



RELIGIONS

East Asian religions

Development of new inter-religious tools



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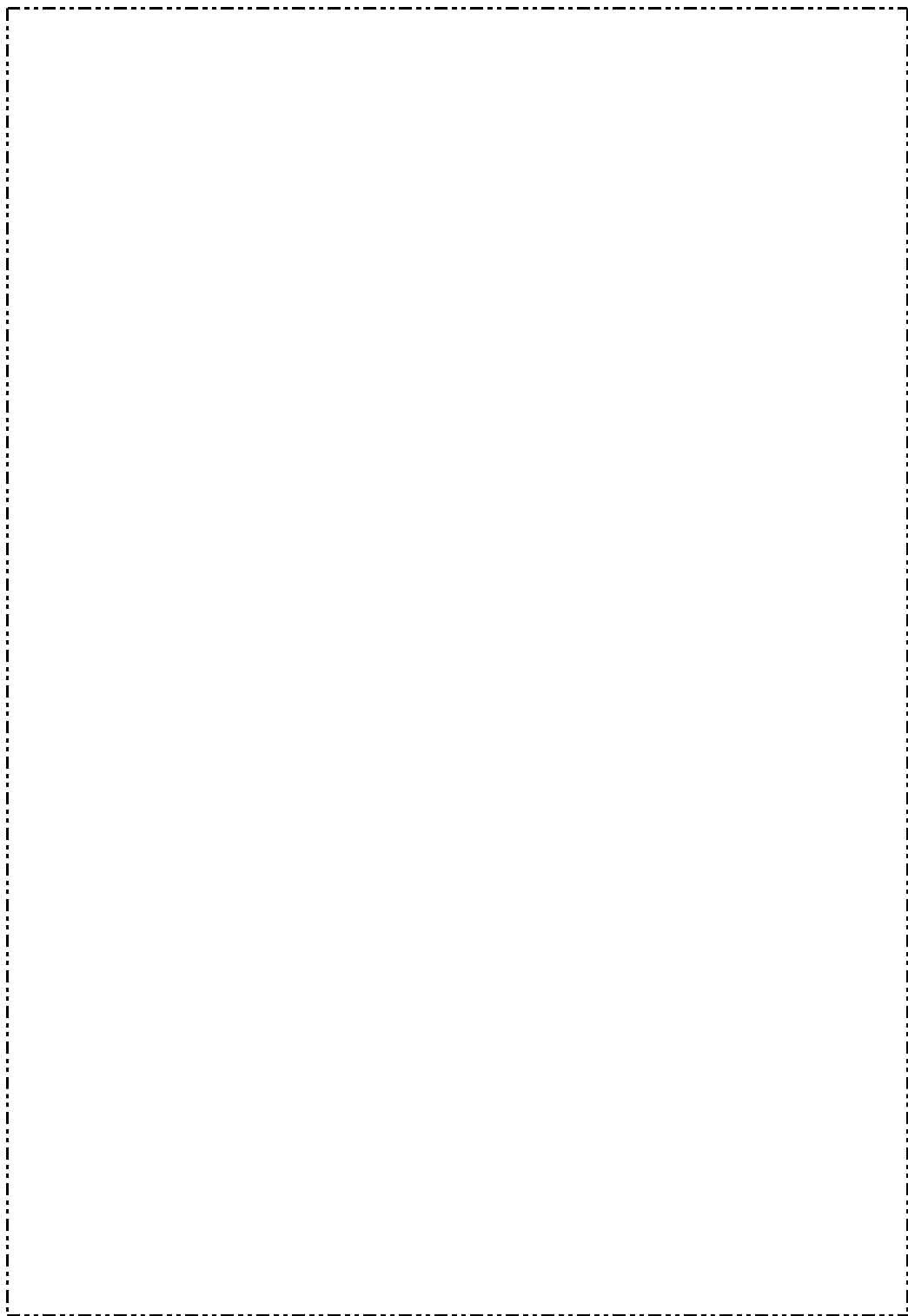


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EAST ASIAN RELIGIONS

In the study of comparative religion, the East Asian religions (also known as Far Eastern religions) form a subset of the Eastern religions. This group includes Chinese religion overall, which further includes Ancestral Worship, Chinese folk religion, Confucianism, Taoism and so-called popular salvationist organisations (such as Yiguandao and Weixinism), as well as elements drawn from Mahayana Buddhism that form the core of Chinese Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism at large. The group also includes Japanese Shintoism and Korean Sindoism (both meaning "Ways of Gods" and identifying the indigenous shamanic religion and ancestor worship of such peoples), which have received influences from Chinese religions throughout the centuries. Chinese salvationist religions have influenced the rise of Korean and Japanese new religions — for instance, respectively, Jeungsanism, Caodaism and Tenriism; these movements draw upon indigenous traditions but are heavily influenced by Chinese philosophy and theology.

All these traditions, more or less, share core Chinese concepts of spirituality, divinity and world order, including Tao ("Way"; pinyin dào, Japanese tō or dō, Korean do, Vietnamese đạo) and Tian ("Heaven"; Japanese ten, Korean cheon, Vietnamese thiên).

East Asian religions include many theological stances, including polytheism, nontheism, henotheism, monotheism, pantheism, panentheism and agnosticism. East Asian religions have many Western adherents, though their interpretations may differ significantly from traditional East Asian thought and culture.

The place of East Asian religions among major religious groups is comparable to the Abrahamic religions found in Europe and the Western World as well as across the Middle East and the Muslim World and Indian religions in South Asia. East Asian religions are dominant in China, Japan, and Korea as well as other countries that are a part of the East Asian cultural sphere.

CONFUCIANISM



Chinese character for water

Confucianism, the way of life propagated by Confucius in the 6th–5th century bce and followed by the Chinese people for more than two millennia.

Confucianism is an Eastern religion/philosophy. Although it is more accurately referred to as a philosophy, books on world religions inevitably include it with other religions from Buddhism to Zoroastrianism.

Confucianism is an ancient religion that originated from The Hundred Schools of Thought which was from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. It encourages a particular social order, respect for the elderly, the respect and elevation of teachers, and the overall good of the community. This religion came up more as an opposition to the existing rituals and religious practices that were then prevalent in China. Although transformed over time, it is still the substance of learning, the source of values, and the social code of the Chinese.

Confucius was primarily known in China for giving moral advice to the leaders of the country. He wrote deeply, mostly about individual morality and ethics, and the proper use of political power by the rulers of the world. There are an estimated 6.3 million followers of Confucianism worldwide, mostly located in China and Korea. There is some debate whether Confucianism is a religion or simply a practice to better the mind, body and soul. Although often grouped with the major historical religions, Confucianism differs from them by not being an organized religion. Nonetheless, it spread to other East Asian countries under the influence of Chinese literate culture and has exerted a profound influence on spiritual and political life.

Most people who adhere to the teachings of Confucius follow Chinese traditional religion, which is a blending of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and traditional local practices and beliefs.

THE MAIN BELIEFS

There are six main groups of beliefs in Confucianism, these include:

Yi - Righteousness

Xin - Honesty and Trustworthiness

Chung - Loyalty to the state, etc.

Li - includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.

Hsiao - love within the family, love of parents for their children, and love of children for their parents
Jen - benevolence, humanness towards one another (the most important Confucianism virtue)

SACRED BOOKS

There are five books that are considered the sacred books of Confucianism. These are The Book of History, The Book of Poetry, The Book of Changes, The Book of Rites, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. These sacred texts teach the five central virtues of Confucianism - benevolence or humaneness, righteousness, observance of rites, moral wisdom or knowledge, and faith or integrity. It was believed that by understanding and

following the virtues given in the books, an individual could achieve moral and cosmic harmony.

The Lun-yü (Analects) are the most revered sacred scripture in the Confucian tradition. It was probably compiled by the second generation of Confucius' disciples. Based primarily on the Master's sayings, preserved in both oral and written transmissions, it captures the Confucian spirit in the same way that the Platonic dialogues embody Socratic teachings.

FAMILY

Confucius laid great emphasis on familial relationships and believed them to form the foundation of any civilised society. These relationships were based on decency and mutual benefit. Confucius laid down the most important relationships and the interactions between members in the relationship. First, the father-son relationship was based on the father's love and care for the child in his youth, and the son's respect and care for his father in old age. Secondly, the younger brothers should be reverent towards their elder brothers and the elder brothers should be patient and gentle with younger brothers and set a good example for them to follow. Lastly, the husband provides security and kindness to his obedient wife who listens and follows his lead.

PRACTICE AND RITUALS

Although Confucianism does not brag to have all the clear cut answers of the universe, the ones who practice have a strong belief in rituals. They believe that participation in ritual serves uniting people, and strengthening the community. However, Confucianism does not hold all the aspects of a religion (such as Christianity or Islam), nor do they hold regular practices and rituals. Instead they symbolize four important times in ones life. These are: birth, reaching maturity, marriage and death. The Practices that go along with these stages are;

BIRTH

The Tai-Shen (spirit of the fetus) protects the expectant mother, and deals harshly with anyone/thing that harasses or harms the woman. She receives a special diet and is given one month to rest after the delivery of the baby. Her parents are responsible for everything that is needed to support the child, on the first, fourth, and twelfth month anniversary of the child's birth.

rites of passage

Three major rites of passage in East Asia developed under Confucian influence: coming-of-age, marriage, and funeral ceremonies.

While the existence of the capping and pinning ceremonies for boys and girls suggests ritual parity between males and females, in actuality only the capping ceremony for boys was a major event. Girls were "pinned" (given a cap, a jacket, and an adult name) as part of the betrothal process, sometimes just prior to their marriage. The capping ceremony, by contrast, was a major event in the lives of boys from upper-class families who had reached the age of 14 (15 in Chinese reckoning). The process began three days before the actual capping with an announcement at the family offering hall by an elder (usually the boy's father or grandfather). The capping ceremony itself occupied a day of ritual activities that culminated in a meal for the sponsor (an important friend or associate of the elder) and the introduction of the boy to his father's friends and other local elders.

MARRIAGE

There are six separate things that happen during the marriage rituals, these include:

Proposal: Both sides of the relationship share the hour, day, month, and year of their birth. If any upsetting events happens within the bride-to-be's family within the next three

days, it is believed that she has rejected the proposal.

Engagement: After the couple decides the date of the wedding, the bride announces the wedding with invitations and gifts of cookies shaped like the moon.

Dowry: A dowry is a transfer of parental belongings when their daughter is getting married. Gifts equal in value after given to the bride and groom.

Procession: The groom proceeds to the brides home, and brings her back to his place, with much happiness and excitement.

Marriage: The couple recites their vows that will bond them together for a lifetime, toast each other with wine, and then take center stage at a banquet consisting of friends, and the families of both bride and groom.

Morning After: The bride serves breakfast to the grooms parents, and then the parents do the same.

DEATH

After the death of a loved one, the family cry aloud to inform the neighbors of the tragic news. The family begin to mourn by making clothes made of course material, and wearing them. The corpse is placed in a coffin, and many family and friends bring money to help with the cost of the funeral. Food and objects important to the deceased are placed into the coffin with him/her. A priest or minister of any religion performs the burial ritual. The guests follow the coffin carrying a large willow tree branch. This is meant to symbolize the soul of the person who has died. Later on, the branch is carried back to the family altar where is used to "install" the spirit of the deceased. A public worship (called a Liturgy) is performed on the seventh, ninth, and forty-ninth days after the burial, along with the first and third year anniversary of the death.

AFTERLIFE

For Confucians, there is no real concept of an afterlife.

SYMBOLS OF CONFUCIANISM

There are four main symbols that represent the beliefs and views of Confucianism. These include: "Confucius", the Chinese character for water, the Chinese character for scholar, and Yin Yang. The symbol for Confucius represents the man who began the religion, as he is one of, if not the most important person to come from this religion. He was very interested in the moral conduct of people in society. The second symbol, the Chinese character for water, is made for water is one of the five elements of Chinese philosophy. Water is viewed as a life source, which most likely comes from it's importance in the natural world in sustaining life. The third symbol, the Chinese character for scholar, is made for the importance of knowledge and self-awareness. Confucius believed one could never have too much knowledge, and the idea of an education has become very important in Chinese culture today. The final symbol, Yin Yang, is common in other forms of Chinese religion, and has different meanings. The general meaning is that the circle represents a whole, while the halves and dots depict opposites, interactions, or balance.

HOLY DAYS

Qing Ming: One of the most important days in the Confucianism religion, happens 106 days after the winter solstice. On this day people go to the graves of their ancestors with offerings such as paper clothing and paper money. Food, which is usually offered after the ceremony is offered during the ceremony. This is supposed to connect the spirits of the living and their former ancestors.

Chongmyo Taeje: A ceremony held in honor of the kings and queens of the Yi dynasty (lasting from 1392 to 1910.) Taking place on the first Sunday of May, the past leaders are celebrated with music, food, and dance.

Confucius' Birthday: Born on the 28th of September, is when the ceremony begins. It takes place over the span of a few days and ends of the 10th of October. It begins with a short march to a local temple where an animal is there sacrificed to Confucius. They sing the "Song of Peace" and get a special "wisdom cake" made of rice. It is celebrated the most of all the ceremonies, due to Confucius being the face of the religion. During the event, there are even kung-fu competitions, which are also accompanied by music and dance.

Ching Ming Festival: Also known as the "Tomb Sweeping Day". It is either held on the 4th or 5th or April. On this day, respect is paid to the ancestors by sweeping the graves and laying flowers. Sometimes, the deceased person's favorite food will be left on the grave and small amounts of money is burned. People also bring kites to fly at the festivals.

HOLY PLACES

The most sacred place for Confucians is Qufu, Shandong Province, China. The town contains the gravesite of Master Kong (in a Kong family graveyard) and the homes of many living descendants of the Kong family. In addition, Qufu is the site of the oldest and largest Master Kong temple. Throughout East Asia are similar temples, where official rites for Master Kong were traditionally performed. Only a few such temples continue to have these rites and do so partly to keep the tradition alive and partly to serve the tourist industry. One can also include the ancestral halls and gravesites of East Asian families other than the Kong family as places of Confucian worship. Traditionally, at these two sites, family members performed Confucian-style ceremonies in commemoration of their ancestors. This practice has continued but on a reduced scale, though there has been a revival of these ceremonies in China since the death of Mao Zedong.

WORSHIP

After Confucius's death, people built temples in his honor. There are ceremonies that take place in these temples. Temple rituals can vary from region to region and have changed over time. Contemporary rituals often involve the burning of incense and kneeling and bowing before images of Confucius or other important ancestors and spirits. Offerings, such as cups of tea, are made and donations may also be made to the temple. Those worshipping at the temple will often make wishes for themselves and for others during such rituals.

THE WORSHIP OF ANCESTORS

As respect of elders and ancestors is a chief concern of Confucianism and is practiced by many Chinese in the home, at temples and at the graves of relatives, a common Confucian practice includes ancestral tablets and shrines dedicated to deceased elders. An ancestral tablet is often made of stone and includes names of ancestors carved in lists. Shrines to ancestors often consist of portraits of deceased elders, such as parents or grandparents, and usually includes an incense-stick holder. Those showing their respect will clasp incense in the palm of both hands, kneel before the portrait or tablet and place the burning incense in the holder.

