

School	Vehicle	View of the Buddha	Sects	Elements of Practice	Objective of Practice
Theravadin 250.BCE Aka The Way of the Elders)	Some disagreement whether Theravada and Hinayana are synonymous	Sakyamuni is the historical founder of Buddhism and representative of the Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha.	Vipassana Schools, Insight Meditaion, Many American traditions emerge from the Theravadin schools	Study of the Four Noble Truth, Eight- Fold Path, Dependent Origination, Wisdom, Virtue, Concentration, Impermanence, Suffering, No-self, Meditation, study	Emphasis on self-liberation, to become an Arhat: The life of the Arhat is the ideal of the followers of this school, a life where all (future) birth is at an end, where the holy life is fully achieved, where all that has to be done has been done, and there is no more returning to the worldly life'.
Chan (pre-Zen) 5-6 th cent.	Mahayana	Sakyamuni is the historical founder of Buddhism and representative of the Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha.	Rinzai, Soto	Study of the Four Noble Truths, Eight-Fold Path, Dependent Origination, Wisdom, Virtue, Concentration, Impermanence, Suffering, No-self, Zazen (sitting meditation) use of Koans, Lankavatara Sutra, study of Emptiness	Main goal is training the mind through working with the mind, self-realization (kensho, satori, with direct and sudden enlightenment a goal
Zen 650 CE	Mahayana	Sakyamuni is the historical founder of Buddhism and representative of the Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha.	Rinzai, Soto, Obakushu	Study of the Four Noble Truths, Eight-Fold Path, Dependent Origination, Wisdom, Virtue, Concentration, Impermanence, Suffering, No-self, Meditation, chanting, koans, spiritual disciplines and rituals	Main goal is training the mind through working with the mind, with direct and sudden enlightenment a goal
Tibetan (7-8 Cent)	Mahayana/ Vajrayana/ Tantrayana	Sakyamuni is the historical founder of Buddhism and representative of the Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha. The Tibetan pantheon includes many more buddhas and manifestions of the Buddha depending on the focus of one's practice	Geluk, Sakya, Kagyü Nyima Dzogchen Bon	Study of the Four Noble Truth, Eight- Fold Path, Dependent Origination, Wisdom, Virtue, Concentration, Impermanence, Suffering, No-self, Meditation, rituals, initiations, mantras, deity yoga, recognizing Buddhature and Cultivating Bodhicitta	To become a bodhisattva for the sake of all sentient beings, to cultivate bodhicitta... Once enlightened, one vows to take continual rebirths until all sentient beings are liberated. Main goal is training the mind through working with the mind

Pure Land “Jodushu” or Jodo Shinshu 1133- onward	Mahayana	Sakyamuni is the historical founder of Buddhism and representative of the Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha. The main Buddha of Pure Land is Amitabha aka, Amitayus, Amita, “Boundless Light”	n/a	Study of the Four Noble Truths, Eight-Fold Path, Wisdom, Virtue, Concentration, Impermanence, Suffering, No-self, Dependent Origination, Meditation, Chanting, meditation, Chanting the name of Amitabha aka Amitayus, Amita, “Boundless Light” to enter the Pure Land	Main goal is training the mind through working with the mind and being reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha
Nicherin (1222- 1282)	Mahayana	Sakyamuni is the historical founder of Buddhism and representative of the Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha.	Nicherin Shoshu, Soka Gakkai	Study of the Four Noble Truth, Eight-Fold Path, Dependent Origination, Meditation, chanting, “Nam Myoho Renge Kyo” (title of Lotus Sutra in Japanese)	Bringing the Dharma to Light in this Dark Age, Enlightenment, stresses socio-political responsibilities of religion

School	Important Scriptures	Regions of Origin	Death Practices	Spiritual Leaders Current and Past
Theravadin aka “The Elder Tradition” based on the Buddha’s original teachings 250 BCE	“Tripitika” or Three Baskets of the vinaya pitaka, Dhammapada,	Southern transmission: Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and parts of Southeast Asia.	Death is part of the cycle of life, meditations on impermanence and the emptiness of self. Do not adhere to the Bardo teachings. the link between death and rebirth is direct without intermediate state. The living participate in acts that transfer merit to the individual for a good rebirth. Cremation, often after 3 days.	Sakyamuni Buddha, Buddhaghosha, Dhammapala, Thich Nhat Hanh, Ajahn Amaro, Jack Kornfield, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Ajahn Chah, Goenka, Mahasi Sayadaw, Gil Fronsdal, Sharon Salzberg
Chan (pre-Zen) 5-6 th century CE (introduced to Korea end of 7 th Cent., Japan in the late 12 th Century	Heart Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Lankavatara Sutra, Platform Sutra	China	Numerous instructive and merit-transferring ceremonies and practices are held. Cremation.	Mahakasyapa, The Six Patriarchs: Bodhidharma, Huike, Sengcan, Daoxin, Hongren, Huineng. Ven. Jing Hui
Zen 650 CE	Heart Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Lankavatara Sutra, Platform Sutra Vimalakirti Sutra,	China, Japan, practiced in Korea, Thailand, USA now	The deceased is given a Buddhist name, sutras chanted (Heart Sutra) Numerous instructive and merit-transferring ceremonies are held. If monks/nuns are present offerings are made.	Bodhidharma, Dogen, Shen-hui, Hui-neng, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, Nan-ch’uan P;u-yuan, Kodo Sawaki, Robert Aitken, Richard Baker, Joan Halifax, Thich Nhat Hanh

Tibetan (7-8 cent.)	2 Main collections, the Kangyur, or “Words of the Buddha” (sutras as revered in the Hinayana traditions) Tengyur, or “translated treatises” Prajnaparamita teachings (Heart Sutra) Noble Truth, Six Perfections, Bodhicaryavatara, Words of My Perfect Teacher, 60 Stanzas of Nagarjuna	Northern transmission: India, Tibet, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Mongolia and parts of Southeast Asia.	The Tibetan school has produced many teachings on death including prayers for the actual time of death as well as prayers for the 49 days it takes for consciousness to cycle through the bardo periods. Cremation, often after 3 days.	Dalai Lama, H.H. Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, Shantideva, Atisha, Nagarjuna, Pabonka Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Milarepa, Chogyam Trungpa, Robert Thurman, Tsultrim Allione, Pema Chodron, Lama Yeshe, Lama Sopa, Chagdud Tulku, Sogyal Rinpoche
Pure Land “Jodushu” or Jodo Shinshu 1133-onward	Three Pure Land Sutras: The Larger and Smaller Sukhavatyuhasutra, “Vision of the Realm of Happiness” and the Amitabhasutra, “Meditation on the Buddha of Boundless Light”	India, Asia, China, though practiced in Japan too	Rebirth in the pure land is possible through continuous repetition of the Amitabha mantra. Bathing the body before death and reciting the Amitabha mantra. After death, prayers for good luck on the journey	Honen, Nagarjuna, Vasubandu, Tanluan, Daochuo, Shandao, Shinran,
Nicherin 1222-82	Lotus Sutra	Japan	Chanting the Lotus Sutra, Praying for the purification of the deceased person’s mindstream. Cremation.	Nicheren, Daisoku Ikeda