (an unbroken, or solid line), or [Yin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_Yang) (broken, an open line with a gap in the center). With six such lines stacked from bottom to top there are 26 or 64 possible combinations, and thus 64 hexagrams represented. (see below)  Yin and Yang (the ideas of the dynamic balance of opposites) and acceptance of the inevitability of change.  http://users.skynet.be/lotus/trigram/images/trigra10.gifhttp://2.bp.blogspot.com/-rKmffUGEwQs/T4CZ8-kQkSI/AAAAAAAAFc4/g7opbakakOA/s1600/I+Ching+20001.jpg |
| Main Concepts, Philosophy and practice | **Inclusiveness**: Unlike many other religions, Chinese folk religion places no emphasis on exclusivity or on doctrine. Due to the lack of exclusivity, practitioners of Chinese folk religion may easily practice other religions such as Taoism or Buddhism.  **After Death**: Chinese philosophy concentrates on the operation of natural law and on living well in this existence, rather in some later life. This focus resulted in the practice of herbal medicines and magical potions, as well as ritualistic breathing and gymnastic exercise, all to become hsien, or immortal. Long life is much valued as proof of good, orderly living.  **Qi** – the life force or energy,however its meaning can vary depending on the context in which it is used .see Taoism  **Five Elements**: Belief in wu-hsing, or the five elements (earth, water, fire, metal, and wood) understood to be the prime energetic building blocks from which all material substance in the phenomenal world is composed. They are the basic elements making up the world, and constantly move and change in relation to each other. The doctrines of Yin and Yang and five elements can be understood as the basis of the Chinese understanding of the nature of the cosmos. The important point is that things that relate to human activity and the activity of nature are woven together. Wu-hsing explains how systems of the body relate to each other. Imbalances in the relationship between elements create illness and disease. The elements also explain the relationships believed to exist between the human body and the environment. Together with yin and yang these were the basis of Chinese cosmologies in the period 403 bc to ad 220, and could be interpreted in medicine and in ritual and colour.  (According to the ancient Indian knowledge, the Five Elements - or the five pillars of Creation - are the building blocks of the universe. In order, the elements are: Earth, Fire, Sky, Water and Air. Planets, animals, rocks, fauna, humans, and even our thoughts are composed of the Five Elements. Every particle of Creation is made of these building blocks. Without any one of the five, the universe would cease to exist. It is our job as humans to balance our individual elements and those of the planet. When the elements are out of balance, disease, stress, violence, depression, lack of clarity, and unhappiness can occur.)  **Divination**: The reading of the Yin and Yang patterns in nature resulted in developing a series of trigrams (A figure composed of three solid or interrupted parallel lines, especially as used in Chinese philosophy or divination according to the I Ching) and hexagrams(same as trigram using 6 lines), which formed the basis for the I, Ching, or Book of Changes. One way in which ancient divination practices have survived is through Chinese astrology. Chinese astrology is related to the Chinese calendar, particularly its 12-year cycle of animals (in the Chinese zodiac), and **the fortune-telling aspects**.  **Talisman** - An object with markings or pictures and believed to confer on its bearer supernatural powers or protection. The Chinese Talismans (now Taoist) Called "FU" in China are enchantment tools. Fu's can be used to invoke gods, protect a household, improve your business, attract wealth, enhance relationship, curse or hex an enemy, dispelled sorcery, activating good "Chi", dissolve a bone lodged on throat, arrest bleedings, prevent burglary, prenatal protection, etc... |
| Deities | There are hundreds of Chinese Deities (local gods and goddesses) as well as [demigods](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demigod), saints and immortals.  Deities that are worshiped in Chinese folk religion are often related to money, fortune, or destiny.  They may also be related to more common aspects of nature, such as the sun, the moon, the land, mountains, trees are also worshiped. Deities are often thought to reside in such places. Temples are erected for these deities around sacred places and in cities.  Emperors and Historical figures noted for their bravery or virtue (sages) are also venerated and honored with their own temples and sometimes festivals after they are apotheosized.    One common type of Chinese deity is the "place god" or T'u-ti (Pinyin: Tudi). The primary characteristic of a place god is the limitation of his jurisdiction to a specific location, like a bridge, home, street, or field. A T'u-ti is always subject to the Ch'eng Huang, the spiritual magistrate of the city.  A T'u-ti is often a deified historical person who had assisted a specific community during his lifetime. It is believed that if the person is deified and sacrificed to, he will be moved to continue his assistance from the spirit world. If misfortunes occur in a location dedicated to a T'u-ti, the T'u-ti is believed to have lost interest and a new patron is chosen. Gods of Chinese folk religion are counterparts of humanity. Their domain, tien or heaven, is a mirror image of earth. The gods have social hierarchies: the Jade Emperor is the counterpart of the earthly emperor, and his subjects the lesser gods, observe the social protocols as strictly as their earthly counterparts. The gods also live variously in palaces or households much in the same way as the people who worship them and they frequently exhibit very human foibles. They also influence historical human events.  [Click here to learn more about the Jade Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jade_Emperor) and origin of Chinese zodiac |
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| Rituals | Incense - "Joss" is a corrupted version of the Portuguese word for "god", *deus*. [Joss sticks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joss_stick) i.e. [incense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incense), are burned inside and outside of the house. (see Taoism, below)  **Ancestral Veneration:** Ancestors are venerated and rituals are performed on their behalf so that ancestral spirits might be persuaded to equally aid their living descendants on earth.  Offerings - Offerings to ancestors or deities are still often performed. Paper replicas —especially of money —are burned in order to send these sacrifices to deities, spirits, and ancestors for use in their world. |
| Influenced | Taoism, Chinese Buddhism, Neighboring People’s Religions |
| Center and Sacred Sites | In Chinese folk religion Miao is mostly associated to temples which enshrine nature gods and patron gods (protecting certain geography, people, activity…). Ci is the term for temples enshrining ancestry gods, human beings apotheosized as gods. The name "joss house" describes the environment of worship. Joss sticks, a kind of incense, are burned inside and outside of the house. |
| No of followers | 454 million (30% of Chinese Population) – Wikipedia. |
| Schools/Versions | N/A |
| Geography | China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, |
| Festivals |  |