THE GRAVES OF ANCESTORS

It is also a Confucian practice to show respect for one's elders by visiting their graves at least once a year.

The most important time to visit is during Tomb Sweeping Day, a holiday celebrated in early April when the family shows veneration for the departed by cleaning the tombs, clearing weeds and adding fresh soil to the surface of the graves. The deceased's favorite food and wine are placed on the grave as an offering and paper representing money is burned for the dead to use in the afterlife. Family members will also burn incense and kneel before the dead to show their respect.

DRESS CODE

Contemporary Confucians, even leaders, have no specific dress code.

The only exception occurs on Master Kong's birthday, when dignitaries wear robes similar to those worn by traditional Confucian officials.

In premodern times the mandarin robes that were the daily attire of officials enhanced the reverence in which they were held by the common people. The robes worn on ritual occasions were quite ornate, featuring images of birds and other animals that indicated the type (civil or military) and rank (grades one through nine) of an official's position. When a large number of officials wearing these robes stood in ceremonial formations, both color and cosmic significance were added to the rites being performed.

SEXUALITY

In sexual matters, Confucianism is quite "puritanic." A "good" young girl is not only expected to keep her virginity until she gets married and to get married only once in her life, she is not supposed to make herself attractive, even to her own husband. Confucianism does not consider sexual activity as wrong, but love and tenderness are treated with mistrust, and physical displays of them are considered at least questionable. This rule applies not only to showing affection in public, but also to its display in the privacy of the home.

ORGAN DONATION

The Confucian teaching maintains that one is born with a complete body and should end the same way. Although traditional Confucian principles seem to exclude organ donation entirely, modern Confucian scholars have taken different views. They cite Confucius who said: "The man of Jen is one who, desiring to sustain himself, sustains others." They believe that Jen and righteousness are valued more in Confucianism than preserving the integrity of the dead body and therefore approve of organ donation.

DIETARY PRACTICES

The Confucian scriptures and related traditions had much to say about eating in general but not about dietary restrictions or prohibited foods.

✓ NEO-CONFUCIANISM

Neo-Confucianism is a moral, ethical, and metaphysical Chinese philosophy influenced by Confucianism, and originated with Han Yu and Li Ao (772–841) in the Tang Dynasty, and became prominent during the Song and Ming dynasties.

Neo-Confucianism was an attempt to create a more rationalist and secular form of Confucianism by rejecting superstitious and mystical elements of Taoism and Buddhism that had influenced Confucianism during and after the Han Dynasty. Although the Neo-Confucianists were critical of Taoism and Buddhism, the two did have an influence on the philosophy, and the Neo-Confucianists borrowed terms and concepts from both.

However, unlike the Buddhists and Taoists, who saw metaphysics as a catalyst for spiritual development, religious enlightenment, and immortality, the Neo-Confucianists used metaphysics as a guide for developing a rationalist ethical philosophy.

✓ **NEW CONFUCIANIS**

New Confucianism is an intellectual movement of Confucianism that began in the early 20th century in Republican China, and further developed in post-Mao era contemporary China. It is deeply influenced by, but not identical with, the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties. It is a neo-conservative movement of various Chinese traditions and has been regarded as containing religious overtones; it advocates for certain Confucianist elements of society - such social, ecological, and political harmony - to be applied in a contemporary context in synthesis with Western philosophies such as rationalism and humanism. Its philosophies have emerged as a focal point of discussion between Confucian scholars in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States.

SHINTO



Shinto, or kami-no-michi (among other names) is the traditional religion of Japan that focuses on ritual practices to be carried out diligently in order to establish a connection between present-day Japan and its ancient past.

Shinto practices were first recorded and codified in the written historical records of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki in the 8th century. Still, these earliest Japanese writings do not refer to a unified religion, but rather to a collection of native beliefs and mythology. Shinto today is the religion of public shrines devoted to the worship of a multitude of gods (kami), suited to various purposes such as war memorials and harvest festivals, and applies as well to various sectarian organizations. Practitioners express their diverse beliefs through a standard language and practice, adopting a similar style in dress and ritual, dating from around the time of the Nara and Heian periods (8th–12th century).

As much as nearly 80% of the population in Japan participates in Shinto practices or rituals, but only a small percentage of these identify themselves as "Shintoists" in surveys. This is because Shinto has different meanings in Japan. Most of the Japanese attend Shinto shrines and beseech kami without belonging to an institutional Shinto religion. There are no formal rituals to become a practitioner of "folk Shinto". Thus, "Shinto membership" is often estimated counting only those who do join organised Shinto sects. Shinto has 81,000 shrines and 85,000 priests in the country.

The essence of Shinto is the Japanese devotion to invisible spiritual beings and powers called kami, to shrines, and to various rituals.

Shinto is not a way of explaining the world. What matters are rituals that enable human beings to communicate with kami.

Kami are not God or gods. They are spirits that are concerned with human beings - they appreciate our interest in them and want us to be happy - and if they are treated properly they will intervene in our lives to bring benefits like health, business success, and good exam results.

Shinto is a very local religion, in which devotees are likely to be concerned with their local shrine rather than the religion as a whole. Many Japanese will have a tiny shrine-altar in their homes.

However, it is also an unofficial national religion with shrines that draw visitors from across the country. Because ritual rather than belief is at the heart of Shinto, Japanese people don't usually think of Shinto specifically as a religion - it's simply an aspect of Japanese life. This has enabled Shinto to coexist happily with Buddhism for centuries.

The name Shinto comes from Chinese characters for Shen ('divine being'), and Tao ('way') and means 'Way of the Spirits'.

Shrine visiting and taking part in festivals play a great part in binding local communities together.

Shrine visiting at New Year is the most popular shared national event in Japan.

Because Shinto is focussed on the land of Japan it is clearly an ethnic religion. Therefore Shinto is little interested in missionary work, and rarely practised outside its country of

origin.

Shinto sees human beings as basically good and has no concept of original sin, or of humanity as 'fallen'.

Everything, including the spiritual, is experienced as part of this world. Shinto has no place for any transcendental other world.

Shinto has no canonical scriptures.

Shinto teaches important ethical principles but has no commandments.

Shinto has no founder.

Shinto has no God.

Shinto does not require adherents to follow it as their only religion.

Shinto is based on belief in, and worship of, kami. The best English translation of kami is 'spirits', but this is an over-simplification of a complex concept - kami can be elements of the landscape or forces of nature. Kami are close to human beings and respond to human prayers. They can influence the course of natural forces, and human events.

Shintō does not have a weekly religious service. People visit shrines at their convenience.

Some may go to the shrines on the 1st and 15th of each month and on the occasions of rites or festivals (matsuri), which take place several times a year. Devotees, however, may pay respect to the shrine every morning.

CENTRAL DOCTRINES

Shinto is not a doctrinal religion. There is no formal, standardized, or orthodox system of belief per se. Rather, most shrines or sects are free to develop their own expressions of religious style and practice. Shrines affiliated with specific larger shrines, however, often follow the lead and ritual calendar of the head shrine. While Shinto priests are versed in topics such as morality, sincerity, purity, and so forth, they rarely preach on these subjects.

MORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Shinto does not have a moral code distinct from that of Japanese culture more generally, which has been deeply influenced by Confucian, Neo-Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist values and ideals. Shinto does not possess a concept of sin akin to that found in the Western monotheisms, nor does it have a concept of humankind as fallen or inherently sinful. Rather, according to the religious anthropology of Shinto, human beings have an innate moral sense of right and wrong or—perhaps more precisely—of propriety and impropriety. They also teach that an individual must assume responsibility not only for his or her actions but also for the reactions of others to them. For instance, if a wife is ignored by her husband or finds him irritable, she should not blame him; rather, she is instructed to examine herself in order to discover what she may have done to provoke this reaction and, then, to rectify it. Shinto ethics, then, are informed by Confucian and Taoist elements and cannot be neatly separated from Japanese social ethics more generally.

SACRED BOOKS

No Shinto texts have the status that the Bible has for Christians or that the Koran has for Muslims. That is, there are no divinely revealed works that all persons accept as the full and final word of God.

PURITY

Purity is at the heart of Shinto's understanding of good and evil. Impurity in Shinto refers to anything which separates us from kami, and from musubi, the creative and harmonising power. The things which make us impure are tsumi - pollution or sin. Shinto does not accept that human beings are born bad or impure; in fact Shinto states that humans are

born pure, and sharing in the divine soul.

Badness, impurity or sin are things that come later in life, and that can usually be got rid of by simple cleansing or purifying rituals.

THE CAUSES OF IMPURITY

Pollution - tsumi - can be physical, moral or spiritual. 'Tsumi' means much the same as the English word 'sin', but it differs from sin in that it includes things which are beyond the control of individual human beings and are thought of as being caused by evil spirits. In ancient Shinto, tsumi also included disease, disaster and error. Anything connected with death or the dead is considered particularly polluting.

SHINTO FESTIVALS - MATSURI

Shinto festivals generally combine solemn rituals with joyful celebration, and these celebrations can include drunken and loutish behavior. Festivals centre on particular kami, who are treated as the guests of honour at the event. The celebrations are very physical events, and may include processions, dramatic performances, sumo wrestling, and feasting. They are bright, colourful, and loud, aromatic with the smells of food, and involve much activity - these performance elements perhaps parallel in their own way the importance of aesthetic and sensual pleasingness in shrine worship. The processions often feature a mikoshi, a 'divine palanquin', used to carry a kami (or an image of a kami). The mikoshi is often described as a portable altar or portable shrine.

The procession of the mikoshi is effectively a visit by the kami of the shrine to the local community that is devoted to them, and is thought to confer a blessing on that community. Because Shinto originates in the agricultural prehistory of Japan, most of its festivals are tied to the farming seasons.

Oshogatsu (New Year) – This festival is marked on 1 January. It's traditional at New Year to visit a shrine. People go to thank the kami, ask the kami to give them good fortune in the coming year, and make their new year resolutions in the presence of the kami. (Shrine attendance is huge for this festival - the estimate for attendance during New Year 2003 was that 32 shrines and Buddhist temples had more than 500,000 visitors each. Meiji Shrine in Tokyo expected over 3 million visitors over the festival period.)

Seijin Shiki (Adults' Day) - This event takes place on 15 January. On this day those Japanese who have had their 20th birthday in the previous year attend a shrine to give thanks. 20 is the age of legal adulthood in Japan.

Haru Matsuri (Spring festivals) - Rissun (or Setsubun); Rissun is celebrated on 3 February and marks the beginning of spring. It is sometimes called Setsubun, although Setsubun can really refer to the beginning of any season. Rissun is known as the bean-throwing festival. When celebrated at home, a male of the family will scatter roasted beans, saying "demons out, good luck in". At shrines, lucky beans are thrown into the congregation, who will attempt to catch them. Toshigoi-no-Matsuri: This spring festival is a celebration to pray to the gods for a good harvest.

Aki Matsuri (Autumn festivals) - Late summer and autumn feature many aki matsuri, autumn festivals, often thanking the kami for a good harvest. Different shrines countrywide hold their own celebrations on varying dates.

Shichigosan - Shichigosan is celebrated on 15 November, or the nearest Sunday. On this day parents take boys of three and five years old and girls of three and seven to give thanks to the gods for a healthy life so far and pray for a safe and successful future. The festival of Shichigosan is named after the ages of the children taking part - seven (shichi), five (go), three (san).

Rei-sai (Annual Festival) - This is a yearly festival on a day particular relevant to the shrine where it takes place. During this festival the local kami are carried in effigy round the town or village in an ornate litter (like a sedan-chair) called a mikoshi. The procession is often accompanied by musicians and dancers, and the whole occasion is celebratory. More serious ceremonies also take place within the shrine.

PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Most Shinto shrines should be thought of as both buildings and the sacred sites on which these stand. This is because Shinto worship does not require physical structures to house the kami. Indeed, most of the earliest religious sites in the Japanese archipelago were holy sites where contact with the deities was possible.

Kami are also regularly worshiped in open spaces known as iwasaka. Priests are not in residence at all shrines; rather, there are innumerable small and miniature shrines throughout Japan where a Shinto priest might occasionally be called to perform a ritual but where more often laypersons offer their own prayers.

Small, unattended shrines are also sometimes found in the midst of rice paddies, where the farmers offer their own prayers to the ta no kami (rice paddy kami) for a successful harvest.

Shinto shrine buildings differ in architectural style. More readily recognizable as a distinctly Shinto architectural feature are the torii, or gate markers, at the entrances to shrine grounds. Torii generally consist of two upright pillars with two cross beams, which may be straight or curved. There is usually at least one torii at each entrance to the shrine grounds, although there can be more.

SACRED PLACES

Shinto shrines: A shrine (jinja) is a sacred place where kami live, and which show the power and nature of the kami. It's conventional in Japan to refer to Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples - but Shinto shrines actually are temples, despite not using that name. Every village and town or district in Japan will have its own Shinto shrine, dedicated to the local kami.

Japanese people don't visit shrines on a particular day each week. People go to the shrine at festival times, and at other times when they feel like doing so. Japanese often visit the local shrine when they want the local kami to do them a favour such as good exam results, a good outcome to a surgical operation for a relative, and so on.

WORSHIP

Shinto worship is highly ritualised, and follows strict conventions of protocol, order and control. It can take place in the home or in shrines. In keeping with Shinto values, Shinto ritual should be carried out in a spirit of sincerity, cheerfulness and purity. Shinto ceremonies have strong aesthetic elements - the setting and props, the sounds, the dress of the priests, and the language and speech are all intended to please the kami to whom the worship is offered. Although Shinto worship features public and shared rituals at local shrines, it can also be a private and individual event, in which a person at a shrine (or in their home) prays to particular kami either to obtain something, or to thank the kami for something good that has happened. Many Japanese homes contain a place set aside as a shrine, called a kami-dana (kami shelf), where they may make offerings of flowers or food, and say prayers. There is no special day of the week for worship in Shinto.

TYPICAL RITUAL

The conventional order of events in many Shinto festival rituals is as follows:

1. Purification - this takes place before the main ceremony

2. Adoration - bowing to the altar
3. Opening of the sanctuary
4. Presentation of food offerings (meat cannot be used as an offering)
5. Prayers (the form of prayers dates from the 10th century CE)
6. Music and dance
7. Offerings - these are symbolic and consist of twigs of a sacred tree bearing of white paper
8. Removal of offerings
9. Closing the sanctuary
10. Final adoration
11. Sermon (optional)
12. Ceremonial meal (this is often reduced to ceremonial sake drinking)

RITES

Harae - purification rites: Purity can be restored through specific Shinto rituals and personal practices that cleanse both body and mind.

Water and salt are commonly used as purifying agents, and a haraigushi can also be used. Purifying rituals are always performed at the start of Shinto religious ceremonies. One of the simplest purifications is the rinsing of face and hands with pure water in the temizu ritual at the start of a shrine visit in order to make the visitor pure enough to approach the kami.

Haraigushi: This is a purification wand, and consists of a stick with streamers of white paper or flax fastened to one end. It is waved by a priest over the person, place or object to be purified.

