REL-103: WORLD RELIGIONS

Rising Scholar Program

Lake Tahoe Community College

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: About Religion

1.1: Sacred Spaces
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1.1: Sacred Spaces

> *"Your sacred space is where you find yourself again and again" (Joseph Campbell)*

We all live in a specific place on the planet, and where we live impacts, in visible and not so visible ways, the ways that we interact with the world, with other people, and with our internal self. The child raised in prairie or tundra spaces may find the deep forest intimidating or enclosing. The child from the seaside may long for water in ways that the desert dweller may not completely understand.

So the concept of Sacred Space will change from people to people, during history, dependent on location, belief and lifestyle. This unit will attempt to help us think about the concepts that make a space Sacred.

Let's start with a definition:

> ***According to the Oxford English Dictionary, one of the definitions of the word sacred is:***
>
> ***"b. Dedicated, set apart, exclusively appropriated to some person or some special purpose."***

During the summer of 2010, PBS went on a quest to find sacred spaces in eight cities across America. The results of that journey is a curated selection which appears in their City Guides to Sacred Spaces in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, Portland, Santa Fe and San Francisco (downloadable at pbs.org/godinamerica/outreach). During this the staff thought long and hard about what it is that makes a space sacred.

Their definition of a sacred space includes the following:

Traditional Sacred Space – A house of worship designed and built for a congregation to gather, meet and enjoy community for the purposes of worship, liturgy and/or ritual

Civic Sites – engineered structures, secular in nature and scope – usually built by cities, state or government entities

Landscape Sites – sequestered spaces with natural features including water, trees, parkland which encourage quiet meditation and pause

Memorial Sites – markers of an event or person, burial grounds, cemeteries, sites of conscience and memory

Spiritual Places that have been imprinted over time, or have been historically seen as "sacred" a priori – set aside for the public good

? EXERCISE

Take some time to consider what you might have in the way of Sacred Spaces in your community. There are likely Traditional Sacred Spaces of some sort. What else can you think of that exists in your community that is a Sacred Space of some sort?

- Go visit a sacred space, preferably one you have never visited before. Take a look at things like layout, façade, intent, function, and form in that space. Can you describe what happens in this space? Can you describe why it is considered "set aside"?
- Read this article from Tricycle, a US Foundation centered on promoting Buddhist views. Sacred Spaces

Religions of the world use varied places and settings for rituals, worship, burial, and other activities. Some of these spaces become more universal in use, as a church or synagogue or mosque might become, in many ways, a community center. AA might meet there, exercise groups gather, pre-schools find housing, clinics, tutoring centers, counseling centers –all of these may use a sacred space as well as the original congregation of people who built it. Some are much more restricted in their use. A monastery is not going to be open to the public, but lived in solely by the Buddhist monks or Catholic monks who dwell there. A labyrinth is limited in use to the walking of it–this is not a park, nor a playground.

Key Takeaway: Creating Sacred Space

Look at how the concept of Sacred and Space come together in this modern example from upstate New York: it's a response to the Covid pandemic.

- Pandemic grief and hope

Places become sacred because of their use, their intent, their functions. As we look at various religions, we will be looking at various ways that religions uses particular kinds of spaces. We also will see, in news articles, in research, in social media and in reflections that you create, the ways that spaces become sacred and why they become sacred.

EXAMPLES

There are a vast diversity of Sacred Spaces. You might enjoy visiting some that may not have originally occurred to you as being set aside as somehow sacred:

- Angkor Wat
- Brazilian Forest Reserve
- Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor
- Okapi Wildlife Reserve
- Joya de Ceren Archeological site
- Taj Mahal

- Masada
- Auschwitz Birkenau
- Singapore Botanic Gardens
- Independence Hall

"God In America." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, www.pbs.org/godinamerica/outreach/tour.html.

UNESCO, en.unesco.org/.

"The Buddhist Review – The Independent Voice of Buddhism in the West." *Tricycle*, tricycle.org/.