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|  | Taoism |  |  |  |
| Founder | Lao Tzu (*Teacher*) 500-600 BCE  Zhuang Zhou( *Master Zhuang*) 369 - 286 BCE | | | |
| Where and When founded | Shandong Province, East China | | | |
| About the founder | Lao Tzu spent most of his life as an archivist in the library of the Zhou Dynasty court. On seeing corruption in the court he left and travelled west. He was persuaded by a gatekeeper to write down his teachings. | | | |
| Founder’s birth culture | Chinese Folk Religion | | | |
| Influenced by | Chinese Folk Religion, which it has co-opted. (see right)  Considered a contemporary of Confucianism. Early Taoist texts reject the basic assumptions of Confucianism which relied on rituals and order, in favour of following intuition, nature and individualism  Later, Taoism incorporated Buddhist elements (during the [Tang period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_period) 618 - 907), such as monasteries, vegetarianism, prohibition of alcohol, the doctrine of emptiness, and collecting scripture in tripartite organization. (see below “influenced”) | | | |
| Main Spreader (s) | Emperors of China 215 CE to 1368 CE | | | |
| Texts | *Lao Tzu wrote Daode Jing (Tao Te Ching)*  Zhuang Zhou Zhuangzi( *Master Zhuang*)  The *Daode Jing* (translated here by Stephen Mitchell) opens with the following lines:  *The tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name. The unnamable is the eternally real. Naming is the origin of all particular things.*  The Daozang (道藏, Treasury of Tao) is also referred to as the Taoist canon which includes over 1500 texts compiled during the [Jin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jin_Dynasty_%28265-420%29) 265-420, [Tang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_Dynasty), and [Song](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Dynasty) (960 -1279) dynasties. | | | |
| Main Concepts, Philosophy and practice | Philosophy:  **Harmony** - Taoist philosophy proposes that the universe works harmoniously. One must place your will in harmony with the natural universe [[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism#cite_note-autogenerated4-52)  **Tao** – the way and the force (of existence)  **Wu Wei** – go with the flow of nature, intuitive living arrived at by keeping the rhythm with nature (the tao) where you live.  **Breathing and meditation** – help you to hear nature’s rhythm.  [**“aimless wandering”**](http://taoism.about.com/od/wuwei/ht/wandering.htm) through the natural world – a practice that teaches us how to communicate with the spirits of trees, rocks, mountains and flowers.  **Physical Exercise and ritual** is aimed at aligning oneself with the pulse of nature and through good health, good diet and herb formulas achieving immortality. (see Folk Religion) Enlightened and immortal beings are referred to as [xian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xian_%28Taoism%29) (hsien).  **Qi**, the life force or energy,however its meaning can vary depending on the context in which it is used. Taoism has an entire philosophy around Qi.  Qi Gong – breathing techniques  Inner Alchemy – the act of gathering, storing and circulating the energies of the human body.  Shaminism - In shamanistic cultures, all adults are responsible for their relationships with spiritual energies, including those of their home environment (geography, animals, and plant life,) their ancestors, their own personal helping spirits …  In the practice of Feng Shui or another Taoist practices Four Heavenly Creatures, four mythological creatures in the Chinese constellations, are needed. They are:- Azure Dragon of the East (青龍)- Vermilion Bird Phoenix, Garuda) of the South (朱雀)- White Tiger of the West (白虎)- Black or Dark Tortoise of the North (玄武) Each one of them represents a direction and a season of the year, and each has its own individual characteristics and origins. They have been portrayed in many historical Chinese and Korean myths and fiction, and also appear in many modern Japanese comic books and animation. In ancient China, the tortoise and the snake were thought to be spiritual creatures symbolizing longevity  Zung Saang Gei - is when a piece of hair is placed in a particular fung shui location in an attempt to extend a person's life.  **The three treasures or jewels** - kindness, simplicity (or the absence of excess), and modesty  Pu - freeing oneself from selfishness and desire, and appreciating simplicity.  . | | | |