Misogi: This term covers purification rituals in general, or purification rituals using water to free body and mind from pollution.

Oharae: This is the "ceremony of great purification". It is a special purification ritual that is used to remove sin and pollution from a large group.

The ritual is performed at the end of June and December in the Imperial Household and at other shrines in order to purify the whole population. Oharae can also be performed as a year-end purification ritual for companies, or on certain occasions such as the aftermath of a disaster.

Shubatsu: Shubatsu is a purification ritual in which salt is sprinkled on priests or worshippers, or on the ground to purify it. One notable use of salt in purification is found in Sumo wrestling when the fighters sprinkle salt around the ring to purify it.

RITES OF PASSAGE

Various Shintō rites of passage - are observed in Japan. The first visit of a newborn baby to the tutelary kami, which occurs 30 to 100 days after birth, is to initiate the baby as a new adherent.

The Shichi-go-san (Seven-Five-Three) - festival on November 15 is the occasion for boys of five years and girls of three and seven years of age to visit the shrine to give thanks for kami's protection and to pray for their healthy growth.

January 15 is Adults' Day - Youth in the village used to join the local young men's association on this day. At present it is the commemoration day for those Japanese who have attained their 20th year.

The Japanese usually have their wedding ceremonies in Shintō style and pronounce their wedding vows to kami. Shintō funeral ceremonies, however, are not popular. The majority of the Japanese are Buddhist and Shintōist at the same time and have their

funerals in Buddhist style.

A traditional Japanese house has two family altars: one, Shintō, for their tutelary kami and the goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami, and another, Buddhist, for the family ancestors. Pure Shintō families, however, will have all ceremonies and services in Shintō style.

There are other Shintō matsuri concerning occupations or daily life, such as a ceremony of purifying a building site or for setting up the framework for a new building, a firing or purifying ceremony for the boilers in a new factory, a completion ceremony for a construction works, or a launching ceremony for a new ship.

WEDDINGS

A Shinto wedding is a small-scale affair involving the couple, their family and their close friends. The bride normally wears a white kimono with a white scarf. The colour symbolises purity. The ceremony begins with ritual purification. Next prayers are offered for the couple to have good luck, happiness and the protection of the kami. Then the couple drinks sake - taking three sips each from three cups poured by the miko (shrine maiden) - and the groom reads words of commitment. In many, weddings rings are exchanged. This is followed by a sacred dance performed by the miko. The ceremony ends with an offering of tamagushi (a sacred branch) and a ritual sharing of sake by everyone present.

HATSUMIYAMAIRI – FIRST SHRINE VISIT

This is when a newborn baby is taken to a shrine (usually the local one), to be placed under the protection of the kami. The child then becomes a parishioner of the shrine.

The ritual takes place on the thirty-second day after birth for a boy and the thirty-third day for a girl.

Traditionally the baby was taken to the shrine by its grandmother because the mother was thought to be impure from childbirth, but nowadays the child is often taken by the mother.

FUNERALS

Death is seen as impure and conflicting with the essential purity of Shinto shrines. For the same reason, cemeteries are not built near Shinto shrines. The result of this is that most Japanese have Buddhist or secular funerals, and cremation is common. Shinto funerals, when they occur, are called Sosai, and are largely developed from Buddhist funeral rites. The funerals are usually conducted by lay people not priests (because the contact with death would be too polluting for priests) and do not take place in shrines.

ORGAN DONATION

Organ transplantation is comparatively rare in Japan because the body after death is impure according to Shinto tradition. Shinto traditions also state that interfering with a corpse brings bad luck. Families are concerned that they might injure the relationship between the dead person and the bereaved (known as the itai) by interfering with the corpse. This means that many followers of Shinto oppose the taking of organs from those who have just died, and also would refuse an organ transplanted from someone who has died.

ALCOHOL

There is perhaps no religion that loves alcohol as much as the Japanese Shinto religion, which reveres sake as the most sacred of drinks—the “liquor of the gods.” The god of sake is also the god of rice and the harvest, so drinking sake is associated with a bountiful and blessed harvest. It’s a standard offering for all deities at Shinto shrines and an important part of agricultural rites, like the jichinsai ground purification ritual, during which sake is liberally poured onto construction sites.

DIET

Shinto does not have strict dietary laws for participants. Most Japanese are not vegetarians and consume fish, fowl, and meat. On some occasions, however, an individual may abstain from consuming specific foods that are believed to offend a given kami. More commonly, special dietary practices involve the serving of certain foods during festivals.

GENDER

Marital infidelity by men has often been overlooked, but women are almost always expected to be faithful. Until the last century, men were allowed to divorce their wives, but the reverse was not the case.

SHINSHOKU (PRIEST)

Shinshoku is priest in the Shintō religion of Japan. Priests may marry and have families. Women may also be admitted to the priesthood, and widows often succeed their husbands. The priests are supported by offerings of the parishioners and worshippers.

CELIBACY

Shinto is opposed to celibacy because the religion represents a celebration of life and procreation. An exception is found with virgins (miko), who assist priests.

Some vide:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgQ4eCc38dM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoQqxdAbRS0>

✓ KOSHINTÔ

Ko-Shintō refers to the original animism of Jōmon period Japan which is the alleged basis of modern Shinto. The search for traces of Koshintō began with Restoration Shinto in the Edo period. Some movements which claim to have discovered this primeval way of thought are Oomoto, Izumo-taishakyo, and Shinrikyō.

The Sino-Japanese word ko means "ancient or old"; shin from Chinese shen, means "spiritual force" or simply "spirit", often translated as "deity" or "god"; and tō from Chinese Tao, means "The Way". Thus Koshintō literally means the "Ancient Way of the Gods". The term Shinto itself originated in the 6th century (to distinguish it from continental ideas such as Buddhism and Taoism then being introduced), so paradoxically, the reconstructed Koshintō predates any use of the word Shinto.

✓ SHUGENDO

Shugendō is a highly syncretic religion that originated in Heian Japan.

Shugendō evolved during the 7th century from an amalgamation of beliefs, philosophies, doctrines and ritual systems drawn from local folk-religious practices, pre-Buddhist mountain worship, Shinto, Taoism and esoteric Buddhism.

The 7th century ascetic and mystic En no Gyoja is widely considered as the patriarch of Shugendō, having first organized Shugendō as a doctrine. Shugendō literally means "the path of training and testing" or "the way to spiritual power through discipline."

In modern times, Shugendō is practiced mainly through Tendai and Shingon temples. Some temples include Kimpusen-ji in Yoshino (Tendai), Ideha Shrine in the Three Mountains of Dewa and Daigo-ji in Kyoto (Shingon).

Shugendō practitioners are said to be descendants of the Kōya Hijiri monks of the eighth and ninth centuries.

The core of this religious tradition consists of magico-religious activities performed in response to the religious needs or demands of people in local communities by shugenja, Shugendo practitioners who have acquired supernatural spiritual powers through cultivation of various ascetic practices, mainly in the mountains.

As a general rule, Shugendo stresses physical endurance as the path to enlightenment. Practitioners perform seclusion, fasting, meditation, magical spells, recite sutras, and engage in austere feats of endurance such as standing/sitting under cold mountain waterfalls or in snow.

There is various categories of religious rituals which have an organic relationship with the entire system of Shugendo religious rituals:

- Practices in the mountains (nyubu shugyd)
- Consecration ceremonies (shokanjo)
- Demonstration of magico spiritual powers (genjutsu)
- Commemoration rites (kuydhhd)
- Participation in matsuri for the kami for the sun, moon, and stars (hi-tsuki-hoshi no matsuri, and for small shrines (shdshi no matsuri)
- Fortunetelling and divination (bokusen)
- The art of obtaining oracles through mediums (fujutsu)
- Prayers of possession (yori kitd)
- Fire ceremonies for averting misfortunes (sokusai goma)
- Rituals centered on various deities (skosonbd)
- Incantations (kaji)
- Exorcism (tsukimono otoshi, chobuku).
- Spells and charms (fuju, majinai)

Centers of Shugendō Practice & Pilgrimage

Shugendō's main centers of practice and pilgrimage both in ancient times and today are:

-Ōmine mountain range in Nara Prefecture. The most ritually important peak is Mt. Sanjō-ga-take. Also known as Ōminezan, this mountain and its temple (Ōminesanji), and a large area around the site, are still forbidden to women. The age-old tradition of banning women from certain holy sites was enforced widely in Japan until modern times, for women were considered disruptive to the monastic practices of male practitioners.

-Mt. Kimpusen in Nara Prefecture. Mt. Kimpusen is also known as Mt. Yoshino, and is located in the Ōmine mountain range. The head temple of Mt. Kimpusen/Yoshino is Kimpusenji.

-Hakusan Mountains.

-Dewa Sanzan. Another ancient center of Shugendō practice, pilgrimage, and lore is located on the three mountains of Dewa Sanzan in central Yamagata Prefecture. The three sacred peaks are Mt. Haguro (419 meters), Mt. Gassan (1980 meters), and Mt. Yudono (1504 meters).

DEITIES OF SHUGENDŌ

The deities worshipped by Shugendō vary widely, although many commonly venerate Fudo Myō-ō, Zaō Gongen, Kujaku Myō-ō, and Kōjin-sama.

✓ YOSHIDA SHINTO

Yoshida Shintō also frequently referred to as Yuiitsu Shintō ("One-and-only Shintō") was a prominent sect of Shintō that arose during the Sengoku Period through the teachings and work of Yoshida Kanetomo. The sect was originally an effort to organize Shintō teachings into a coherent structure in order to assert its authority vis-a-vis Buddhism. However, by the Edo Period, Yoshida Shintō continued to dominate the Shintō discourse, and influenced Neo-Confucian thinkers such as Hayashi Razan and Yamazaki Ansai in formulating a Neo-Confucian Shinto doctrine. Yoshida Shinto's dominance rivaled that of Ise Shintō.

Yoshida Shinto rejected celibacy and the idea that human life always leads to suffering. There is no clear conception of the afterlife, however.

Yoshida Shintō was an esoteric tradition also in terms of priestly organisation in that it consisted of several ranks achieved through secret initiations, with the highest rank accorded to only one man at a time, who would carry on the Yoshida family name. In cases where a suitable heir was lacking, one was adopted.

➤ SHINTO-INSPIRED RELIGIONS

✓ KONKOKYO



Crest of Konkokyo

Konkōkyō or just Konkō, is a religion and spiritual way of living of Japanese origin. Originating in Shinbutsu Shugo beliefs, it is now both an independent religion as well as Sectarian Shintō being a member of the Kyoha Shintō Rengokai (Association of Sectarian Shinto).

It is a syncretic, henotheistic and pantheistic religion, which worships the universe as the deity Tenchi Kane No Kami, or the Golden Kami of Heaven and Earth (or the Universe). Tenchi Kane No Kami is also referred to as "Tenchi No Kami-Sama," "Oyagami-Sama," "Kami-Sama," and "Kami." In English language, the deity can also be called, "Divine Parent of the Universe," "Principle Parent," "Parent Kami," "Kami-Sama," or "Kami." Although mentioned as 'he' for linguistic convenience, the Kami is neither male or female.

Bunjirō Kawate (1814–1883) is recognized as the founder of Konkō-kyō way and teachings, beginning in 1859.

In Konkokyo, everything is seen as being in profound interrelation with each other. Kami is not seen as distant or residing in heaven, but present within this world. The universe is perceived to be the body of Tenchi Kane no Kami. Konkokyo's beliefs center around the betterment of human life in this world by showing appreciation for all things, apologizing, and providing mutual help and prayer for others.

While Toritsugi at churches is typically performed by ministers, lay members are also encouraged to perform Toritsugi in their daily lives to help others. When they meet people who are suffering, the Konkokyo way is to listen to their problems, support them, and pray for their wellbeing and happiness. Tenchi Kane no Kami wishes for all people to become a mediator and help others.

Konkokyo has churches where people can go to worship and pray. Though Konkokyo believes that Tenchi Kane No Kami is everywhere, and followers of the way can talk to the deity anytime and anywhere. The church is a place to receive assistance and guidance through Toritsugi, and for people to focus their prayers, to appreciate blessings, apologize for any irreverences they may feel they have made, as well as be a safe and calming center for people to visit.

The faith believes that all people came from and are connected by the universe. This means that all people are connected by Tenchi Kane no Kami and there is no one that does not belong. Konkokyo desires to have all people, regardless of race, creed, gender, and occupation, work together to resolve the problems of the world. The faith also respects and accepts all ethnic groups and religions.

Konkokyo does not force or require people to quit another religion before following Konkokyo ways; believers are free to belong to another religion concurrently.

Women in Konkokyo are also held in high esteem with many women serving as head ministers at its churches.

The faith differs in Jinja Shinto in that it does not believe in taboos including beliefs related to unlucky days, unlucky years (age), and ominous directions. There are no distinctions between pure and impure things or sacred and non-sacred places.

Konkokyo also does not impose any restrictions on food and drink. Konkokyo believers are permitted to consume alcohol, caffeine, meat, etc.

Celibacy is also not a requirement for the clergy or anyone.

There are no restrictions for Konkokyo believers. As well believers are not obligated or required to pay any dues or make any donations.

Konkokyo Kyoten, The Sacred Scriptures is the foundation for practicing the Konko Faith. This book is comprised of five parts and has been translated into English as five separate volumes.

Helping and saving people are central precepts in Konkokyo. The foremost wish of Tenchi Kane No Kami is to help and save people. But He can do so only through people.

Ancestral Worship

Konkokyo holds memorial services to thank our ancestors for giving us life and protection. At the services, living descendants also pray to have their ancestral spirits join hands with Tenchi Kane No Kami to bestow even more blessings.

According to Konkokyo beliefs, there is no Heaven or Hell upon death.

Konkokyo also does not believe in transmigration or reincarnation.

Children are therefore highly valued and welcome by Konkokyo. The relationship between parent and child is also given much importance. Many activities for children are held, including an annual children's festival held at Konkokyo Headquarters with the participation of children from all areas.

Konkokyo believers are not obligated or required to pay any dues or make any donations.

STILL to this day Konkokyo is considered one of the 13 original Shinto sects. That is because of its close practices to the Shinto religion.

The main ritual they perform is called Tortisugi, this is a meditation practice. This lets them talk to Kami and get a spiritual blessing.

Konkokyo is a very modern religion so they don't have any mumbo jumbo kind of rituals they believe in keeping your body holy as well so yoga and exercise is considered a ritual.

✓ SEICHO-NO-IE



The Logo of Seicho-no-Ie

Seichō no Ie ("House of Growth"), is a syncretic, monotheistic, New Thought Japanese new religion that has spread since the end of World War II. It emphasizes gratitude for nature, the family, ancestors and, above all, religious faith in one universal God. Seichō no Ie is the world's largest New Thought group. By the end of 2010 it had over 1.6

million followers and 442 facilities, mostly located in Japan.

The basic principles of the Seicho-No-Ie teachings consist of three major components; (1) Only God-created perfect world exists (also referred to as the 'True Image'), (2) All phenomena are manifestation of only mind, (3) All religions emanate from one universal God.

Seicho-No-Ie can be considered a philosophy or religion.