Adams, Beth. "Earth Altars: Sacred Spaces Honor Pandemic Grief, Offer Hope for Future." *WXXI News*, Public New New York, 2021, www.wxxinews.org/post/earth-altars-sacred-spaces-honor-pandemic-grief-offer-hope-future.

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1.2: Sacred Texts

Start by reading this article from the New York Times: What is the Meaning of Sacred Texts?

Karen Armstrong, author and former nun, writes, “Our English word ‘Scripture’ implies a written text, but most Scriptures began as texts that were composed and transmitted orally,” she writes. “Indeed, in some traditions, the sound of the inspired words would always be more important than their semantic meaning. Scripture was usually sung, chanted or declaimed in a way that separated it from mundane speech, so that words — a product of the brain’s left hemisphere — were fused with the more indefinable emotions of the right.”

The author of the article regarding Armstrong’s book about scriptures, Nicholas Kristoff, says,

> “Armstrong argues that this approach [literal reading] misunderstands how Scripture works. It’s like complaining about Shakespeare bending history, or protesting that a great song isn’t factual. That resonates. Anyone who has been to a Catholic Mass or a Pentecostal service, or experienced the recitation of the Quran or a Tibetan Buddhist chant, knows that they couldn’t fully be captured by a transcript any more than a song can be by its lyrics. “

Armstrong states, in a way that helps the reader understand the difference between something being insightful and something being factual,

> *“Because it does not conform to modern scientific and historical norms, many people dismiss Scripture as incredible and patently ‘untrue,’ but they do not apply the same criteria to a novel, which yields profound and valuable insights by means of fiction,”*
>
> *Armstrong writes:*
>
> ***“A work of art, be it a novel, a poem, or a Scripture, must be read according to the laws of its genre.”***

Many faiths have a rich history of revered and honored texts, be they the word of God as revealed to prophets, oral stories retold by one generation to another over centuries, or the sayings of a Teacher written down (eventually) into books. Looking at the history and context of these writings is useful as one explores the origins and developments of the world’s major faiths. It is also important to understand that a number of religious expressions have used and continue to use oral tradition in passing on teachings, rituals, stories and rules. In some places, oral tradition has never been and possibly never will be written down in any formal way. In some other places what is written down for a culture or group or tribe may come after centuries of oral expression, passing on stories, ideas, rituals and other values. And all writing must be set into its context–when was it written, for whom was it written, why was it written, what function did it serve? All of these questions help us understand the role of any sacred text.

Outside Reading

Read a bit of good basic information about sacred texts and their development, style, and content here at Britannica: Scripture: Religious Literature . In this you will find:

- A broad definition
- Characteristics of sacred writings
- How western or non-western writings differ

The use of sacred texts helps make tangible the beliefs and history of a faith tradition. This can be useful in approaching any particular faith. It can also, in some ways, freeze a faith tradition in time. Cultural, historic, and geographic context matters, as one considers what has gone into making a text what it is. Reading any text as if it were written today is to miss both the real meaning, but also to miss the possible richness found in its words and images and stories. In most faith traditions, the interpretation of the written word matters a great deal, and years of study is needed in order to help understand what is involved in something that seems, at first, to be simple.

Let's use an example of how this interpretation might work. We will look at a portion of writing from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah. **Isaiah** lived in 8th century BCE. He was a prophet after whom the book of Isaiah is named. His call to prophecy in mid-8th century BCE coincided with the beginnings of the expansion of the Assyrian empire, which was just to the east of Israel, and which threatened Israel. Isaiah proclaimed, in poetry, prose and story, and certainly in this following parable, warnings from Yahweh to the people of Israel, whom he claimed were abandoning their faith and ethics. We are going to look at a story from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 5, verses 1-7.

