

Chinese and Japanese Buddhism: Differences

<i>Chinese Buddhism</i>	<i>Japanese Buddhism</i>
Early History (beginning ca. 50 CE)	Early history (beginning ca. 538 CE)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ China's <i>two strands of ideology</i>: (1) Confucianism (social philosophy) and (2) Daoism (religio-philosophical system) ▪ <i>Problems faced in Buddhism's transmission</i> to China: (1) monasticism, (2) the Sangha, (3) Buddhist teachings. ▪ <i>Causes for later successful transmission</i> of Buddhism: (1) ethics, (2) philosophy, (3) notion of skilful means, (4) emphasis on practical side of Buddhism, (5) cooperation with Daoism (later rivalry existed). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Japan had the <i>indigenous religious tradition</i> of Shintō. In time, it borrowed heavily from Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. ▪ <i>Success in Buddhism's transmission to Japan</i>: (1) appeal of its art and ritual, (2) protective powers, (3) ethics, (4) status as a state religion (by Prince Shōtoku, 573-622), (5) building of temples, (6) monks' introduction of writing, (7) introduction of six schools of Chinese Buddhism. ▪ <i>Problem faced in Buddhism's transmission to Japan</i>: Buddhism (Nara) was mainly for the elite and became corrupt and politically meddling.
Schools of Chinese Buddhism	Schools of Japanese Buddhism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Sanlun ('Three Treatise' school)</i> ~Mādhyamika in Chinese form. ~Based on three key texts: (1) <i>Madhyamaka-kārikā</i>, (2) verses of Nāgārjuna, (3) work of Āryadeva. ▪ <i>Faxiang ('Characteristics of Dharmas' school)</i> ~A form of Yogācāra. ~Introduced by pilgrim-translator Hsüan-tsang (602-64). ▪ <i>Zhushe (Chu-she)</i> ~A form of Sarvāstivāda, based on the study of the <i>Abhidharma-kośa</i>. ~Introduced by translator Paramārtha (499-569). ~Note: Paramārtha was also author of two influential texts in Chinese Buddhism: (1) 'Treatise on the Buddha-nature' and (2) 'Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna'. ~The <i>Tathāgata-garbha</i> is portrayed in cosmological terms as the 'One Mind' that encompasses the whole of reality, both awakened and unawakened; as a single, universal reality, rather than as is typical of Indian Buddhism, an aspect of individual beings. This monistic view has parallels with the Brahmanical idea that the Self (<i>Ātman</i>) is identical with Brahman, the sacred, and that 'everything is <i>Brahman</i>', and also with the Daoist idea of everything as the play of the <i>Dao</i>. ▪ <i>Zhenyan (Chen-yen; the 'Mantra' or 'Efficacious Word' school)</i> ~A late import, arriving in the eighth century. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Tendai school (Tiantai)</i> ~Came from China in 805. ▪ <i>Shingon (Mantranaya Zhenyan)</i> ~Came from China in 816. ~Important idea was 'original' or 'innate' awakening/enlightenment – saw all phenomena as having the awakened nature of a Buddha. ~Religious practice aimed at knowing that one was already a Buddha, rather than becoming a Buddha. ~In sum: The Shingon worshipped Vairocana. ▪ <i>Jōdo-shū ('Pure Land school')</i> ~Formed by Hōnen (1133-1212) and Shinran (1173-1263). ~Taught faith in Amida (not 'self-power') – salvation comes from gratefully accepting Amida's saving grace, <i>not</i> by any good works. Even a person's faith comes from grace, for the all-pervading power of Amida can be found within one, prompting the Buddha-nature to overcome arrogance and sin. ~In sum, the Pure Land schools worshipped Amida.

<p>▪ Tiantai (T'ien-t'ai) school ~Founded by Zhiyi (Chih-i), 539-97, and named after Mount 'Heavenly Terrace'. ~Emphasized study and meditation, as well as the Buddha-nature as present in all things, and that the world is non-different from the ultimate 'One Mind', thusness, emptiness or <i>Nirvāna</i>. ~The Buddha is seen as the saviour of all and the 'three vehicles' are united in one.</p> <p>▪ Huayan (Hua-yen) school ~Founded by meditation-master Dushan (Tushun), 557-640. ~The <i>Avatamsaka Sūtra</i> took pride of place. ~Emphasized ultimate reality as immanent in the world, like the <i>Dao</i>, and as fathomable by penetration into the thusness of any natural phenomenon (as did the Tiantai school).</p> <p>▪ Lü ('Vinaya') school ~Introduced around 650 CE. ~Based on the Śrāvakayāna-emphasizing Dharmaguptaka school. ~Emphasized study of monastic discipline.</p> <p>▪ Jingtu (Ching-t'u) or 'Pure Land' school ~Tanluan (476-542; former Daoist) first organized the school. ~Became the most popular form of Buddhism in China. ~Based on three main <i>Sūtras</i> related to Amitābha and the 'Instruction on the Array of the Happy Land' (Vasubandhu)</p> <p>▪ The Chan School (or 'Meditation' school) ~Founded by semi-legendary Indian monk Bodhidharma. ~Emphasized meditation as <i>the</i> method for attaining awakening. ~Has an iconoclastic streak for undercutting attachment. ~Discursive thought and its 'dualistic' distinctions are disparaged. ~Insight arises by direct mind-to-mind transmission from master to pupil – study is secondary. ~'Innate nature' within the mind is the Buddha-nature. ~Other people and their teachings cannot really <i>make</i> a person see their Buddha-nature – this comes as a direct intuition, when the practitioner totally stops looking outside himself for ultimate reality. ~Became popular among monks, artists, and intellectuals. ~Developed powerful, new methods of practice. ~Influenced by Daoism in its spontaneous style.</p>	<p>▪ Rinzai Zen ~Introduced from China by monk Eisai (1141-1215). ~Successful among the samurai. ~Reliance on the <i>kōan</i>.</p> <p>▪ Sōtō Zen ~Introduced by Dōgen (1200-53). ~Emphasized a strict and simple life of monastic discipline and <i>zazen</i>, or 'sitting meditation'. ~<i>Sūtras</i> are direct mind-to-mind transmission of truth. ~Reading the <i>Sūtras</i> leads to faith in the Buddha and ultimate reality. ~<i>Zazen</i> is a return to true Buddhism of the Buddha – a natural and easy method open to all and encompassing all other practices. ~ <i>Zazen</i> is not a method to attain awakening, but a way of exhibiting one's innate Buddha-nature. ~Dōgen: Sit in <i>zazen</i> with faith that one is already a Buddha – the process is one of self-forgetting in which the Buddha-nature gradually unfolds its infinite potential throughout one's life. ~In sum: The Zen schools revered the earthly Śākyamuni, but not the heavenly one.</p> <p>▪ The Nichiren School ~Named after the monk Nichiren (1222-82). ~The <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> seen as expressing the essence of Buddhism. ~Advocated a 'self-power' method: To chant the formula <i>Namu myō-hō ren-ge kyō</i> – to activate the Buddha-nature.</p>
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Reference:

Harvey, P. (2013). *An introduction to Buddhism: teachings, history and practices*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Harvey (2013). Pages 210-235.

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