Seicho-no-Ie's main scripture is the Sutra known as the Nectarean Shower of Holy Doctrine which the founder received from God while in meditation in 1931. The founder also was deeply interested in Christianity and wrote commentaries on St John's Gospel, which his followers study with great interest. He also developed the notion of the Eternal Christ a statue of whom can be found in Seicho-no-Ie places of worship.

Apart from the founder's birthday there are no religious festivals.

Seich ō no Ie members are encouraged to read passages of Taniguchi's scriptures and sutras, practice meditation, and do something good every day. They are also strongly encouraged to tell others of Seichō no Ie's doctrine and lead them to its way of life. Apart from this general ideal, however, Seichō no Ie offers a large number of private and communal rituals and activities in which members (and potential members) are encouraged to participate.

Seichō no Ie's religious practice includes various ceremonies (private and communal, daily and annually) of reverence for ancestors which are quite common in the Japanese religious repertory. In Seichō no Ie their primary aim is not to ask for ancestors' assistance or protection. Rather it is to express one's gratitude towards one's ancestors and to please them with a bright, grateful heart, positive words and the delightful smell of incense, which contributes towards one's salvation.

Most prominent is the annual ancestor ceremony in August at the main ancestral shrine in Uji. For this occasion paper strips bearing names, dates of birth and death of members' ancestors are collected to be ritually read and finally burnt in a large purificatory fire (Fieldwork Observations). In 1977, rites for stillborn and aborted babies were separated from those for ancestors because of unborn babies' distinct spiritual status.

As in most other new religions, seasonal festivals of various scale and frequency may also be found in Seichō no Ie. Some ceremonies, such as annual celebrations in memory of Taniguchi's revelations and monthly memorial days for Taniguchi, Taniguchi Seichō and Teruko (as well as larger annual festivals) are only or primarily performed in Nagasaki. Others, such as ancestor veneration, and especially the annual Ancestral Memorial Festival in August, take place in Uji. Other events, such as ceremonies at the beginning of every month, are celebrated in all the facilities.

Seichō no Ie's Confucian-influenced ideal female role is readily discernible in the policies of its girls's school, countless testimonials and, above all, Taniguchi's own writings. Rather than equality between men and women or superiority of men over women, Taniguchi teaches that men and women are fundamentally different and that women, like men, should strive to fully develop their innate potential. As Seichō no Ie regards the family, especially husband and wife, as society's basic unit, peace and harmony (which are prerequisites for a peaceful, prosperous society), it encourages women to be loving housewives and caring mothers who "obey their husbands without hesitation" because husbands are head of the family endowed with fatherly, that is divine, wisdom.

As in many other new religions, testimonials describing people's release from illness, misery or strife through belief in a new religion's doctrine or the performance of its rituals

are commonplace in Seichō no Ie.

✓ OOMOTO

Ōmoto also known as Ōmoto-kyō , is a sect founded in 1892 by Deguchi Nao (1836–1918), often categorised as a new Japanese religion originated from Shinto. The spiritual leaders of the movement have predominantly been women; however, Deguchi Onisaburō (1871–1948) has been considered an important figure in Omoto as a seishi (spiritual teacher). Since 2001, the movement has been guided by its fifth leader, Kurenai Deguchi. Omotokyo was strongly influenced by Konkokyo, Ko-shinto (ancient Shinto) and folk spiritual and divination traditions; it also integrated Kokugaku (National Studies) teachings and modern ideas on world harmony and peace, creating a new doctrine. It shares with Konkokyo the belief in the benevolence of Konjin, who was previously considered an evil kami, and shares with other ancient Shinto schools the teachings that proclaim the achievement of personal virtue as a step to universal harmony.

Members of Oomoto believe in several kami. The most important are Ookunitokotachi, Ushitora

Konjin and Hitsujisaru. Oomoto members also tend to recognize notable religious figures from other religions, or even notable non-religious figures, as kami – for example, the creator of Esperanto, L. L. Zamenhof is revered as a god. However, all of these kami are believed to be aspects of a single God concept.

Oomoto is monotheistic but not exactly like Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

Oomoto has no professional priests. Some of the paid workers spend much or most of their time engaged in priest duties at the two headquarters. But in Oomoto anyone can become a priest. Men, women, and children are all eligible to study the doctrine and ritual, and to become certified to practice.

Oomoto promoted interfaith activities long before most religions acknowledged the importance of interfaith dialogue and prayer.

The basic ritual, practiced at each branch, at each headquarters and in each home once a month is called Tsukinamisai. In it, Oomoto followers express their gratitude to the spirit by a token return of the basic necessities, placed with reverence upon the altar. Food, clothing, and shelter, the requisites of daily life, are reverently offered during the ceremony.

There are four Grand Festivals. Spring, Summer and Autumn are held in May, August and November, respectively. Setsbun Grand Festival is the most important, held each Feb. 3, the date of the sect's founding. Setsubun is an all-night prayer and purification vigil, with at least one male and one female priest from each branch participating, in addition to the Spiritual Leader and other key priests. Thousands of followers attend each year. Spring, Autumn and Setsbun festivals are held in Ayabe, and the Summer festival is in Kameoka.

Oomoto principles are: 1) Purity through purification of mind and body. 2) Optimism, specifically believing in the goodness of the Divine Will. 3) Progressivism as a way to social improvement. 4) Unification or reconciliation of all dichotomies (good and evil; rich and poor; humans and nature; humans and God, etc.)

In keeping with Ushitora no Konjin's instructions, the Spiritual Leader of Oomoto is

always a woman, a descendant of Nao on the matrilineal line.

Oomoto followers believe their Spiritual Leader has direct contact with the Divine Spirit. Based on this she interprets the teachings according to present circumstances – social, political, etc. --and guides the spiritual activities of Oomoto followers. The Spiritual Leader is an active participant in most major and many minor rituals throughout the year. Nao's transcriptions became known as the "Ofudesaki," which means "from the tip of the brush," and are collectively one of Oomoto's holy books. They are also known as "Oomoto Shinyu" ("Divine Revelations"). The other holy book is "Reikai Monogatari" by Onisaburo.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIho17Y3i_s

✓ TENRIKYO



Tenrikyo – emblem

Tenrikyo, sometimes rendered as Tenriism, is a Japanese new religion which is neither strictly monotheistic nor pantheistic, originating from the teachings of a 19th-century woman named Nakayama Miki, known to her followers as Oyasama.

Followers of Tenrikyo believe that God of Origin, God in Truth, known by several names including "Tsuikihi," "Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto," and "Oyagamisama (God the Parent)" revealed divine intent through Miki Nakayama as the Shrine of God, and to a lesser extent the roles of the Honseki Izo Iburi and other leaders.

Tenrikyo's worldly aim is to teach and promote the Joyous Life, which is cultivated through acts of charity and mindfulness called hinokishin.

The primary operations of Tenrikyo today are located at Tenrikyo Church Headquarters (Tenri, Nara, Japan), which supports 16,833 locally managed churches in Japan, the construction and maintenance of the oyasato-yakata, and various community-focused organisations. It has 1.75 million followers in Japan, and is estimated to have over 2 million worldwide.

The ultimate spiritual aim of Tenrikyo is the construction of the Kanrodai, a divinely ordained pillar in an axis mundi called the Jiba, and the correct performance of the Kagura ritual around the Kanrodai, which will bring about the salvation of all human beings. A pilgrimage to the Jiba is interpreted as a return to one's origin, so the greeting okaeri nasai (welcome home) is seen on many inns in Tenri City.

Other key teachings include:

- Tanno (Joyous Acceptance) – a constructive attitude towards troubles, illness and difficulties
- Juzen-no-Shugo – ten principles involved in the creation, which exist in Futatsu Hitotsu (two-in-one relationships) and are considered to be applied continuously throughout the universe

The three scriptures of Tenrikyo are the Ofudesaki, Mikagura-uta, and Osashizu.

The sacred name of the single God and creator of the entire universe in Tenrikyo is "Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto".

Tenrikyo utilises traditional musical instruments in its otsutome (lit. service or duty), Hyoshigi (wooden clappers), Chanpon (cymbals), Surigane (small gong), Taiko (large drum), Tsuzumi (shoulder drum), Fue (bamboo flute), Shamisen, Kokyū, and Koto.

The Hyoshigi, Chanpon, Surigane, Taiko, and Fue were traditionally the men's instruments but are now acceptable for women to play. The Shamisen, Kokyu, and Koto were traditionally women's instruments and, although not very popular, are now acceptable for men to play as well.

The Otsutome or daily service consists of the performance of the seated service and, optionally, the practice of a chapter or two of the 12 chapters of Teodori (lit. hand dance) or Yorozuyo. The daily service is performed twice a day; once in the morning and then in the evening. The service times are adjusted according to the time of sun rise and sun set but may vary from church to church. Service times at the Jiba in Tenri City go by this time schedule and adjust in the changing of seasons.

Instruments used in the daily service are the Hyoshigi, Chanpon, Surigane, Taiko, and Kazutori (a counter, to count the 21 times the first section is repeated). The Hyoshigi is always played by the head minister of the church or mission station. If the head minister is not present, anyone may take his or her place.

The daily service does not need to be performed at a church. It can be done at any time and anywhere, so long as that one faces the direction of the Jiba, or "home of the parent".

The purpose of the daily service, as taught by Miki Nakayama, is to sweep away the Eight Mental Dusts of the mind.

Tsukinamisai or the monthly service is a performance of the entire Mikagura-Uta, the sacred songs of the service, which is the service for world salvation. Generally, mission headquarters and grand churches (churches with 100 or more others under them) have monthly services performed on the third Sunday of every month; other churches perform on any other Sunday of the month. The monthly service at the Jiba is performed on the 26th of every month, the day of the month in which Tenrikyo was first conceived – October 26, 1838.

Instruments used in the monthly service are all of those aforementioned. Performers also include dancers – three men and three women – and a singer. Performers wear traditional montsuki, which may or may not be required depending on the church.

Marriage is an important institution in Tenrikyo. The term Tenrikyo uses to describe this institution is "husband and wife". Tenrikyo attaches great significance to the husband-wife relationship, viewing it as a key element of human society. The Scriptures describe this relationship as having been essential to the creation and development of humanity.

✓ ZENRINKYO



Zenrinkyō is a Shinto-based Shinshūkyō (Japanese new religion) founded in 1947. It was founded by Rikihisa Tatsusai as Tenchi Kōdō Zenrinkai, and is headquartered in Fukuoka Prefecture. Zenrinkyō was registered as a legal religious corporation under the Shūkyō Hōjinrei ordinance in 1948. In 2005 the group had a claimed nominal membership of 450,000 under leader Rikihisa Ryūseki.

✓ SHINMEIAISHINKAI

Shinmei Aishinkai is a Japanese new religious movement founded by Komatsu Shin'yō in 1976. Komatsu was born in Yokohama in 1928; her mother was the successor to a hereditary line of kannushi (Shinto priests). In 1976, an acquaintance of Komatsu's made a prophecy that a kami was about to descend to Earth. Shortly thereafter, Komatsu was visited in turn by a dragon god, Kannon and Amaterasu, the sun goddess. From that time forward, Komatsu dedicated herself to passing on knowledge from Amaterasu.

The Shinmei Aishinkai movement became an official religious organization in 1983.

The focus of the movement's practices are ritual purification (okiyome or osame) meant to give ascension to the spirits or jiki of departed people which are still bound to the earth. By doing so, the group hopes to ensure peace and prosperity throughout the world. To that end, rituals have been held following such events as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the September 11 attacks.

The movement's main festival, Kamiyo Gyōretsu "Whole World Procession", is held in autumn at the main Tokyo shrine and includes a parade in which members dress in period clothing and proceed through the city.

The five main gods worshipped by followers are Amaterasu, Takemikazuchi, Ninigi-no-Mikoto, Kannō, and Ame-no-tajikarao. However, others such as Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto are also regularly worshipped.

The Shinmei movement, like many Shinto-derived new religious movements includes a strong emphasis on divination and Wu Xing practices, known as kigaku. This includes the study of kasō, the floor plan of one's house and the influences of energy drawn from various compass directions and shares some similarities with feng shui. The group also has strong ties to Ise Grand Shrine (Mie Prefecture), where the goddess Amaterasu is believed to reside.

The main shrine is located in Tokyo. Branch shrines have been established in Hokkaido, Kyushu, Nasu (Tochigi Prefecture), and Hyōgo Prefecture.

TAOISM



Taoism/Daoism is generally thought to have begun with the writings of Lao-Tsu, a man from China who is attributed with writing the Tao te Ching, or the Book of the Way and its Power, some time between 604-531 BCE. It was adopted as the state religion of China in 440 CE, but ceased to be so in 1911.

Tao' means 'the Way', and the first cause of the universe: the force that flows through all life. It is the producer and source of order and stability. Taoists seek to live in harmony with that force, by leading a balanced life. Taoism is thus a nature-based philosophy, embodying four principles: Oneness (which starts and ends with the observation of nature), Dynamic Balance, Complementary Cycles and Harmonious Action. For Taoists time is cyclical, not linear as in western thinking.

The principles of Dynamic Balance and Complementary Cycles are embodied in the symbol of the Yin-Yang, which depicts the two opposite energies from whose interaction the universe is believed to have emerged. When these opposites are equally present, everything is calm, which is where the Taoist emphasis on balance comes from. This is also seen in the elements of fire, water, wood, metal and earth, which should be balanced wherever possible to create fortune, as well as in the practice of feng shui, which aims to balance the way the home is set out, in order to generate greater prosperity.

Taoism encourages its followers to accept life, with its good and its bad. It teaches that most suffering and weakness comes from resistance to natural processes. This is evident in the principle of Harmonious Action, which can be illustrated by the example of a bamboo stick bending with the wind. It overcomes the wind by yielding to it. If it were stiff it would break, but because it yields it overcomes. This can also be expressed in the art of wu wei, which is to let nature take its course, but also to be kind to other people because such actions are reciprocated.

Another Taoist principle is that each person has a life force (known as Chi) that should be looked after, and so health is considered very important. An individual's chief task is to develop their virtue – especially the three jewels of compassion, moderation and humility. Taoism emphasises the individual's responsibility to react to the situation, and is more concerned with guidelines for harmonious living than rules. Matters of dress etc are, therefore, determined by the culture of the person concerned.

Taoists do not pray, rather they seek to answer life's problems through inner meditation and outer observation. Many Taoists practice Tai Chi, which is a slow, controlled technique of movement and breathing.

Many Taoists believe in spirits of nature, or personified deities. Some may not believe in these as actual entities, but as symbols that help them to understand the world around them.

Most Taoists are of Chinese origin. However, increasing numbers of Westerners are becoming influenced by Taoist principles.

DIETARY PRACTICES

No uniform dietary practices are expected of all Taoists. Historically, most Taoists

accepted the general ideal that one should avoid foods that hinder self refinement and should favor foods more conducive to spiritual practice. Under Buddhist influence some Taoists began avoiding meat and other “stimulating” foods such as onions; earlier, the prime food to avoid was any kind of grain. Generally, Taoists have tended to regard rice and vegetables as wholesome, but there have never been dietary requirements for laypeople.