| Deities | Taoist deities include nature spirits, ancient legendary heroes, humanized planets and stars, humans who became immortal through Taoist practices, and [animals](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/animals_symbolism.htm) such as dragons, tigers, and snakes. All human activities—even such things as drunkenness and robbery—are represented by deities as well.  Popular ("religious") Daoism typically presents the [Jade Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jade_Emperor) as the official head [deity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deity). Intellectual ("elite") Daoists usually present Laozi (Laojun, "Lord Lao") and the [Three Pure Ones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Pure_Ones) at the top of the pantheon of deities.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lao_tzu#cite_note-28)[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lao_tzu#cite_note-29)  Below the Three Purities, the emanations of Tao are a mass of deities such as the Jade Emperor, the Four Heavenly Emperors and the Five Emperors of the Five Directions, and the immortals who humans can become through self-cultivation. Deities and immortals, models in achieving Tao, make it their duty to teach and redeem all creatures, and are therefore worshiped by the Taoism followers.  See <http://www.china.org.cn/english/daodejingforum/208124.htm> | | | |
| Symbols | Yin and Yang |  |  |  |
| Rituals | **Ancestors and gods**  Food is set out to sprits of the deceased ancestors and gods  Special money is burned believing that this transfers it to the ancestors who need money where they are.  Street Parades with people dressed in masks of gods and spirits. It is believed that these people are now possessed by the gods and spirits they represent.  Divination including Yijing (I-ching) and contact with spirits and Astrology (birth date related fortune)  **Qi - energy**  An acupuncturist diagnoses energetic imbalances, and works to re-establish free-flowing qi in the human body;  The practitioner of [Feng Shui](http://taoism.about.com/od/glossaryoftaoistterms/g/fengshui.htm) perceives energetic imbalances in natural or man-made landscapes or events. More on Feng Shui - <http://www.himavanti.org/en/c/healing/feng-shui-qi-taoism-astrology-and-qigong> (excellent article)  **Incense**- The practice of offering incense, with a bow, to the Taoist altar is called Baibai.  As the incense burns, smoke rises, and ashes fall. The ashes represent impure air that sinks; the smoke, pure air that rises. So the offering represents the separation of pure from impure - the refinement and purification of internal energies.  It also symbolizes the human body as being the meeting-place of Heaven and Earth: as the smoke rises, and the ashes fall, we make a connection with both earth and sky.  **The Taoist Altar & Taoist Cosmology**: All of [Taoist cosmology](http://taoism.about.com/od/cosmology/a/Cosmology.htm) is represented in the Taoist altar: Tao (as the Sacred Lamp) giving birth to Yin and Yang (the two candles), out of which arise the Five Elements (the five plates and bowls), which are the constituents of the “10,000 things.”  **The Inner Alchemical "Path of Return":** The burning of incense represents the purification of [Jing, Qi and Shen](http://taoism.about.com/od/internalalchemy/a/three_treasures.htm), which balances the [Five Elements](http://taoism.about.com/od/thefiveelements/p/Five_Element.htm). This balancing of the Five Elements frees the virtues, and empowers the Deities of the organs. Finally, [Yin and Yang](http://taoism.about.com/od/daojiadaojiao/a/daojia.htm) are unified, allowing the Light of our Primordial Wisdom (the Sacred Lamp) to shine forth unobstructed. | | | |
| Influenced | Co-opted Chinese Folk Practice into Taoist doctrine  Buddhism's scriptures were translated into Chinese using the Taoist vocabulary.[[121]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism#cite_note-121)  Chan Buddhism was particularly modified by Taoism, integrating distrust of scripture, text and even language, as well as the Taoist views of embracing "this life", dedicated practice and the "every-moment".[[122]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism#cite_note-122) Chan Buddhism is the largest Buddhist sect in China. | | | |
| Center and Sacred Sites | Chinese Taoist Association, Quanzhen, China  Sacred Sites: Grotto Heavens are sacred caves in each community; Mount Penglai, a mythological land | | | |
| No of followers | +400 million in China and Taiwan. A third of the total population. | | | |
| Schools/Versions |  |  |  |  |
| Festivals |  |  |  |  |

