

**Articles and Sermons :: Chinese folk religion, also called Shenism****Chinese folk religion, also called Shenism - posted by ArthurRosh, on: 2015/9/4 9:01**

Chinese folk religion, also called Shenism which is a term of considerable debate, are labels used to describe the collection of ethnic religious traditions which have been a main belief system in China and among Han Chinese ethnic groups for most of the civilization's history until today. Shenism comprises Chinese mythology and includes the worship of shens (神, shén; "deities", "spirits", "awarenesses", "consciousnesses", "archetypes") which can be nature deities, Taizu or clan deities, city deities, national deities, cultural heroes and demigods, dragons and ancestors.

It is sometimes categorized with Taoism, since over the centuries institutional Taoism has been attempting to assimilate or administrate local religions. More accurately, Taoism can be defined as a branch of Shenism, since it sprang out of folk religion and Chinese philosophy.

Chinese folk religion retains traces of some of ancestral primal religious belief systems such as animism and shamanism, which include the veneration of (and communication with) the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, the Heaven, and various stars, as well as communication with animals. It has been practiced by the Chinese people for thousands of years, and since the start of the Common Era alongside Buddhism, Taoism and various other religions.

Rituals, devotional worship, myths, sacred reenactment, festivals and various other practices associated with different folk gods and goddesses form an important part of Chinese culture today. The veneration of secondary gods does not conflict with an individual's chosen religion, but is accepted as a complementary adjunct, particularly to Taoism. Some mythical figures in folk culture have been integrated into Chinese Buddhism, as in the case of Miao Shan. She is generally thought to have influenced the beliefs about the Buddhist bodhisattva Guanyin. This bodhisattva originally was based upon the Indian counterpart Avalokiteśvara. Androgynous in India, this bodhisattva over centuries became a female figure in China and Japan. Guanyin is one of the most popular bodhisattvas to which people pray.

There are many free folk religion texts such as Journeys to the Underworld distributed in temples, or sold in goods material shops or vegetarian shops. Temples for Shenist worship are different from Taoist temples and Buddhist monasteries, being administered by local managers, associations and worship communities. "With around 400 million adherents, or about 6% of the world population, Chinese folk religion is one of the major religions in the world.