The invention of vegan food tofu was credit to a Taoist.

RITUALS

At certain dates, food may be set out as a sacrifice to the spirits of the deceased or the gods, such as during the Qingming Festival. This may include slaughtered animals, such as pigs and ducks, or fruit. Another form of sacrifice involves the burning of Joss paper, or Hell Bank Notes, on the assumption that images thus consumed by the fire will reappear - not as a mere image, but as the actual item-in the spirit world, making them available for revered ancestors and departed loved ones. At other points, a vegan diet or full fast may be observed.

Also on particular holidays, street parades take place. These are lively affairs which invariably involve firecrackers and flower-covered floats broadcasting traditional music. They also variously include lion dances and dragon dances.

Fortune-telling - including astrology, I Ching, and other forms of divination-has long been considered a traditional Taoist pursuit.

DRESS CODE

Taoists have no distinctive items of apparel.

The clerics of “Northern Taoism” favor simple cotton apparel in solid, muted colors, with formal robes for ceremonial occasions. The priests of “Southern Taoism” attract attention to their liturgical rites by wearing highly ornate silk robes, richly embroidered with images of heavenly bodies and animals such as fish and dragons, signifying the priest’s role as unifier of all spheres of existence.

WOMEN

Taoism is a gender-neutral religion. This is implied by the concept of Yin Yang which teaches that masculine and feminine are complementary, inseparable and equal.

The Tao Te Ching uses female images such as the mother of the universe and the mother of all things when describing the Tao.

Taoism has always accepted that women have an equal part to play in spiritual life. Women took priestly roles from the earliest days of organised Taoist religion and Taoist legend has many tales of female deities.

SACRED BOOKS

Unlike Christians, Jews, and Muslims, Taoists have never understood their religion as the faithful practice of teachings found in a clearly defined set of writings. Certain “Taoist ideas” did originate in classical texts like the Nei-yeh and the Tao te ching, but research has not yet revealed any “religious community” devoted to following their teachings. In that sense, the first “Taoist scripture” may have been the T’ai-p’ing ching (“Scripture of Grand Tranquility”)—a massive work of late antiquity. In another sense, the first “scripture” could be said to have been the Tu-jen ching (late fourth century; “Scripture for Human Salvation”), which presents itself as a verbalization of Tao itself.

HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY PLACES

Taoism has never had houses of worship comparable to Christian churches or Muslim mosques. For 2,000 years, however, Taoists have set up special places for their spiritual

practices. In medieval times Taoists began establishing kuan (temples, or abbeys), where male and female practitioners could go to immerse themselves in Taoist practice. Over time Taoists borrowed ideas from Buddhist institutions and added temple activities such as preserving old writings, housing traveling dignitaries, and providing a supplemental site for imperial ceremonies.

Today kuan across China are generally identified with the Ch'üan-chen tradition ("Northern Taoism").

PLACE OF WORSHIP

Taoists have many places of worship, including many temples, where Taoists perform ceremonies. There are generally three kinds of these temples; palace-like temples, ordinary temples and hut-like or cave temples. In most Taoist temples the "Three Pure Ones" are worshiped.

These rituals, festivals and places of worship are used so that Taoists may show their faith towards their gods and religion as well as communicate with those who have passed.

HOLY DAYS

The Taoist life has seldom been anchored to segments of the temporal year. Taoism has never had a "Sabbath," a common liturgical calendar, or holy seasons comparable to Easter and Christmas among Christians or Ramadan among Muslims. Generally, Taoists have observed the holidays and festivals common in the surrounding society, sometimes adding specifically Taoist ceremonies to the observance of such occasions.

FESTIVALS

Taoists have many festivals including; The Lantern Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, The Chinese New Year and Hungry Ghost Festival.

The Lantern Festival is a festival celebrated on the first full moon of the year. It is also the birthday of Tianguan, one of the Taoist gods. They eat dumplings called, Tangyuan, which represents happiness and family unity.

Tomb Sweeping Day, a festival believed to have derived from the Tang Dynasty, is a festival for ancestors and is performed at the graves of these ancestors on a particular day of the year.

Chinese New Year is probably the most popular celebration and involves burning paper statues of their Gods, believing this allows the spirits to fly up into heaven and report on the family's behavior.

The Hungry Ghost Festival is a festival in honor of the dead who were not given a proper funeral and are released from the underworld on this day. Offerings are made to the ghosts, prayers are said and entertainment and music events are held to please the spirits. These festivals are performed to please those who have passed and to pray for a happy and enriching year.

rites of passage

Taoists have no standard rites of passage keyed to boy's or girl's natural growth and maturation. Rather, Taoists tend to integrate their own rites - generally intended to signify an individual's spiritual development - with the generic rites of passage common throughout Chinese society. Taoism is not a religion into which a person is born, nor is it one into which a child's parents ritually induct him or her. There is thus no rite intended to confirm an infant as a member of the religion. Nor are there puberty rites that are specifically linked to Taoist religious identity. Rather, Chinese social traditions - disrupted by modernity - preserved ancient rites of ascendance (called "capping"), which have generally been regarded as Confucian, though they were never really tied to any

doctrinal or scriptural authority. Boys and girls alike had the choice, from puberty onward, to move beyond such rites - which simply confirmed a person in standard social roles - and to enter a specifically Buddhist or Taoist community. In early medieval times it was not uncommon for boys or girls to take that step in early adolescence. There has never been any regulation in this area, and entry into the religious community remains elective for any person at any age.

DEITIES

Westerners who study Taoism are sometimes surprised to discover that Taoists venerate gods, as there doesn't seem to be a place for deities in Taoist thinking.

Taoism does not have a God in the way that the Abrahamic religions do. There is no omnipotent being beyond the cosmos, who created and controls the universe. In Taoism the universe springs from the Tao, and the Tao impersonally guides things on their way.

But the Tao itself is not God, nor is it a god, nor is it worshipped by Taoists.

Nonetheless, Taoism has many gods, most of them borrowed from other cultures. These deities are within this universe and are themselves subject to the Tao.

WEDING CEREMONY

Wedding Ceremony the couple sit in a Pakua facing each other with the family surrounding them. While sitting in the Pakua the man guards an urn with a lit candle, this represents the element of fire. The woman guards a urn filled with water which represents the element of water. The ceremony begins after the couple lights the eight candles surrounding the Pakua. To conclude the ceremony the man places his urn of fire in the center of the Pakua followed by the woman putting hers with water on top. The fire and water create steam and the opposing elements form a union. The master of the ceremony does his part by reading vows and poems. After this the families will dance followed by a wedding feast.

DIVORCE

Taoists do not view marriage or divorce as religious matters. They see marriage and divorce as civil matters determined by law.

While Taoism does not necessarily prohibit the act of divorce, the concept of a divorce can often find itself at odds with Taoist principles of harmony and balance. Part of the divorce process for a Taoist would require an active stance toward changing the family composition, which has its own share of issues.

Because of their skepticism, they are of the belief that when a couple is experiencing marital strife, they should pursue options that promote familial wellness.

FUNERAL CEREMONY

Taoist ceremonies for the dead often include an altar upon which are placed a sacred lamp, two candles, tea, rice, and water. The sacred lamp symbolizes the light of wisdom, yet it could also be referred to as the Golden Pill or Elixir of Immortality. On each side of the lamp are two tall candles that symbolize the light of the sun, moon, and both eyes of the human body. The tea, rice and water are put in cups in front of the altar. The tea symbolizes yin, water is the energy of the yang, and rice represents the union of the yin and the yang.

Five plates of fruit are used to symbolize the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. These elements are further equated with specific colors: green, red, yellow, white, and black. These elements all go in a cycle that when balanced ensure that the body is healthy. An incense burner is placed in the middle of the five elements. The burning of the incense represents refinement and purification of the soul, also known as the inner

energies.

The ceremony usually takes place in a person's house and is held over an odd number of days, usually three, five or seven days. The candle is lit up for the body all that time before burial. During the vigil and the funeral the relatives wear white.

IMMORTALITY

A very common and major goal of most Taoists is to achieve immortality rather than enter the regular after life. Reaching this goal is not easy; there are various tasks that must be met during your entire lifetime to be qualified to be immortal. The two different categories of requirements for immortality include internal alchemy and external alchemy.

ABORTION

Taoism see abortion as a necessary evil. The Taoists believe abortion should only be used in a situation when the pregnancy would threaten the mother.

➤ CONTEMPORARY TAOISM-INSPIRED RELIGIONS

✓ YIGUANDAO



Yiguandao, meaning the Consistent Way or Persistent Way, is a Chinese folk religious sect that emerged from the Xiantiandao ("Way of Former Heaven") tradition in the late 19th century, in Shandong, to become China's most important redemptive society in the 1930s and 1940s, especially during the Japanese invasion. In the 1930s Yiguandao spread rapidly throughout China led by Zhang Tianran, who is the eighteenth patriarch of the Xiantiandao lineage, among thousands of other sects that thrived since the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911.

In the 1930s Yiguandao was a local religion of Shandong with a few thousand followers, but under Zhang Tianran's leadership and with missionary work the group grew to become the biggest sect in China in the 1940s with millions of followers. After 1949, Xiantiandao sects were proscribed as illegal secret societies and heretical cults. While still banned in China, Yiguandao was legally recognised in Taiwan in 1987 and has flourished since then.

Yiguandao is characterized by an eschatological and soteriological doctrine, presenting itself as the only way to salvation. It also encourages adherents to engage in missionary activity.

WORSHIP

Yiguandao is the worship of the source of the universal reality personified as the Eternal Venerable Mother, or the Splendid Highest Deity as in other folk religious sects.

Yiguandao focuses on the worship of the Mother of the Great Void (Wujimu), also known as the Unborn (or Limitless) Ancient Mother (Wusheng Laomu), which is also a feature of other Xiantiandao movements. It is the source of things, not female nor male, though it is called "mother" or "matrix".

DEITIES

The highest deity is the primordial energy of the universe, identified in Yiguandao thought with the Tao in the wuji or "unlimited" state and with fire. The name used in contemporary Yiguandao scriptures is the "Infinite Mother" and the "lantern of the Mother" —a flame representing the Mother—is the central focus of Yiguandao shrines.

DIET

Yiguan Dao promotes a strict vegetarian diet.

TEMPLES

Temples are located on the top floors of private homes and believers are organised in temple cells of eight to ten core followers per temple. Temples are organised in districts under the loose leadership of a master. The master presides over initiation ceremonies and guides the activities of the district faithful. He is treated with great respect. Due to the Yiguan Dao being organised as a secret sect, its members seek converts discretely.

RITUALS/PRACTICES

Ritual practice is an essential part of Yiguandao identity. Yiguandao ritual serves to unite congregations in common acts of respectful obeisance to the divine structure of the universe. To see the neat, evenly-spaced rows of members, all dressed in long white or grey gowns, as they kneel and rise in unison before the altar in long, complex ceremonies of worship is always an impressive sight.

The key rituals involve invocation, presentation of offerings, and initiation. All rituals take place facing the altar. The altar may house different deities or no deity figures at all. But the single essential element is the mudeng, the lamp signifying the Ancient Mother, along with two flanking flames. These are normally oil lamps lit and extinguished during the ceremonies.

There are also five rituals common to Yiguan Dao gatherings:

1. The Ritual of Saluting and Taking Leave of the Honourable Presence
2. The Ritual for Presenting Incense
3. The Ritual for Presenting Offerings
4. The Ritual for inviting Spirits to the Altar
5. The Ritual for Transmission of the Way/ The Rite of receiving the Way

RITE OF INITIATION

The rite of initiation involves the "offering of the Three Treasures" (chuan Sanbao), which are the xuanquan (the heavenly portal), the koujue (a mantra), and hetong (the hand gesture). The Three Treasures are the saving grace offered by the Eternal Mother to people who received the initiation, they enable Yiguandao members to transcend the circle of birth and death and directly ascend to Heaven after they die.

Yiguandao followers regard the initiation ceremony as the most important ritual, the full meaning of the Three Treasures is a secret of Yiguandao followers and is strictly prohibited to be spread openly to outsiders who did not go through the initiation process. The Three Treasures are also used in daily life as a form of meditation.

PRAYER/KOWTOWS

Religious activities include morning and evening prayer sessions but only the most devout carry them out daily. Believers are expected to attend at least on the full and new moon. Yiguan Dao praying involves very rapid kowtowing in a kneeled position while a cantor on the right announces the names of gods and a cantor on the left counts out the kowtows.

Yiguandao promotes a relatively strict moral vision. Members are strongly urged to be vegetarian. In the temples, most dress in uniforms. The men sport close-cropped hair; the women wear their hair in short cuts of buns and use hair nets. In addition, Yiguandao promotes a very Confucian vision of the proper life. One is humble and self-effacing. Hierarchy is respected, with seniority afforded many rights and deference's. One is expected to be filial. One way to express strong filial piety is by converting departed family members to Yiguandao. The departed can also be helped through the process of chaoba, a ritual of salvation for ancestors in which they are "pulled up" from the lower realms of hell.

✓ DUDEISM (The Church of the Latter-Day Dude)



Dudeist logo

Dudeism is a religion, philosophy, or lifestyle inspired by "The Dude", the protagonist of the Coen Brothers' 1998 film *The Big Lebowski*. Dudeism's stated primary objective is to promote a modern form of Chinese Taoism, outlined in *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi (6th century BC), blended with concepts from the Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BC), and presented in a style as personified by the character of Jeffrey "The Dude" Lebowski, a fictional character portrayed by Jeff Bridges in the film. Dudeism has sometimes been regarded as a mock religion due to its use of comedic film references and occasional criticism of religion in its traditional sense.

March 6 is the annual sacred high holy day of Dudeism: The Day of the Dude.

Dudeism's official organizational name is The Church of the Latter-Day Dude. An estimated 450,000 Dudeist Priests have been ordained worldwide as of May 2017 and marriages have been officiated legally by Dudeist clergy in some US states.

The Dudeist belief system is essentially a modernized form of Taoism stripped of all of its metaphysical and medical doctrines. Dudeism advocates and encourages the practice of "going with the flow", "being cool headed", and "taking it easy" in the face of life's difficulties, believing that this is the only way to live in harmony with our inner nature and the challenges of interacting with other people. It also aims to assuage feelings of inadequacy that arise in societies which place a heavy emphasis on achievement and personal fortune. Consequently, simple everyday pleasures like bathing, bowling, and hanging out with friends are seen as far preferable to the accumulation of wealth and the spending of money as a means to achieve happiness and spiritual fulfillment.

www.dudeism.org/ - look funny

OTHER

➤ CHINESE

✓ CHAN BUDDHISM

Chan, from Sanskrit dhyāna (meaning "meditation" or "meditative state"), is a tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It developed in China from the 6th century CE onwards, becoming dominant during the Tang and Song dynasties. After the Yuan, Chan more or less fused with Pure Land Buddhism.

Chan spread south to Vietnam as Thiền and north to Korea as Seon, and, in the 13th century, east to Japan as Zen.

Classical Chinese Chan is characterised by a set of polarities: absolute-relative, Buddha-nature – sunyata, sudden and gradual enlightenment, esoteric and exoteric transmission.