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|  | **Confucianism** |  |  |  |
| Founder | Confucius (551–479 BCE) |  |  |  |
| Where and When founded | Lu State, near present-day [Qufu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qufu), [Shandong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shandong) Province, China | | | |
| About the founder |  | | | |
| Founder’s birth culture | Chinese Folk Traditions | | | |
| Influenced by | Confucius's principles had a basis in common Chinese folk tradition and belief. | | | |
| Main Spreader (s) | Many students (disciples) who became political officials.  Mencius 372 – 289 BCE a follower and writer on Confucian ideals.  Following the victory of [Han](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_dynasty) over [Chu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chu-Han_Contention) after the collapse of Qin Dynasty 202 BC, Confucius's thoughts received official sanction and were further developed into a system known as [Confucianism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism).  The works of Confucius were made the official imperial philosophy and required reading for civil service examinations in 140 BC which was continued nearly unbroken until 1905.  Zhu Xi 1130 – 1200 CE the leading figure of the School of Principle and the most influential rationalist [Neo-Confucian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Confucianism) in [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China). His synthesis of all fundamental Confucian concepts formed the basis of Chinese bureaucracy and government for over 700 years  father [Prospero Intorcetta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prospero_Intorcetta) published the life and works of Confucius into [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) in 1687 influencing many thinkers of the Enlightenment.[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius#cite_note-parker77-25-36)[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius#cite_note-37) | | | |
| Texts | the [Five Classics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Books_and_Five_Classics) by Confucius were the basic texts of Confucianism.  the [Classic of Filial Piety](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classic_of_Filial_Piety), (C3 BCE) | | | |
| Main Concepts, Philosophy and practice | Filial Piety – respect for parents living and dead (veneration of ancestors). Filial piety is now built into Chinese law. People have the responsibility to provide for their elderly parents according to the law.  Confucius did not provide many moral precepts; rather he taught an attitude toward one's fellow humans of respect, particularly respect for one's parents, teachers, and elders.  .  His teachings are summarised as Ren,Yi,Li. Act with:  Reciprocity and Empathy (Ren) – “What you do not wish for yourself, do not do unto others”. Ren is an obligation of [altruism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altruism) and humaneness for other individuals within a community. He also encouraged his students to learn from everyone they encountered and to honor others' cultural norms  Righteousness (Yi) – act to do good not only out of self-interest  li is a system of norms and [propriety](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appropriate) that determines how a person should properly act within a community.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism#cite_note-craig2-4)  Ideal person - cultivate themselves morally; show filial piety and loyalty where these are due; cultivate humanity, or benevolence. 5 basic virtues of benevolence: seriousness, generosity, sincerity, diligence and kindness. And act with due Moderation – the golden mean.  Vile person - petty in mind and heart, narrowly self-interested, greedy, superficial, or materialistic.  a virtuous woman - subordinate to father, husband and son, on death of husband  Divination: Reject divination believing that the future results of our actions were a function of our personal virtues.  Culture  Importance of mutual duty within a relationship vs. law. Political culture based on social responsibility and trust not coercion and fear.  Meritocracy seek knowledge, study, and become a better person. replacing nobility of blood with nobility of virtue.  Ying and Yan – philosophy of change.  Poetry and Music – convey human feelings and mutual responsiveness. | | | |
| Deities | The focus of spiritual concern is this world and the family, not the gods and not the afterlife. | | | |
| Symbols |  |  |  |  |
| Rituals | Encourages the practice of [Chinese folk religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_folk_religion) e.g. Ancestor Worship to ensure social harmony. | | | |
| Influenced |  |  |  |  |
| Center and Sacred Sites | Shrine in Confucius birth city Qui | | | |
| No of followers |  | | | |
| Schools/Versions | No formal schools. Confucian thought is learnt and influences people and behavior but it is not a separate religion. No-one today calls themself a Confusionist. | | | |
| Geography |  | | | |
| Festivals |  | | | |