If you do not know the agricultural importance of a vineyard to the people of Israel, nor what work goes into cultivating vines, then a story about a failed vineyard is a little hard to follow. What's the fuss here, and why is the owner of the vineyard complaining? But if one starts to understand that parts of the country of Israel are arid, and only small numbers and types of crops thrive in some of those places, one starts to have a little more context. And then when the total disappointment of a failed crop clearly means that the owner has no income, that this is a true catastrophe, then we have even more context.

Still, this narrative is not just a story of a failed grape crop. This story is making a point to the reader. We must realize that this is no ordinary vineyard owner, but is Yahweh, the God of Israel. And these are not really vines, but are instead the people of Israel who are producing "sour grapes", unfit for eating or for making wine. Then when we look at when this story is written, we see that the people of Israel at this time are trying to become a nation like any other surrounding them, and as a people they are not following the basic commandments of their faith, nor following Yahweh as commanded in the covenant that they have with their God.

Surrounding nations are taking notice that Israel has some decent water resources, has access to the ocean and ports, and that it is a prime crossroads for trade routes. The people of Israel are not faithful to their religious origins, however, and the guidance and protection of Yahweh seems to mean little to them any more–ambition and power are seeming to be more attractive to the people at the time of this prophet. So Yahweh, seen in the story as the owner of this poorly producing vineyard, is going to allow the vines–those people– to reap the consequences of their current behavior and see how they like those consequences. Yahweh symbolically throws hands in the air and lets the surrounding nations deliver those consequences, once the protection of Yahweh is gone. One can, with a bit more historic and cultural context, then, read the parable of the Vineyard owner in the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, chapter 5: 1-7

The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard (NRSV)

5 Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
2 He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
4 What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
6 I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

Analysis

When a reader starts to approach a Sacred Text, is is important that they do a little research. The reader should always ask:

- Who wrote this? (was it a priest? a scholar? a storyteller? a prophet?)
- When was it written? (can you find a reliable date?)
- Where was this written? (location, location, location matters)
- Who was the audience? (common people? religious leaders?)
- What form does this take? (Sayings? story? poetry? instructions?)

When the reader knows a bit more about the who, what, where, when and why of any Sacred Text, then the material can being to sing.

Exercise

Take a look at the Sacred Texts website for the British Library. In it are articles, videos, data and reflection from experts in the fields of sacred writings. British Library: Sacred Texts

- First, note the various traditions being considered in the site
- Second, be aware that there are more traditions not considered here then there are present for study.
- Third, look for other sites that may have resources available. One such, which just offers the texts with no commentary, is Internet Sacred Text Archive

There are many, many texts found in the religions of the world, some of which will seem familiar, and some of which you may never have heard.

They are a fascinating mix of advice, historical style writings, rules, mythology, ritual, guidance and encouragement. Each unit in the text will have links to original writings for that faith tradition, translated into English. Almost none of the sacred texts in the world were written in English, however, so one must be aware that there are nuances not found in the translation!

> *"You are what you believe in. You become that which you believe you can become"*
> *— Bhagavad Gita*
>
> *"If you realize that all things change, there is nothing you will try to hold on to. If you are not afraid of dying, there is nothing you cannot achieve."*
> *— Lao Tzu, Daodejing*
>
> *"Whoever destroys a single life is as guilty as though he had destroyed the entire world and whoever rescues a single life earns as much merit as though he had rescued the entire world."*
> *–Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9*
>
> *"He who knows and knows that he knows is a wise man – follow him; he who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool – shun him"*
> *— Confucius, The Analects*

Sacred Texts in so many traditions were created as something resembling what we would call fiction. They are written as literature, meant to educate, elevate, inspire and support us, but not to give us rigid interpretations of preconceived views nor absolutely accurate historical narrative, and so reading them thus is a mistake.

