**Chinese Shamanism Theory.**

Chinese Shamanism Theory is proposed by Taiwanese-American scholar K. C. Zhang (Kwang-chih Chang, 張光直, 1931–2001), which is a milestone of sinology. It holds that the Chinese culture in essence is based upon shamanism that can be found globally. Being different from the western world that shamanism pervades only in pre-Christian times, Chinese shamanism keeps unchanged from its origin until today. Chinese Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism (BCD) are nothing mysterious but the coats of shamanism. When characterizing the difference between the Chinese civilization and the western from shamanism view, Zhang calls the Chinese form the "continuity" form, and the Western form the "disruptive" form[[1]](#footnote-1). Zhang’s theory has been supported by more and more evidence from the prehistory archeological materials and the existing historical classic corpus as well as various aspects of the society of today (e.g. Chinese herbs, acupunctures, qigong, psychic divination, etc.)

**Shamanism**

The term shamanism derives from *shaman* (from the Siberian Tungus language, means “one who knows”) a title for those who can enter the ghost realm to interfere human life. Dutch [Nicolaes Witsen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolaes_Witsen) (1641 –1717) defined *shaman* as ‘priest of the Devil’ in 17th century. The term shamanism became popular after Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) published his work, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951), where Eliade views the mysterious and fascinating phenomenon in native cultures as absolute true account of a creation in primordial time rather than fake superstitions.

Depending on the purpose and functionality, shaman can be various types, e.g. a medium, necromancer, wizard, magician, magus, sorcerer, witch, wizard, enchanter, medicine man, witchdoctor, sorcerer, exorcist, soothsayer, necromancer, and spirit walker, etc. The female medium(witch) at Endor (1Sam28) who can summon the spirits of the dead by magic is a typical shaman.

Shamanism do not have a certain unified descriptive doctrine (like sacred text, scripture). Many native shamans are illiterate. They use oral storytelling and practices to keep their tradition alive. For example, in China, many mystical practices, like Qigong, a particular acupuncture, a specific herb, etc. are usually passed down generation by generation inside a close family only; they never spill the beans outside. Shamans usually do not make public propaganda; they prefer to operate secretly and sometimes illegally and unwittingly. They only know that their shamanic practices can work but they cannot explain how and why.

**Animism**

The conceptualization of the worldview of shamans contributes to the formation of animism in anthropology. Sir [Edward Tylor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Burnett_Tylor) is a major contributor of animism research. Tylor asserts that although each culture has its own different expression style, mythologies, rituals and society's development stage, the human mind and its capabilities are the same globally. The goal to study animism is to find out the most common, foundational thread of indigenous peoples' "spiritual" or "supernatural" minds.According to Tylor, animism is a study that explores ‘the general doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings in general.’  Animism often includes "an idea of pervading life and will in nature;"[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism#cite_note-19) a belief that natural objects other than humans have souls.

Animism plays a critical role to assist shamanists to abstract its own ideological theory from folk religious phenomenon. However, it is over-reflection to presume that animism represents the earliest form of religion. Tylor’s (1929) use of the term ‘animism’ referring to a theory of religion rather than a type of religion is untenable. There is no historical and archeological evidence to show a natural evolutionary process from animism to religion.

**Religion**

In history, the term *religion* initially was used by Tertullian (150--220 AD) to refers to the Christianity and became popular after St. Augustine of Hippo (354--430 AD) wrote his paper, *of the true religion* (*de vera religione*)[[2]](#footnote-2). The English word *religion* came from Latin *religio,* which is derived from *religare*: *re* (again) + *ligare* (bind or connect). Augustine uses the term *religion* as a tool to expound how his Christianity faith is essentially different from all kinds of heresies and syncretism -- the religious Christianity or Christian’s religion is purely built upon Christ the triune of the Son and the Father and the Spirit. As shamanism contains identical elements of religion: doctrine, rituals and mass, it can be studied as a type of religion. The primitive ineffable concept of spirits in shamanism in primordial times is in essence identical to the Hericlitus’ *logos* or Laozi’s *Dao*, which can be considered as an evolutionary progress for religion. However, human acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit from spirits cannot happened naturally without the reborn process through Christ. From a particular respective, Zhang’s Chinese shamanism continuity theory shows that, without the missionaries in China, the good and bad, auspicious and inauspicious, just and unjust in the culture will remain determined by man rather than the trinity God.

This definition is so simple that it would include all religions, the difference of which is based on the usages and purpose of the spirits.

Christianity

Tylor perceived the modern religious belief in God as a "survival" of primitive ignorance. However, Tylor did not believe that [atheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism) was the logical end of cultural and religious development, but instead a highly minimalist form of [monotheist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monotheism) [deism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deism).

**Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) reintroduced the term** [***animism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism) **and regarded animism as the first phase in the development of religions.**

**despite a particular society's stage in social evolution.**

**Largely due to such** [**ethnolinguistic**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnolinguistic) **and cultural discrepancies, opinion has differed on whether *animism* refers to an ancestral mode of experience common to indigenous peoples around the world, or to a full-fledged religion in its own right. The currently accepted definition of *animism* was only developed in the late 19th century (1871) by Sir** [**Edward Tylor**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Tylor)**. It is "one of** [**anthropology**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology)**'s earliest concepts, if not the first".**[**[10]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism#cite_note-10)

**Animism encompasses the beliefs that all material phenomena have agency, that there exists no categorical distinction between the** [**spiritual**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirituality) **and physical (or material) world and that** [**soul**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_(spirit)) **or spirit or sentience exists not only in humans but also in other animals, plants, rocks, geographic features such as mountains or rivers or other entities of the natural environment:** [**water sprites**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_water_deities)**,** [**vegetation deities**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetation_deity)**,** [**tree spirits**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tree_deities)**, etc. Animism may further attribute a life force to abstract concepts such as words,** [**true names**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_name)**, or metaphors in** [**mythology**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythology)**. Some members of the non-tribal world also consider themselves animists (such as author** [**Daniel Quinn**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Quinn)**, sculptor** [**Lawson Oyekan**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawson_Oyekan)**, and many** [**contemporary Pagans**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Paganism)**).**[**[11]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism#cite_note-Harvey-11)

**The animistic perspective is so widely held and inherent to most indigenous peoples that they often do not even have a word in their languages that corresponds to "animism" (or even "religion");**[**[9]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism#cite_note-9)

**the term is an** [**anthropological construct**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emic_and_etic)**.**

**Shamanism is based on the premise that the visible world is pervaded by invisible forces or spirits which affect the lives of the living.**[**[44]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamanism#cite_note-Peru-44) **Although the causes of disease lie in the spiritual realm, inspired by malicious spirits, both spiritual and physical methods are used to heal. Commonly, a shaman "enters the body" of the patient to confront the spiritual infirmity and heals by banishing the infectious spirit.**

**Archeological evidence shows that shamanic practices can be found globally at ancient times.**

**Shamanism is believed to be declining around the world. Whalers who frequently interact with Inuit tribes are one source of this decline in that region.**[**[135]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamanism#cite_note-135)

**The story of King Saul and the Witch of Endor would appear at first sight to affirm that it is possible (though forbidden) for humans to summon the spirits of the dead by** [**magic**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_(paranormal))**.**

**Shamanism is related to** [**animism**](https://www.gotquestions.org/Animism.html)**, the belief that spirits inhabit the physical world as well as the spiritual realm. Animism is one of the oldest existing belief systems and is found in many tribal communities, ancient and modern, around the world. It is seeing a comeback today in neo-shamanistic groups.**

In his work on the history of religion, Eliade is most highly regarded for his writings on [Alchemy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alchemy),[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-84) [Shamanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamanism), [Yoga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga) and what he called the [eternal return](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_return_(Eliade))—the implicit belief, supposedly present in religious thought in general, that [religious behavior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_behaviour) is not only an imitation of, but also a participation in, sacred events, and thus restores the mythical time of origins. Eliade's thinking was in part influenced by [Rudolf Otto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Otto), [Gerardus van der Leeuw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerardus_van_der_Leeuw), [Nae Ionescu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nae_Ionescu) and the writings of the [Traditionalist School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditionalist_School) ([René Guénon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Gu%C3%A9non) and [Julius Evola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Evola)).[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-pccheie-37) For instance, Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane* partially builds on Otto's [*The Idea of the Holy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Idea_of_the_Holy) to show how religion emerges from the experience of the sacred, and myths of time and nature.

Eliade notes that, in traditional societies, myth represents the absolute truth about primordial time.[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-Eliade,_p.23-94) According to the myths, this was the time when the Sacred first appeared, establishing the world's structure—myths claim to describe the primordial events that made society and the natural world be that which they are. Eliade argues that all myths are, in that sense, origin myths: "myth, then, is always an account of a *creation.*"[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-95)

Many traditional societies believe that the power of a thing lies in its origin.[[96]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-96) If origin is equivalent to power, then "it is the first manifestation of a thing that is significant and valid"[[97]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-97) (a thing's reality and value therefore lies only in its first appearance).

According to Eliade's theory, only the Sacred has value, only a thing's first appearance has value and, therefore, only the Sacred's first appearance has value. Myth describes the Sacred's first appearance; therefore, the mythical age is sacred time,[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-Eliade,_p.23-94) the only time of value: "primitive man was interested only in the *beginnings* [...] to him it mattered little what had happened to himself, or to others like him, in more or less distant times."[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-Eliade,_p.44-98) Eliade postulated this as the reason for the "[nostalgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nostalgia) for origins" that appears in many religions, the desire to return to a primordial [Paradise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise).[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Eliade#cite_note-Eliade,_p.44-98)

1. K.C. Chang, Continuity and Rupture: Ancient China and the Rise of Civilizations, Manuscript being prepared for publication. https://min.news/en/culture/59a6f27153177a16b35cd6a71b0ac432.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. THE WORKS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE:A Translation for the 21st Century. New City Press. 2005. p17. https://wesleyscholar.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Augustine-On-Christian-Belief.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)