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|  | **Chinese Buddhism – Mahayana Buddhism** | | | |
| Founder | Siddhartha Gautama | | | |
| Where and When founded | Nepal 500 – 600 BCE. Buddhism was first brought to China from India by missionaries and traders along the Silk Road that connected China with Europe in the late Han Dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD). | | | |
| About the founder | See Indian Religions | | | |
| Founder’s birth culture | Hindu | | | |
| Influenced by | Zen Buddhism (see “Schools” below) influenced by Taoism. | | | |
| Main Spreader (s) |  | | | |
| Texts | Theravada Buddhists regard the Tipitaka as the complete teachings of Buddha. Mahayana Buddhists also use the Tipitaka, but they regard the Mahayana sutras, or journals of the Buddha, as more important. | | | |
| Main Concepts, Philosophy and practice | In Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are **many buddhas**, and each buddha has a pure land (Paradise).  **Nirvana** (also in Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism but differently defined), a state of enlightenment i.e. an end to individual sufferings and desires, which is the goal.  **Samsara** – a state of suffering. i.e. life before Nirvana.  **Deification/Apotheosis** – All people can reach Buddhahood at which point they are revered or worshipped as gods or saints.  **Ultimate Reality** – the world exists only as a mental construction shaped by the senses.  **After Death** – Views differ. Some believe in two alternatives: reincarnation (migration of karma) or Nirvana (no rebirth) as with Hinduism.  **Life is suffering**. One must work to free oneself from worldly cravings, desires, and attachments, through loving-kindness, compassion, charity, moral conduct, wisdom, and meditation. (for more see Buddhism, Indian Religions).  **The Bodhisattva** is the ideal of all Mahayana Buddhists. Bodhisattvas are beings who postpone nirvana (final enlightenment) in order to assist and guide those beings still suffering in the cycle of rebirths. Bodhisattva vow: However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them. However inexhaustible the defilements are, I vow to extinguish them. However immeasurable the dharmas (teachings of the Buddah) are, I vow to master them. However incomparable enlightenment is, I vow to attain it. | | | |
| Deities | The Mahayana developed a vast pantheon of bodhisattvas, Buddhas, and other powerful beings, and a complex array of devotional and meditational practices directed toward them. As the Mahayana moved beyond India, it took typically adopted distinct local cultural characteristics; thus the Mahayana pantheon in China is significantly different than that found in India, or that in Japan. | | | |
| Symbols | Buddhist SymbolsThe Rotund “Laughing Buddah” is based on a Ch’an monk Ch'i-t'zu who according to tradition revealed himself, just before died, to be an incarnation of Maitreya Buddha. Maitreya is named in the [Tripitaka](http://buddhism.about.com/od/thetripitaka/a/tripitakahistor.htm) as the Buddha of a future age.    [Lotus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padma_%28attribute%29) flower. Representing purity and enlightenment.  [Endless knot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endless_knot), or, the [Mandala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandala). Representing eternal harmony.  [Golden Fish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Fish) pair. Representing conjugal happiness and freedom.  [Victory Banner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhvaja). Representing a victorious battle.  [Wheel of Dharma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmachakra) or Chamaru in Nepali Buddhism. Representing knowledge.  [Treasure Vase](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bumpa). Representing inexhaustible treasure and wealth.  [Parasol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chhatra). Representing the crown, and protection from the elements.  [Conch shell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dung-Dkar). Representing the thoughts of the Buddha. | | | |