Chan is deeply rooted in the teachings and doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism. What the Chan tradition emphasizes is that enlightenment of the Buddha came not through intellectual reasoning, but rather through self-realization in Dharma practice and meditation. Therefore, it is held that it is primarily through Dharma practice and meditation that others may attain enlightenment and become Buddhas as well.

Central to Chan practice is dhyana or meditation. In the Lin-ji (Rinzai) school this is supplemented with koan study.

In meditation practice, the Chan tradition holds that the very notions of doctrine and teachings create various other notions and appearances that obscure the transcendent wisdom of each being's Buddha-nature.

Sitting meditation is called zuòchán, zazen in Japanese, both simply meaning "sitting dhyāna". During this sitting meditation, practitioners usually assume a position such as the lotus position, half-lotus, Burmese, or seiza postures. To regulate the mind, awareness is directed towards counting or watching the breath, or put in the energy center below the navel.

Often, a square or round cushion placed on a padded mat is used to sit on; in some other cases, a chair may be used.

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/religions-society-china/lecture/lwNgL/main-ideas-of-chan-buddhism>

✓ CHINESE FOLK RELIGION



Chinese folk religion (Chinese popular religion) or Han folk religion is the religious tradition of the Han people, including veneration of forces of nature and ancestors, exorcism of harmful forces, and a belief in the rational order of nature which can be

influenced by human beings and their rulers as well as spirits and gods.

Worship is devoted to a multiplicity of gods and immortals, who can be deities of phenomena, of human behaviour, or progenitors of lineages. Stories regarding some of these gods are collected into the body of Chinese mythology.

Chinese religious practices are diverse, varying from province to province and even from one village to another, for religious behaviour is bound to local communities, kinship, and environments. In each setting, institution and ritual behaviour assumes highly organised forms.

Temples and the gods in them acquire symbolic character and perform specific functions involved in the everyday life of the local community. Local religion preserves aspects of natural beliefs such as totemism, animism and shamanism.

Chinese folk religion pervades all aspects of social life.

Deity or temple associations and lineage associations, pilgrimage associations and formalised prayers, rituals and expressions of virtues, are the common forms of organisation of Chinese religion on the local level. Neither initiation rituals nor official membership into a church organisation separate from one person's native identity are mandatory in order to be involved in religious activities. Contrary to institutional religions, Chinese religion does not require "conversion" for participation.

The prime criterion for participation in Chinese folk religion is not "to believe" in an official doctrine or dogma, but "to belong" to the local unit of Chinese religion, that is the "association", the "village" or the "kinship", with their gods and rituals.

Chinese religion in its communal expression involves the worship of gods that are the generative power and tutelary spirit (*genius loci*) of a locality or a certain aspect of nature (for example water gods, river gods, fire gods, mountain gods), or of gods that are common ancestors of a village, a larger identity, or the Chinese nation (Shennong, Huangdi, Pangu).

The social structure of this religion is the *shénshè* (literally "society of a god"), synonymous with *shehui*, in which *shè* originally meant the altar of a community's earth god, while *huì* means "association", "assembly", "church" or "gathering". This type of religious trusts can be dedicated to a god which is bound to a single village or temple or to a god which has a wider following, in multiple villages, provinces or even a national importance.

These societies organise gatherings and festivals (*miaohui*) participated by members of the whole village or larger community on the occasions of what are believed to be the birthdays of the gods or other events, or to seek protection from droughts, epidemics, and other disasters. Such festivals invoke the power of the gods for practical goals to "summon blessings and drive away harm".

This type of religion is prevalent in north China, where lineage religion is absent, private, or historically present only within families of southern origin, and patrilineal ties are based on seniority, and villages are composed of people with different surnames. In this context, the deity societies or temple societies function as poles of the civil organism.

Another dimension of the Chinese folk religion is based on family or genealogical worship of deities and ancestors in family altars or private temples, or ancestral shrines. Kinship associations or churches, congregating people with the same surname and belonging to the same kin, are the social expression of this religion: these lineage societies build temples where the deified ancestors of a certain group are enshrined and worshipped. These temples serve as centres of aggregation for people belonging to the

same lineage, and the lineage body may provide a context of identification and mutual assistance for individual persons.

The construction of large and elaborate ancestral temples traditionally represents a kin's wealth, influence and achievement.

This type of religion prevails in south China, where lineage bonds are stronger and the patrilineal hierarchy is not based upon seniority, and access to corporate resources held by a lineage is based upon the equality of all the lines of descent.

Chinese religions are polytheistic, meaning that many deities are worshipped as part of what has been defined as *yǔzhòu shénlùn*, translated as "cosmotheism", a worldview in which divinity is inherent to the world itself.

In Chinese tradition, there is not a clear distinction between the gods and their physical body or bodies (from stars to trees and animals); the qualitative difference between the two seems not to have ever been emphasised. Rather, the disparity is said to be more quantitative than qualitative.

In folk religions, gods (*shen*) and immortals (*xian*) are not specifically distinguished from each other.

Classical Chinese has characters for different types of sacrifice, probably the oldest way to communicate with divine forces, today generally encompassed by the definition *jìsì*. However different in scale and quantity, all types of sacrifice would normally involve food, wine, meat and later incense.

Sacrifices usually differ according to the kind of deity they are devoted to.

Chinese language has a variety of words defining the temples of the Chinese religion. Collective names defining "temples" or places of worship are *simiào* and *miàoyǔ*.

Temples can be public, private (*simiào*) and household temples (*jiāmiào*). The *jing* is a broader "territory of a god", a geographic region or a village or city with its surroundings, marked by multiple temples or complexes of temples and delineated by the processions.

Ancestral shrines are sacred places in which lineages of related families, identified by shared surnames, worship their common progenitors. These temples are the "collective representation" of a group, and function as centers where religious, social and economic activities intersect.

Chinese temples are traditionally built according to the styles and materials (wood and bricks) of Chinese architecture, and this continues to be the rule for most of the new temples.

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/religions-society-china/lecture/354qJ/basics-of-chinese-folk-religions>

✓ FALUN GONG



Falun Gong - Logo (The Falun Dafa emblem)

Falun Gong is a modern Chinese spiritual practice that combines meditation and qigong

exercises with a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. The practice emphasizes morality and the cultivation of virtue, and identifies as a qigong practice of the Buddhist school, though its teachings also incorporate elements drawn from Taoist traditions. Through moral rectitude and the practice of meditation, practitioners of Falun Gong aspire to eliminate attachments, and ultimately to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

Falun Gong was first taught publicly in Northeast China in 1992 by Li Hongzhi.

The practice initially enjoyed support from Chinese officialdom, but by the mid to late 1990s, the Communist Party and public security organizations increasingly viewed Falun Gong as a potential threat due to its size, independence from the state, and spiritual teachings.

On 20 July 1999, the Communist Party leadership initiated a nationwide crackdown and multifaceted propaganda campaign intended to eradicate the practice. It blocked Internet access to websites that mention Falun Gong, and in October 1999 it declared Falun Gong a "heretical organization" that threatened social stability. Falun Gong practitioners in China are reportedly subject to a wide range of human rights abuses: hundreds of thousands are estimated to have been imprisoned extrajudicially, and practitioners in detention are subject to forced labor, psychiatric abuse, torture, and other coercive methods of thought reform at the hands of Chinese authorities. As of 2009, human rights groups estimated that at least 2,000 Falun Gong practitioners had died as a result of abuse in custody. Some observers put the number much higher, and report that tens of thousands may have been killed to supply China's organ transplant industry (see Organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners in China). In the years since the persecution began, Falun Gong practitioners have become active in advocating for greater human rights in China.

Falun Gong is also known as Falun Dafa. Technically, Falun Gong refers to the practice, while Falun Dafa refers to the teaching of the movement, but the terms are now generally used interchangeably.

The teachings of Falun Gong draw from the Asian religious traditions of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Chinese folklore as well as those of Western New Age movements.

BELIEFS

The central concept of Falun Gong is the falun. While in traditional Chinese Buddhism falun means the "wheel of law" or "wheel of dharma," here the word refers to the center of spiritual energy in the human body, akin to a chakra. It is located in the lower abdomen and can be awakened (or "installed") through a set of exercises.

The falun is regarded as a microcosm of the universe; once it is installed into the abdomen, it rotates continuously. When the falun turns clockwise, it absorbs energy from the universe into the body; when it turns counter-clockwise it eliminates waste from the body. Some Falun Gong practitioners whose "celestial eye" (tianmu) is open, can see the falun, which looks like the Falun Gong symbol.

PRACTICES

Followers of Falun Gong believe that the falun can be awakened (or "installed") through a set of exercises called Xiu Lian ("Cultivating and Practicing"). This dispels karma that causes illness, and thus can cure and prevent disease.

Falun Gong has its origins in Qi Gong (Chinese: "Energy Working"), the use of meditation techniques and physical exercise to achieve good health and peace of mind, which has a long history in Chinese culture and religion.

Unlike other Qi Gong groups, Falun Gong insists that its founder is the only authoritative source for determining the correct exercises and that a spiritual discipline, the "cultivation of the Xinxing" ("Mind-Nature"), is essential to the success of the exercises.

The practice of Falun Gong consists of five exercises, four standing and one sitting, which involve meditation and slow movements. Falun Gong practitioners also "study the universal principles of truthfulness, benevolence, and tolerance."

TEXTS

The main text of Falun Gong is Li Hongzhi's book, *Zhuan Falun* (Turning the Law Wheel). There is also a book for beginners by Li Hongzhi called *Falun Gong*.

Falun Gong members gather in parks and do slow tai-chi-like exercises to the sound of slow, mellow Chinese music. They also meditate in a variety of positions. Favorite positions include standing and reaching for the sky, standing up and making an "O" sign with the arms and sitting down in lotus position and holding an invisible box on the top and bottom with parallel arms.

Falun Gong members also take part in revival-meeting-like "exchanges" in which they stand up before a group, describe a past sin or illness, give thanks to the healing power of Master Li and then claim to be cured or reformed.

✓ YIGUANDAO



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Yiguandao is characterized by an eschatological and soteriological doctrine, presenting itself as the only way to salvation. It also encourages adherents to engage in missionary activity.

WORSHIP

Yiguandao is the worship of the source of the universal reality personified as the Eternal Venerable Mother, or the Splendid Highest Deity as in other folk religious sects. Yiguandao focuses on the worship of the Mother of the Great Void (Wujimu), also known

as the Unborn (or Limitless) Ancient Mother (Wusheng Laomu), which is also a feature of other Xiantian dao movements. It is the source of things, not female nor male, though it is called "mother" or "matrix".

DEITIES

The highest deity is the primordial energy of the universe, identified in Yiguandao thought with the Tao in the wuji or "unlimited" state and with fire. The name used in contemporary Yiguandao scriptures is the "Infinite Mother" and the "lantern of the Mother" - a flame representing the Mother - is the central focus of Yiguandao shrines.

DIET

Yiguan Dao promotes a strict vegetarian diet.

TEMPLES

Temples are located on the top floors of private homes and believers are organised in temple cells of eight to ten core followers per temple. Temples are organised in districts under the loose leadership of a master. The master presides over initiation ceremonies and guides the activities of the district faithful. He is treated with great respect. Due to the Yiguan Dao being organised as a secret sect, its members seek converts discretely.

RITUALS/PRACTICES

Ritual practice is an essential part of Yiguandao identity. Yiguandao ritual serves to unite congregations in common acts of respectful obeisance to the divine structure of the universe. To see the neat, evenly-spaced rows of members, all dressed in long white or grey gowns, as they kneel and rise in unison before the altar in long, complex ceremonies of worship is always an impressive sight.

The key rituals involve invocation, presentation of offerings, and initiation. All rituals take place facing the altar. The altar may house different deities or no deity figures at all. But the single essential element is the mudeng, the lamp signifying the Ancient Mother, along with two flanking flames. These are normally oil lamps lit and extinguished during the ceremonies.

There are also five rituals common to Yiguan Dao gatherings:

1. The Ritual of Saluting and Taking Leave of the Honourable Presence
2. The Ritual for Presenting Incense
3. The Ritual for Presenting Offerings
4. The Ritual for inviting Spirits to the Altar
5. The Ritual for Transmission of the Way/ The Rite of receiving the Way

RITE OF INITIATION

The rite of initiation involves the "offering of the Three Treasures" (chuan Sanbao), which are the xuan guan (the heavenly portal), the kou jue (a mantra), and hetong (the hand gesture). The Three Treasures are the saving grace offered by the Eternal Mother to people who received the initiation, they enable Yiguandao members to transcend the circle of birth and death and directly ascend to Heaven after they die.

Yiguandao followers regard the initiation ceremony as the most important ritual, the full meaning of the Three Treasures is a secret of Yiguandao followers and is strictly prohibited to be spread openly to outsiders who did not go through the initiation process. The Three Treasures are also used in daily life as a form of meditation.

PRAYER/KOWTOWS

Religious activities include morning and evening prayer sessions but only the most devout carry them out daily. Believers are expected to attend at least on the full and new moon. Yiguan Dao praying involves very rapid kowtowing in a kneeled position while a

cantor on the right announces
the names of gods and a cantor on the left counts out the kowtows.

Yiguandao promotes a relatively strict moral vision. Members are strongly urged to be vegetarian.

In the temples, most dress in uniforms. The men sport close-cropped hair; the women wear their hair in short cuts of buns and use hair nets. In addition, Yiguandao promotes a very Confucian vision of the proper life. One is humble and self-effacing. Hierarchy is respected, with seniority afforded many rights and deference's. One is expected to be filial. One way to express strong filial piety is by converting departed family members to Yiguandao. The departed can also be helped through the process of chaoba, a ritual of salvation for ancestors in which they are "pulled up" from the lower realms of hell.

✓ MOHISM

Mohism or Moism (aka. Mohist School of Logic) was an ancient Chinese philosophy of logic, rational thought and science developed by the academic scholars who studied under the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi (c. 470 BC–c. 391 BC) and embodied in an eponymous book: the Mozi. It evolved at about the same time as Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism, and was one of the four main philosophic schools from around 770–221 BC (during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods). During that time, Mohism was seen as a major rival to Confucianism. The administrative thought of Mohism was absorbed by Chinese Legalism and its books were later merged into the Taoist canon, all but disappearing as an independent school of thought.

Mohism is best known for the concepts of "impartial care" This is often translated and popularized as "Universal Love", which is misleading as Mozi believed that the essential problem of human ethics was an excess of partiality in compassion, not a deficit in compassion as such. His aim was to re-evaluate behaviour, not emotions or attitudes.

Mohism promotes a philosophy of impartial caring; that is, a person should care equally for all other individuals, regardless of their actual relationship to him or her.

Mozi is known for his insistence that all people are equally deserving of receiving material benefit and being protected from physical harm. In Mohism, morality is defined not by tradition and ritual, but rather by a constant moral guide that parallels utilitarianism. Tradition varies from culture to culture, and human beings need an extra-traditional guide to identify which traditions are morally acceptable. The moral guide must then promote and encourage social behaviours that maximize the general utility of all the people in that society.