Example: A Mission

Reading Sacred Texts is tricky. Check some advice on how this is being done in modern times! Read about the impact that early Mesopotamian culture had on Jewish, Christian and Muslim writings, and how it makes clear that scriptures change with time and culture and human interpretation. "An especially gifted scribe would sometimes be required to address current preoccupations by transforming and adapting the ancient traditions. He was even allowed to insert new material into the stories and Wisdom literature of the past. This introduces us to an important theme in the history of scripture. Today we tend to regard a scriptural canon as irrevocably closed and its texts sacrosanct, but we shall find that in all cultures, scripture was essentially a work in progress, constantly changing to meet new conditions. This was certainly the case in ancient Mesopotamia. An exceptionally advanced scribe was allowed—indeed expected—to improvise, and this enabled Mesopotamian culture to survive the demise of the original Sumerian dynasties and inform the later Akkadian and Babylonian regimes by grafting the new onto the old."

- A Mission to Reinterpret the World's Sacred Texts

It is a mistake that people make fairly regularly, however, and this style of reading sacred texts allows the literalist to condemn or attack others for not reading and accepting these sacred words in the same way that they, as literalists, choose to interpret them. Fundamentalists in various religions can cite passages from the Apostle Paul to oppose same-sex marriage or the ordination of

women, they can quote the Torah to displace Palestinians from land in Israel, or they can point to narrow, out of context passages in the Quran to justify violence against those that they want to attack for other reasons — but all of that behavior and reading is an abuse and misuse of those Sacred Texts, and does not reflect the role that they have always been intended to play. We must know the genre, the original audience, the writer, and the intent of these writings in order to gain the wisdom that they have on offer for all readers. This is true whether those readers are believers or whether the readers approach the texts purely as interested students of this material.

"Discovering Sacred Texts." *The British Library*, The British Library, 27 May 2015, www.bl.uk/sacred-texts.

Internet Sacred Text Archive Home, www.sacred-texts.com/.

"Scripture." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/scripture.

Kristof, Nicholas. "What Is the Meaning of Sacred Texts?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 11 Nov. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/11/11/books/review/the-lost-art-of-scripture-karen-armstrong.html.

Armstrong, Karen. *The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts*. Anchor Books, 2020.

Bhagavad Gita Free PDF – University of Macau. Translated by Lars Martin Fosse, University of Macau, library.um.edu.mo/ebooks/b17771201.pdf.

The Analects of Confucius. Translated by Robert Eno, University of Indiana, chinatxt.sitehost.iu.edu/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf.

"Dao De Jing (Eno) – Indiana University Early Chinese Thought[B\/E\/P374 Fall 2010(R Eno The Dao De Jing Introduction If You Walk into Borders Books or: Course Hero." Translated by Robert Eno, *Dao De Jing (Eno) – Indiana University Early Chinese Thought[B\/E\/P374 Fall 2010(R Eno The Dao De Jing Introduction*

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Clayson, Jane, and Anna Bauman. "A Mission To Reinterpret The World's Sacred Texts." *A Mission To Reinterpret The World's Sacred Texts | On Point*, WBUR, 4 Dec. 2019, www.wbur.org/onpoint/2019/12/04/karen-armstrong-lost-art-scripture.

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1.3: Religion Resources

"…[It] is my firm belief that all religions aim at making people better human beings and that, despite philosophical differences, some of them fundamental, they all aim at helping humanity to find happiness."

— Dalai Lama XIV, *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama*

Useful Links

- Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life
- Lumen: sociology and religion
- Humboldt State University OER for Religion
- British Library: Sacred Texts
- Harvard's Pluralism Project
- Religion Online
- Alta Lib Guides
- New York Times Religion and Belief
- BBC: Religion
- National Public Radio: Religion
- Religion in American History: a list from OER Commons
- PBS Religion and Ethics
- Ted Ed Lessons on Religion
- OER resources on religion from Humboldt University

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Asian Origins

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2.2: Daoism Resources
2.3: Confucian Thought
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2.1: Daoism