| Rituals | Meditation  [Mantras](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/practices/mantras.htm) - Sacred sounds believed to embody the power and attributes of particular deities. The best known mantra is that of the beloved deity Avalokiteshvara: [*Om mani padme hum*](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/symbols/om_mani_padme_hum.htm). Tibetan Buddhists chant mantras repeatedly as a part of [meditation](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/practices/meditation.htm), often with the aid of [mala beads](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/things/mala.htm) for counting.  In addition to invoking deities and providing supernatural power, mantras are often used for **protection** from evil and misfortune. They are chanted during large public rituals to avert collective danger and in private rituals to protect individuals against illness or other misfortune. For example, every summer in Kyoto, Japan, children sit in a circle and pass around a large rosary to invoke the protection of the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, guardian of children.  [Mudras](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/symbols/mudras.htm) - Symbolic hand gestures  Tibetian [Prayer Wheels](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/things/prayer_wheel.htm) - Reciting mantras with the turn of a wheel  Veneration of Buddhas and Deities | | | |
| Influenced |  | | | |
| Center and Sacred Sites |  | | | |
| No of followers | The Mahāyāna tradition is the largest major tradition of Buddhism existing today, with 56% of practitioners 100 Million in China. 200 million worldwide. | | | |
| Schools/Versions | Pure Land School (402 CE) – most popular Buddhism in Japan; Pure Land believed that achieving the liberation of Nirvana through a life of monastic austerity was too difficult for most people. All that is required to relieve one’s suffering is to call out the name of Amitabha Buddah with full faith and you will be reborn in Amitabha’s Paradise, the Pure Land. Amitabha Buddah who lived long ago, promised this.  Ch’an or Zen Budddhism (Indian teaches Buddhism at Shaolin Monastery - 600s CE); means "Meditation Buddhism." Enlightenment is attained through meditation, recitation of koans (a paradoxical anecdote or riddle) and interaction with a learned teacher. Practices in China, Vietnam, Korea, Western World. Zen teachings also emphasize the Buddhist teachings of ‘suchness’(beauty of existence) and compassion with all sentient beings.  In Chinese Buddhism, Pure Land practice never became a sect of Buddhism separate from general Mahāyāna practice. In particular, Pure Land and Zen practice are often seen as being mutually compatible, and no strong distinctions are made.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Land_Buddhism#cite_note-faces-33) Chinese Buddhists have traditionally viewed the practice of meditation and the practice of reciting Amitābha Buddha's name, as complementary and even analogous methods for achieving enlightenment.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Land_Buddhism#cite_note-faces-33) This is because they view recitation as a meditation method used to concentrate the mind and purify thoughts.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Land_Buddhism#cite_note-faces-33) Chinese Buddhists widely consider this form of recitation as a very effective form of meditation practice.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Land_Buddhism#cite_note-faces-33)  Tiantai – popular in Japan, is known primarily for its syncretisation of the teachings of many schools. It is also the first Mahayana school to pay special attention to the [Lotus Sutra](http://buddhism.about.com/od/mahayanasutras/a/lotussutra.htm) (scripture). Its key message is that Buddhahood--a condition of absolute happiness, freedom from fear and from all illusions--is inherent in all life. It makes the attainment of enlightenment a possibility open to all people, without distinction based on gender, race, social standing or education.  Huayan – popular in Japan | | | |
| Geography | Tibet, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia. | | | |
| Festivals |  | | | |