Unlike hedonistic utilitarianism, which views pleasure as a moral good, "the basic goods in Mohist consequentialist thinking are... order, material wealth, and increase in population". During Mozi's era, war and famines were common, and population growth was seen as a moral necessity for a harmonious society. The "material wealth" of Mohist consequentialism refers to basic needs like shelter and clothing.

Mozi disagrees with the fatalistic mindset of people, accusing the mindset of bringing about poverty and suffering.

✓ Xiantiandao

The Xiantiandao; literally: "Way of Former Heaven", or "Way of the Primordial"; also simply Tiandao; literally: "Way of Heaven"; is one of the most productive currents of Chinese folk religious sects, characterised by representing the principle of divinity as feminine and by a concern for salvation (moral completion) of mankind.

Xiantiandao was founded in Jiangxi in the 17th century Qing dynasty as an offshoot of the Venerable Officials' teaching of fasting, a branch of the Dacheng or Yuandun eastern proliferation of Luoism.

The Xiantiandao religions were considered heterodox and suppressed throughout the history of China; they are still mostly forbidden in China, yet they thrive in Taiwan where at least 7% of the population adheres to some sect derived from the Xiantiandao.

The Xiantiandao movement is not limited only to Chinese-speaking countries, with at least one sect, the Tendō ("Way of Heaven"), active in Japan.

➤ KOREAN

✓ CHEONDOISM



Cheondoism Symbol



Cheondoism Flag

Cheondoism; literally "Religion of the Heavenly Way" is a 20th-century Korean religious movement, based on the 19th-century Donghak neo-Confucian movement founded by Choe Je-u and codified under Son Byeong-hui. Cheondoism has its origins in the peasant rebellions which arose starting in 1812 during the Joseon dynasty.

Cheondoism is essentially Confucian in origin, but incorporates elements of Korean shamanism. It places emphasis on personal cultivation, social welfare in the present world, and rejects any notion of an afterlife. A splinter movement is Suwunism.

Cheondoist theology is basically monotheistic, pantheistic and panentheistic.

In keeping with its roots in Confucian thought, Cheondoism venerates Heaven as the ultimate principle of good and justice, which is referred to by the honorific term Haneullim or "Divine Master".

Cheondoism members believe god called 'Hanul'. God is both transcendent and immanent in Heaven, Earth, and Man. According to the church doctrine, the term "Hanul" does not only mean Heaven but represents the whole universe. This title implies the quality of Heaven as "instructor", that is a belief that man and things are not created by a supernatural (out of nature) God, but generated by a God that is inner in things.

Also in keeping with its Confucian background, Cheondoism places emphasis on personal cultivation in the belief that as one improves their innate nature, one comes closer to

Heaven, and that all things are the same as Heaven in terms of their innate quality.

EQUALITY

The fundamental doctrine of the religion is that all human being is equal because all people serve the god in their mind when born, so believers desperately oppose the hierarchy. And depending on equality for all, it insisted that children should be respected.

SACRED TEXT

The sacred text is called the Great Sacred Scripture and contains the commandments in the word of the Hanulnim (the Master Heaven within all living things).

Followers believe that improving the self, brings one closer to Heaven and that this earthly existence can be converted into a paradise.

Over time, Cheondoism has also adapted elements of other Korean religious traditions including Taoism and Buddhism and also Christianity.

As of 2005, Cheondoism had about 1.13 million followers and 280 churches in South Korea. Very little is known of the activities of Cheondoists in North Korea. According to official statistics, Cheondoism had 2.8 million adherents in North Korea (12.9% of the total population) as of 2000. Cheondoists are nominally represented in North Korean politics by the minor Cheondoist Chongu Party.

✓ DAEJONGISM



Daejongism - symbol

Daejongism ("religion of the Divine Progenitor" or "great ancestral religion") or Dangunism ("religion of Dangun") is the name of a number of religious movements within the framework of Korean shamanism, focused on the worship of Dangun (or Tangun).

There are around seventeen of these groups, the main one of which was founded in Seoul in 1909 by Na Cheol.

Dangunists believe their mythos to be the authentic Korean native religion, that was already around as Gosindo ("way of the Ancestral God" or "ancient way of God") at the time of the first Mongol invasions of Korea, and that was revived as "Daejongism" (Daejonggyo) just at the start of the Japanese occupation. The religion was suppressed during the Japanese rule.

The religion believes in one God manifested in three persons, whose earthly incarnation was the legendary king Dangun, who ruled over a Korean empire around 5000 years ago. Its main tenet is that the Koreans have their own God and they have no need to worship foreign gods. Its emphasis is on the national identity and unity of the Korean people (known as minjok) and as such has been associated with Korean nationalism (and sometimes ultranationalism).

Daejongism does not focus so much on institutions or rituals but rather on central doctrines and associated mythologies, so that it is more definable as a creed or a faith

system rather than an organized religion.

Central to the faith is the belief in Haneullim, the triad of Gods of Korean culture.

The faith is embodied in three sacred texts.

Daejongism is also well-known for its teaching of breathing techniques, known in the West as part of the so called internal alchemy (Neidan in Taoism). Daejongism's techniques focus on the "sea of energy," which is also often referred to as the cinnabar field or the elixir field (tanjón). The tanjon is a field rich in the vital energy Qi and the religion offers techniques to draw on this field and circulate the energy through the human body. These techniques became extremely popular in the 1970s and generated a new interest in Daejongism and its school of internal alchemy, known as Kich'ónmun.

✓ **DAESUN JINRIHOE**



Daesun Jinrihoe – Logo

Daesun Jinrihoe, which in its English-language publications has recently used the transliteration Daesoonjinrihoe and, from 2017, Daesoon Jinrihoe, is a Korean new religious movement, founded in April 1969 by Park Han-gyeong, known to his followers as Park Wudang (1917–96). Daesoon thought is said to be a comprehensive system of truth representing the Great Dao of "resolution of grievances and reciprocation of gratitude into mutual beneficence".

Daesun Jinrihoe followers believe that Gang Il-Sun was Sangjenim, or the Supreme God, in human form. Sangjenim descended to earth and assumed human form at the end of 19th century in order to teach human beings the ritual for the Reordering of the Universe. Other revered figures include Jesus Christ, the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, buddhas and bodhisattvas. Daesoon jinri hoe articulates its four tenets, which are Harmony of yin and yang, Harmonious union of divine beings and human beings, Resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence and Unification with Dao. These four tenets contain the whole teachings of Sangjenim.

Daesoon Jinrihoe teachings are often similar to Confucianism, including an emphasis on reverence, sincerity, and trust, but they diverge from the patriarchy and social hierarchy of that belief.

Daesoon jinri hoe builds on terminology and ideas found in all of Korea's religious traditions, so some call it the "quintessential Korean religion".

Some followers of the religion believe in a Trinity (similar to the beliefs of another Korean religion, Taejonggyo), made up of Gang Il-Sun, Cho Ch'ölje, and Park Han-gyeong.

The practice ("cultivation") of Daesoon Jinrihoe is summarized in its Creeds, divided into the Four Cardinal Mottos and the Three Essential Attitudes. The Four Cardinal Mottos are: quieting the mind, quieting the body, respect for Heaven, and cultivation. The Three Essential Attitudes include sincerity, respectfulness, and faithfulness.

The cultivation includes gongbu (a specifically timed devotional incantation ritual held at the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, which is believed to hasten the opening up of the coming Earthly Paradise), spiritual training, and prayer.

Gongbu is divided into sihak and sibeop, which are different ways to chant incantations in specifically designated places and in certain ways. Spiritual practice refers to chanting the Tae-eul mantra without a designated place or time.

The prayer is divided into daily prayer and weekly prayers. The daily prayer is performed at 1 AM, 7 AM, 1 PM, and 7 PM. The weekly prayers, or prayers for the fifth day of every traditional Korean week (which consists of five days), are practiced in a designated place or at home, at 11 PM, 5 AM, 11 AM, and 5 PM.

More elaborate and collective devotional offerings (Chiseong) are held on the dates of birth and death of Kang Jeungsan, Jo Jeungsan, and Park Wudang, and of major religious events in the history of the movement, as well as on dates related to seasonal divisions, especially the Winter solstice, the Summer solstice, and the beginnings of Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

✓ JEUNG SAN DO



The symbol of Jeungsanist organizations (Logo)

Jeung San Do, occasionally called Jeungsanism, meaning "The Dao/Tao of Jeung-san", although this term is better reserved for a larger family of movements, is a new religious movement founded in South Korea in 1974.

The religion is characterised by a universal message, millenarianism, and a method of healing meditation.

The holy text of Jeung San Do, the Dojeon, was written in 1992 and provides an account of the teachings of Jeung San Sangjenim and Taemonim. Sangjenim means "God the father" and Jeung San, who was born in 1871, is a well known individual in Korea. He is regarded by most as a prophet and a miracle worker, but his followers believe that he was the embodiment of God.

Jeung San Do's followers worship Jeung-San Sangjenim and Subunim. Subunim was the successor of Sangjenim.

The sacred actions of Jeung San Do involve meditation. Followers believe meditation will cultivate both their eternal and mortal life, and ultimately allow them to become reborn into the cosmic Autumn Gaebyeok. They believe chanting meditation opens them to the spiritual nature of the universe, and heals their bodies, minds, and souls. Jeung San Do practices eight mantras:

The Tae Eul Ju Mantra

The Jinaekju Mantra

The Unjangju Mantra

The Jeolhuju Mantra

The Gaengsaengju Mantra
The Chilseonggyeong Mantra
The Jinbeopju Mantra
The Gaebyeokju Mantra

Jeung San Do's practitioners devote themselves to rituals, learning, meditation, and sharing. Through their rituals, they worship and honor Sangjenim and Taemonim, the spirits of heaven and earth, and ancestors. The learning of their teachings takes place at Jeung San Do University, at their dao centers, or in their own homes. Meditation is a vital practice for renewal.

Jeung San Do practitioners believe in Heaven, thus an afterlife.

The Dojeon is Jeung San Do's most sacred scripture, presenting the lives, works, and teachings of Sangjenim and Taemonim.

Jeung San Do celebrates holidays from the cosmic year. They include:

- Later Heaven Gaebyeok, including the seasons Autumn and Winter
- Early Heaven Gaebyeok, including the seasons Spring and Summer
- In the Autumn Gaebyeok, followers meditate to the Tae Eul Ju mantra.
- Another celebrated event is the Songnisan falling leaves festival in Boeun county, South Korea.

Jeung San Do practitioners do not have many religious festivities of their own, so they celebrate cultural Korean holidays.

The spiritual teachings of the past and present that profess the equality of men and women do so with the mouth and not the deed; but in Jeung San Do, this equality truly manifests. As part of His decree of a new destiny of equality between yin and yang in which women would be freed from their oppressive lives of servitude and persecution, Sangjenim conferred His dao lineage and authority not upon a man, but upon a woman: Taemonim.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RCdFmW4xO4>

✓ JUCHE

Juche usually left untranslated, or translated as "self-reliance", is the official state ideology of North Korea, described by the government as Kim Il-sung's "original, brilliant and revolutionary contribution to national and international thought". It postulates that "man is the master of his destiny", that the North Korean masses are to act as the "masters of the revolution and construction", and that by becoming self-reliant and strong can a nation achieve true socialism.

Juche was adopted into a set of principles that the North Korean government has used to justify its policy decisions from the 1950s onwards. Such principles include moving the nation towards claimed "jaju" (independence), through the construction of "jarip" (national economy) and an emphasis upon "jawi" (self-defence), in order to establish socialism.

The Practice is firmly rooted in the ideals of sustainability through agricultural independence and a lack of dependency.

The Juche ideology has been criticized by many scholars and observers as a mechanism for sustaining the totalitarian rule of the North Korean regime, and justifying the country's heavy-handed isolationism and oppression of the North Korean people. It has also been

described as a form of Korean ethnic nationalism, but one which promotes the Kim family as the saviours of the "Korean Race" and acts as a foundation of the subsequent personality cult surrounding them.

Despite the religious features of Juche, it is a highly atheistic ideology that discourages the practice of mainstream religions. This draws from Juche's Marxist-Leninist origins. North Korea is officially an atheist state, much like the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is guided in its activities by the Juche idea authored by President Kim Il Sung. The Juche idea means, in a nutshell, that the masters of the revolution and construction are the masses of the people and that they are also the motive force of the revolution and construction.

The Juche idea is based on the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything. It is the man-centred world outlook and also a political philosophy to materialize the independence of the popular masses, namely, a philosophy which elucidates the theoretical basis of politics that leads the development of society along the right path.

The Government of the DPRK steadfastly maintains Juche in all realms of the revolution and construction.

Establishing Juche means adopting the attitude of a master towards the revolution and construction of one's country. It means maintaining an independent and creative standpoint in finding solutions to the problems which arise in the revolution and construction. It implies solving those problems mainly by one's own efforts and in conformity with the actual conditions of one's own POLITICS country.

✓ GASIN FAITH

In Korean shamanism, Gasin, literally "House's God" are a branch of deities believed to protect the various objects and rooms of the house, such as jangdok or the kitchen.

The Gasin faith is the faith based on worshipping these deities. The worshipping of the Gasin form a central and integral part of Korean shamanism.

✓ KOREAN SHAMANISM



Korean Shamanism, also known as Muism or Sinism Singyo "religion of the shin [gods]", is the collective term for the ethnic religions of Korea and the Koreans.

In contemporary Korean language, the shaman-priest or mu is known as a mudang if female or baksu if male, although other names are used.

Korean mu "shaman" is synonymous with Chinese wu, which defines priests both male and female.

The role of the mudang is to act as intermediary between the spirits or gods, and the human plain, through gut (rituals), seeking to resolve problems in the patterns of development of human life.

One part the faith is the belief in Haneullim or Hwanin, meaning "source of all being", and of all gods of nature.

Other myths link the heritage of the traditional faith to Dangun, male son of the Heavenly King and initiator of the Korean nation.

Korean Muism has similarities with Chinese Wuism, Japanese Shinto, Ainu religion and with the Siberian and Manchurian religious traditions. In some provinces of Korea the shaman is still called dangul dangul-ari.

According to various sociological studies, many Christian churches in Korea make use of practices rooted in shamanism.

Korean shamanism encompasses a variety of indigenous beliefs and practices that have been influenced by Buddhism and Taoism.

Shamanism was mixed with elements of animism, where natural features such as trees, mountains, rocks, and rivers are believed to possess their own spirits, and with the idea of geomancy, where any placement of houses, temples, and graves, for example, is carefully considered to take into account and best benefit from the location of such spirit-dwellings and life forces.

A shaman, at least for believers, has the ability not only to establish contact with these spirits but to actually enter their world. Alternatively, in a kut ritual, a spirit or specific god may temporarily possess or cohabit the body of the shaman and be capable of holding a conversation. He or she does this in an altered state of consciousness or trance which is reached through prolonged chanting and dancing accompanied by drumming and bell ringing.

Finally, shamans were also credited with healing powers and the ability to promote positive effects on the body such as fertility and longevity.