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|  | **Synthesis Beliefs** |  |  |  |
| [Afterlife](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/beliefs/afterlife.htm) | The Chinese conception of the **afterlife** is based on a combination of Chinese folk religions, [Taoism](http://www.religionfacts.com/taoism/index.htm) and [Mahayana Buddhism](http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/sects/mahayana.htm).  At the moment of death, Chinese believe one's spirit is taken by messengers to the god of walls and moats, Ch'eng Huang, who conducts a kind of preliminary hearing. Those found virtuous may go directly to one of the Buddhist paradises, to the dwelling place of the Taoist immortals, or the tenth court of hell for immediate rebirth.  After 49 days, sinners descend to hell, located at the base of the mythical Mount Meru. There they undergo a fixed period of punishment in one or more levels of hell. The duration of this punishment may be reduced by the intercession of the merciful Ti-ts'ang.  When the punishment is complete, the souls in hell drink an elixir of oblivion in preparation for their next reincarnation.  They then climb on the wheel of transmigration, which takes them to their next reincarnation, or, in an alternative account, they are thrown off the bridge of pain into a river that sweeps them off to their next life.  Which beliefs are Tao? Which are Buddhist? | | | |
| [Body and Soul](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/beliefs/body_soul.htm) | In Chinese thinking, everything that exists flows out of the **Tao**, and human beings are simply a tiny component of the Tao.  The ancient Chinese believed in a dual soul. The lower soul of the senses disappears with death, but the rational soul (**hun**) survives death and is the object of ancestor worship.  Perhaps the most important Chinese concept related to the body and soul is the idea of **ch'i**. At its simplest, ch'i means breath, air or vapor, but in Chinese religious belief it is life energy or life-force.  It is believed that every person is allotted a specified amount of ch'i and he or she must strengthen, control and increase it in order to live a long life. Many Taoist exercises focus on regulation and increase of one's ch'i. In the west, the most well-known example of such a practice is **T'ai chi**. | | | |
| [Ch'i](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/beliefs/chi.htm) | **Ch'i** (also spelled **Chi** or **Qi**) is a fundamental concept in Chinese philosophy and culture. Found in Chinese traditional religion but especially [Taoism](http://www.religionfacts.com/taoism/index.htm), Ch'i literally means "air" or "breath," but as a concept it refers to the **energy flow** or **life force** that is said to pervade all things.  The **nature of ch'i** has always been a matter of debate in Chinese thinking. Some believe ch'i is a separate force from the physical world, while others think ch'i comes from physical matter. Still others, especially Chinese Buddhists and Taoists, hold that matter arises from ch'i.  The quality, quantity and balance of Ch'i is believed to be essential to maintaining **health** and achieving a **long life**. One author explains it this way:  "Qi is the basic material of all that exists. It animates life and furnishes functional power of events. Qi is the root of the human body; its quality and movement determine human health. There is a normal or healthy amount of qi in every person, and health manifests in its balance and harmony, its moderation and smoothness of flow." -- Livia Kohn, [Health and Long Life: The Chinese Way](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1931483035?ie=UTF8&tag=religi09-20&link_code=as3&camp=211189&creative=373489&creativeASIN=1931483035)  In addition to living a healthy life (both physically and psychologically), Ch'i can be regulated through practices like breath control, Ta'i Chi, massage and acupuncture. Nearly all techniques in **traditional Chinese medicine** are based on the concept of Ch'i.  **Breath control** is considered especially fundamental to balancing the levels of Ch'i in one's body. Controlled and meditative breathing, called hsing-ch'i, allows ch'i to permeate the entire body by imagining the breath as a visible current moving through the body. Another type of breathing exercise, t'ai-hsi, attempts to revert one's breathing to that of an fetus in the womb. This is considered especially powerful for longevity and immortality (especially in Taoism).  The traditional Chinese art of placement and arrangement of space called **Feng Shui** is also based on the flow of ch'i, as well as the five elements, yin and yang and other factors. The retention or dissipation of ch'i is believed to affect the health, wealth, energy level, luck and many other aspects of the occupants of the space. Color, shape and the physical location of each item in a space affects the flow of ch'i by slowing it down, redirecting it or accelerating it, which directly affects the ch'i of the occupants. | | | |
| [Ghosts and Spirits](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/beliefs/spirits.htm) | In Chinese thought, the world is populated by a vast number of **spirits**, both good and evil. Such spirits include nature demons (kuei-shen), evil spirits or devils (oni), and ghosts (kui).  **Evil spirits** are believed to avoid light, so many rituals involving **fire and light** have developed, such as the use of bonfires, firecrackers, and torches. Evil spirits are also traditionally believed to travel in straight lines, which explains many **curvy roads** throughout China.  But not all spirits are evil — some are just unhappy. As evidenced by the practice of [ancestor worship](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/practices/ancestor_worship.htm), most Chinese people believe the **souls of the deceased** endure after death and must be kept happy by offerings and honor.  If a spirit is not kept happy, perhaps because it had a bad death, an improper burial or has no descendents to perform the proper rituals, it becomes a **ghost** (sometimes called a "hungry ghost," a term with Buddhist origins). Ghosts may attack human beings to prompt them to meet the ghosts' needs or at least to draw attention to their plight.  Ghosts receive the most attentions during Ghost Month, the seventh month in the Chinese lunar year, and especially during the [Ghost Festival](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/holidays/ghost_festival.htm) on the fifteenth day.  In mainland China, belief in ghosts and evil spirits is declining under the influence of atheistic Communism. But in **Taiwan**, which split from China in 1949, the vast majority of the population (perhaps as much as 90%) believes in ghosts. Late-night television is filled with video of haunted houses and ghost-busting and afterlife experts make a good business of advising distressed clients on how to appease their angry ancestors. | | | |
| [Heaven](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/beliefs/heaven.htm) | Perhaps the most important consequence of the Chinese idea of heaven is the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (t'ien-ming). According to this concept, rulers governed by divine permission and based on the ruler's virtue, not by right. Importantly, this permission was regarded as revocable if the ruler was not virtuous enough. Social and political unrest were traditionally taken as signs that the Mandate of Heaven had been revoked, and it was then permissible to overthrow those in power and replace them with the succeeding dynasty. | | | |
| [Yin and Yang](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/beliefs/yin_yang.htm) | In Chinese and other Eastern thought, yin and yang are the two opposing and complementary forces that make up all phenomena of life. Both proceed from the Supreme Ultimate and together they represent the process of the universe and all that is in it. | | | |
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Ineffable – ideas that cannot be described or captured in words.

Deity - *Deity* comes from the Latin word for "god": *deus.* A *deity* is a supernatural being, like a god or goddess, which is worshipped by people who believe it controls or exerts force over some aspect of the world.

Immanent – Sometimes, immanent means a quality that is essential to something. Psychologists claim the need to love and be loved is an immanent trait of human beings — we all have it. Some people think there is an immanent spirit or force in nature. Also, immanent things are ideas and feelings that only exist in your mind — they remain within. If you keep your ideas to yourself, they’re immanent.

Divination – Prophecy and Fortune Telling. The idea that you can see the future by supernatural means is called *divination*. When your friend tells your fortune by reading the tea leaves in your cup, she claims to have the power of *divination*.

Righteous - Being righteous literally means to do right in a moral way. Religious people often talk about being righteous. In their view, the righteous person not only does the right thing for other people but also follows the laws of their religion.

Self-Righteous – If you call someone *self-righteous*, it means they're a little too sure they're right and better than other people. Arrogant.

Benevolent – *Benevolent* comes from the Latin *bene* "well" and *volent* from the verb "to wish".

Altuism, Altruisitic – The belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others.

Disciple – The noun *disciple* comes from the Latin word *discipulus*, which means "student, learner, or follower."

Apotheosis - the highest point in the development of something; the elevation of someone from human to god. Deification.

Analogous - similar

Vocabulary.com