To become a shaman did not require any particular ceremony, learning, or initiation. Self-appointed, shamans often claimed a spiritual experience, typically during an illness, and so practised then onwards. Daughters of mudang commonly followed their mother's footsteps and became shamans too. These shamans had no particular place or temple in which to practice their abilities but performed wherever they were needed. Some shaman shrines did exist, such as those in mountain areas dedicated to Sansin, the Mountain God.

The mudang, usually a woman, serves as an intercessors between a god or gods and human beings.

Shamans hold gut, or services, to invoke good fortune for clients, cure illnesses by exorcising evil spirits, or propitiate local or village gods. Frequently, such services help guide the spirit of a deceased person to heaven.

In the shamanistic rite gut, the shaman offers a sacrifice to the spirits. Through singing and dancing the shaman invokes the spirits to intercede in the fortunes of the humans in question. The shaman wears a very colorful costume and normally speaks in trance. During a gut a shaman changes their costume several times. Three elements make up the gut. First, spirits as the object of folk beliefs. Second, the believers who pray to those spirits. Finally, the shaman mediating between the two. The actual form of gut varies between regions. The plot of the shamanistic rite depends largely on the objective of the ceremony, the individual character and ability of the shaman, and finally, fine differences in style. Naerim-gut, dodang-gut, and ssitgim-gut comprise the main variations of gut.

The shamans can either be hereditary or spirit-possessed.

Purity of both the body and the mind is a state that is required for taking part in rituals. Purification is considered necessary for an efficacious communion between living people and ancestral forms. Before any gut is performed, the altar is always purified by fire and water, as part of the first gori of the ritual itself. The colour white, extensively used in rituals, is regarded as a symbol of purity. The purification of the body is performed by burning white paper.

Korean shamanism did not have dawn prayer meetings, mountain fasting prayer, mysterious union with the Spirit or a well-developed eschatology.

Korean shamans were exclusively female, and they tried to solve people's misfortunes by appeasing household spirits or the spirits of the deceased through kut ceremonies.

They dress in a bright colored dress with a black hat for ceremonies and usually hold symbolic weapons like tridents and knives in their hands.

The most elaborate and lavish kind of mudang kut is the kut for the dead. It is sometimes called Chinogi kut, a peace-giving ceremony for the dead, or the releasing of the soul of an ancestor.

Chinogi kut is usually performed three months after the death. A kut performed immediately after the death, for the "freeing" of the dead, is usually called "shikim kut".

The kut for the dead is to guide the dead soul to "heaven" in peace.

Korean shaman rituals do not describe heaven or hell except by borrowing from Buddhism and other religions. There is no good place or bad place to go after death. But it is good to die completely.

✓ **WON BUDDHISM**



Wŏn Buddhism is a modernized form of Buddhism that seeks to make enlightenment possible for everyone and applicable to regular life.

The scriptures are simplified so that they are easy to understand and their applications to life are made clear.

Practice is simplified so that anyone, regardless of their wealth, occupation, or other external living conditions, can still practice Buddhism. Practices that are considered outdated, confusing, or unnecessary are removed.

Because of the major changes that Won Buddhists have made to their practice, Won Buddhism can be regarded either as a new religious movement or as a form of Buddhism.

Won Buddhist doctrine is split into two gates by which enlightenment is attained. The first, the Gate of Faith, is made up of the Fourfold Grace and the Four Essentials, which together make up the necessary mindset of a practitioner. The second gate is the Gate of Practice, composed of the Threefold Study and the Eight Articles, which make up the necessary behaviors of a practitioner.

Scriptures of Won Buddhism include The Principal Book of Won Buddhism (Wonbulgyo

chongjon) and The Discourse of the Great Master Dharma Words (Daejonggyeong). Won Buddhism has a network of about 350 temples in Korea, organized in 16 districts. In contrast to traditional Seon and Hwaom Temples, Won Temples are located in cities so that people can visit them easily, to pray, to hold memorial services, to find peace, to attend Dharma services, and to meditate.

There are five major holy places revered by Won Buddhists:

- Yeongsan, the birthplace of Great Master Sotaesan,
- Injang Rock on Bongnae Mountain, where The Great Master organized his ideas and began teaching.
- Manduksan, site of the first Zen retreat, where the Great Master and his disciples spent a month in meditation and training in Won Buddhism year nine.
- Won Buddhism's Headquarters in Iksan, which includes many historical sites and buildings, including the sacred pagodas that hold the ashes of the Great Master Sotaesan and Venerable Chongsan.
- The birth house of Won Buddhism's second head Dharma master, Venerable Chongsan.

✓ SUWUNISM

Suunism is one of the Korean ethnic religions derived from Sinism. "Suwun" was another name used by Choe Je-u. Suwunists claim to have transmitted a purer version of his teaching.

The religion's headquarters are located in Daejeon, where Suwun himself moved in 1929 after having preached in Seoul since 1923.

The religion focuses on the worship of Okhwangsangje Hanulim (the "Great Jade Emperor of Heaven"), in order to make the earth a paradise through the reconnection to the One.

An important symbol of the faith is Gungeul ("Archer Bird").

The doctrine includes belief in the Maitreya.

➤ VIETNAMESE

✓ CAO ĐÀI



Cao Đài's left eye



Cao Dai Eye of Providence

Cao Đài is a syncretistic, monotheistic religion officially established in the city of Tây Ninh, southern Vietnam in 1926. The religion combines Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism,

Confucianism and Islam. The full name of the religion is Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (great religion of the third period of revelation and salvation).

Cao Dai uses ethical precepts from Confucianism, occult practices from Taoism, theories of Karma and Rebirth from Buddhism ,and a hierarchical organization (including a Pope) from Christianity.

Cao Đài literally the "Highest Lord" or "Highest Power" is the supreme deity, believed by Caodaists to have created the universe.

The symbol of the faith is the Left Eye of God, representing the yang (masculine, ordaining, positive and expansive) activity of the male creator, which is balanced by the yin (âm) activity of Mother Goddess, the Queen Mother of the West, the feminine, nurturing and restorative mother of humanity.

Adherents engage in practices such as prayer, veneration of ancestors, nonviolence, and vegetarianism with the goal of union with God and freedom from saṃsāra.

The design, shape and coloring of Caodaist temples is quite standard around the world and includes the incorporation of sacred images, symbols, and colors.

The doctrines of the Cao Đài faith tends not only to reconcile all religious views, but also to adapt itself to all degrees of spiritual evolution. A basic principle of Caodaism is "All Religions are One".

Believers worship God the Father, Holy Mother and the Divine Beings with all their heart. They also venerate the Great Religious Prophets of history and honour the ancestors.

The original center of the CAO DAI faith is at the city of Tay Ninh which is about 70 miles northwest of Saigon.

The most dedicated CaoDaists observe a full-time vegetarian diet, live at a temple, take a vow of chastity, and meditate five hours a day, and some sleep in a sitting position. If a CaoDaist dies with his or her left eye open, then he or she is believed to have reached transcendence. "Very few practice at this level of intensity unless they're trying to achieve sainthood."

STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

The organisational structure of the Caodaist church has similarities with that of a state. There are similarities between the hierarchy of the Caodaist clergy and that of the Catholic Church. Besides the Pope, the Caodaist hierarchy has Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, and further ranks.

Caodaism stresses equality among men and women in society. However, in the spiritual domain, ordained women may not attain the two highest positions: the Legislative Cardinal and the Pope.

Ordinary members of the Cao Dai clergy may marry and raise families, as do some of the members of the Eastern Orthodox and some of the Oriental Rites of the Catholic Church. Those above the rank of priest are not allowed to marry and must remain celibate in order to commit their total energies to the religious life. Nuns may occupy all positions up to Cardinal.

CEREMONY

Ceremonial prescriptions such as actions, dress and music were organized in detail by God the Father. These include ceremonies for initiations, marriages and funerals.

Particular attention is paid to death, and it has been revealed to the religion how the soul journeys towards heaven and how, on earth, co-religionists can pray for souls to help them on their way.

Dead body may be either buried or cremated.

For new born there is a ceremony called Tam Thanh (holy shower) in front of the altar of a Caodai temple, where the CaoDai priest prays for divine blessing for the baby and sprinkles the baby with Holy water. For weddings and deaths, there are special ceremonies accordingly.

MARRIAGE

CaoDai suggests one marriage for life, and allow remarriage only when the spouse dies. It does not encourage divorce except for the wellness and best benefits of the parties (including the children). Therefore choosing spouse should be done carefully before marriage and based on virtues, sincerity and spiritual level of a person, believing that materialism will never last.

BELIEFS

Cao Dai holds beliefs common in other faith traditions such as: karma, reincarnation, the unity of God, the existence of the soul, missionary work, and ancestor veneration. Traditional Vietnamese cultural ideas and taboos are also incorporated into the belief structure of Cao Dai.

WORSHIP

Cao Dai perform prayer and reverence to God. Worship involves group prayer in the temple, elaborate rituals and festivals.

There are four daily ceremonies (Cung Tu Thoi): - 12:00 a.m. (Thoi Ty), 6:00 a.m. (Thoi Meo), 12:00 p.m. (Thoi Ngo), 6:00 p.m. (Thoi Dau). Tea is offered in the morning and evening, wine is offered at noon and midnight. On major ceremonial days (Dai Le or Tieu Le), and the 1st and 15th day of each lunar month, there are three offerings (dang tam buu): fruits and flowers, wine and tea. The four services must be observed in Temples (Thanh-That) as well as in homes. For believers a daily minimum of one act of obeisance before the God's altar is required. During the period of worship, the believers must wear distinctive white robes (ao dai trang) with the distinctive black head covering(khan dong den) for men. On ceremonial occasions, all dignitaries and believers must wear special ceremonial dress and head coverings which accord with their various hierarchies.

There is also a special anniversary ceremony once a year for God the Father, the Holy Mother, the five founders of the world's major religions, and the founders of the Cao Dai religion. The rituals differ between places, depending on who they pray to.

There are also differences between monthly rituals, and anniversary ones.

DIET

Most CaoDaists observe a vegetarian diet for 10 days a month. The most dedicated CaoDaists observe a full-time vegetarian diet. (Vegetarianism is required of all orders of the priesthood, but not for the laity.)

WOMEN

Caodaism is an institutionalized religion whereby women are only allowed to achieve a certain level of advancement within the institution. The ranking system of the religion proper aligns closely with the Catholic Church. On top is a Pope and then there are Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Sub-dignitaries, and Followers. Women may only achieve the institutional position of cardinal. Similarly, even though women are allowed to attain high levels within the order, they are frequently disallowed from being leaders.

In worship and in ceremonies, women also have a different walking pattern within the temple. Women walk clockwise around the hall and congregate to the left. Meanwhile, men enter from the right and walk counterclockwise. These symbolic differences of

practice within the temple may be representative of the actual spiritual potentials of men and women within the Caodai religion.

HOLY PEPOLE

There are many Holy people from other religions. Some people from history are also venerated. The pantheon of Holy people includes: Buddha, Guan Yin, Jesus, Joan of Arc, Muhammad, Sun Yat-sen, Julius Caesar, Victor Hugo, and many more....

HOLY SCRIPTURES

These are the main scriptures of Cao Dai.

- Kinh Thiên Đạo Và Thế Đạo (Prayers of the Heavenly and the Earthly Way)
This is used for Daily life and Prayers for Worship.
- Pháp Chánh Truyền (The Religious Constitution of Caodaiism) This is used for information on the elections of officials, their powers, and ritual dress.
- Tân Luật (The New Canonical Codes) This is used for laws regulating religious, secular, monastic life.
- Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển (Compilation of Divine Messages)
- Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc The Sermons of His Holiness

Other branches of Cao Dai have additional scriptures.

ABORTION

CaoDai does not allow killing life, abortion is considered as a kind of killing a future baby and therefore considered as a crime.

RIGHT TO DIE

CaoDai does not allow suicide therefore would not approve anyone for killing self.

✓ ĐẠO BURU SON KYHUONG

Đạo Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương, ("Way of the Strange Fragrance from the Precious Mountain") refers to a religious tradition originally practiced by the mystic Đoàn Minh Huyền (1807–1856) and continued by Huỳnh Phú Sổ, founder of the Hòa Hảo. The phrase itself refers to the Thất Sơn range on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border, where Huyền, claiming to be a living Buddha sent into the world to rescue humankind, and accepted as such by followers of Hòa Hảo, is said to have made his first appearance in 1849.

Đạo Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương is an organized folk religion in Vietnam that takes some of its religious traditions from elements of Buddhism.

Currently, there are around 15,000 followers of the religion throughout Vietnam.

✓ ĐẠO DURA

➤ MANCHU

✓ MANCHU SHAMANISM



Manchu ethnoreligious symbol

Manchu folk religion is the ethnic religion practiced by most of the Manchu people, the major of the Tungusic peoples, in China. It can also be called Manchu Shamanism by virtue of the word "shaman" being originally from Tungusic *šamán* ("man of knowledge"), later applied by Western scholars to similar religious practices in other cultures.

It is a pantheistic system, believing in a universal God called Apka Enduri ("God of Heaven") which is the omnipotent and omnipresent source of all life and creation. Deities (enduri) enliven every aspect of nature, and the worship of these gods is believed to bring favour, health and prosperity. Many of the deities are original Manchu kins' ancestors, and people with the same surname are generated by the same god.

Shamans are persons of unusual ability, strength and sensitivity, capable of perception and prediction of the ways of the gods. They are endowed with the social function to conduct the sacrificial ceremonies and approach the deities asking them intervention or protection. Because of their abilities the shamans are people of great authority and prestige. Usually, every Manchu kin has its own shaman.

Manchu folk religious rites were standardised by the Qianlong Emperor (1736-96) in the "Manchu Sacrificial Ritual to the Gods and Heaven" (Manjusai wecere metere kooli bithe), a manual published in Manchu in 1747 and in Chinese (Manzhou jishen jitian dianli) in 1780.

Study of Manchu religion usually distinguishes two types of ritual, "domestic" and "primitive", which can be performed in two cultic settings, "imperial" and "common". The domestic ritual primarily involves the sacrifices for the progenitors of lineages and is the most important, while the primitive ritual involves the sacrifices for zoomorphic gods. The ancestral ritual is the same in the common and imperial cults. It is composed of three main moments: the dawn sacrifice (Chinese: *chaoji*), the sunset sacrifice (*xiji*) and the "light-extinguishing" sacrifice (*beidingji*) held at midnight. Both common and imperial rituals make use of the gods' pole as a means of establishing connection with Heaven.

While the domestic ritual is bright and harmonious, the primitive or "wild" ritual is associated with darkness and mystery. Deities involved are not those of the sky, the earth or the ancestors, but are zoomorphic chthonic deities. With its reliance on techniques of ecstasy, the primitive ritual had long been discouraged by the court (Hong Taiji proscribed it as early as 1636).

Manchu religious cults originally took place in shrines called *tangse* ("visitation temple") but at least by 1673 all communal *tangse* were prohibited with the exception of the imperial cult building. Households continued their rituals at private altars called *weceku*. Common cults gradually adopted deities from Chinese religion in addition to Tungusic

gods. Guwan mafa (Guāndì, Divus Guan), whose martial character appealed to the Manchus, became one of the most beloved deities. Another popular cult was that of the Goddess (Niángniáng).