The **Daoists**, beginning with the supposed founder, Laozi (Lao Tzu), taught about nature and its operation and what it meant to live harmoniously with the Dao. The Dao is said to be the principle or power that makes the universe move through the patterns and rhythms seen in nature. Daoism arose around 500 BCE, during a time when spiritual ideas were developing in both the East and the West. The Daoists saw the trappings of civilization as something artificial or at least far removed from the Dao, the source of all. Disdaining formal education, Daoists advocated a more intuitive path through life best conveyed through stories, or described using images such as the movement of water. Simplicity, gentleness, humility, seeing the relative nature of things, and a certain earthiness were Daoist values. Yet this apparent ordinariness in approaching life also embodied a rather different way of looking at the world and of being in it. Daoists sought a special *effortless* way of acting to accomplish one's purposes, which included serenity and longevity.

Key Ideas

You will want to know a few key details about the history and content of Daoism. Take two minutes to watch this Britannica video, Q and A about Daoism.

- Key leaders
- Basic dates
- Key texts
- Definition of Dao
- Life goals

Two texts form the basis of Daoism: the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. The *Laozi*—also called the *Daodejing*, or *The Way and Its Power*—has been understood as a set of instructions for self-cultivation. A number of terms within its teachings are considered key to living within the Dao.

When we look at very approachable translations of the *Daodejing* and the *Zuangzi* by Robert Eno[1] of the University of Indiana, we get some excellent narrative from him about this text (and this scholar's materials have been made available for free for teaching purposes, and are included throughout this chapter):

"Everyone familiar with the field of Chinese thought knows that Daoism sells in America and Confucianism doesn't. And it's no wonder. Daoist books are beautifully written, poetic, imaginative, and often playful. And as far as serious thinking goes, Daoist texts sound deeply profound, while Confucians have a tendency to seem shallow and pedantic. One of the great attractions of Daoist texts is actually that the sense of wisdom they convey is so deep that it frequently seems impossible to understand what they mean. But when we hear Laozi utter majestic words such as, "Reaching the ultimate of emptiness, deeply guarding stillness, the things of the world arise together; thereby do I watch their return," it seems almost sacrilegious to ask precisely what he's talking about.

While the Confucians were an identifiable school during the Warring States period (450-221 BCE), with teachers and students who shared an identity as disciples of the great Master, Confucius, there was, during the same period, no group of people who called themselves "Daoists" or were labeled by that term. The books we call Daoist are instead independent works, negative reactions against Confucianism that share many features, but whose authors were not necessarily aware of one another or conscious of contributing towards the formation of a school of thought.

We do not know, for example, whether the authors of the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* were teachers with students or merely solitary writers whose words were read and passed down by friends and admirers chiefly after their deaths. Only after the Classical period

was long over did scholars group these texts into a single school and coin a name for it, calling it the “School of Dao” because of the unique role that the authors of these texts assigned to the term Dao. For these writers, the Dao was not just a teaching that they promoted, in competition with the Daos that other teachers offered.

For Daoists, the term “Dao” referred to a fundamental order of the universe that governed all experience and that was the key to wisdom and human fulfillment.

Activity

Take a moment and listen to this Ted Talk about living in and with Daoism

A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=56

The origins of Daoism

Daoism appears to have begun as an escapist movement during the early Warring States period, and in some ways it makes sense to see it as an outgrowth of Confucianism and its doctrine of “timeliness.” That doctrine originated with Confucius’s motto: “When the Way prevails in the world, appear; when it does not, hide!” Even in the Confucian *Analects*, we see signs of a Confucian trend towards absolute withdrawal. The character and comportment of Confucius’s best disciple, Yan Hui, who lived in obscurity in an impoverished lane yet “did not alter his joy,” suggest this early tendency towards eremitism (the “hermit” lifestyle). Righteous hermits were much admired in Classical China, and men who withdrew from society to live in poverty “in the cliffs and caves” paradoxically often enjoyed a type of celebrity status.

The legend of Bo Yi, a hermit who descended from his mountain retreat because of the righteousness of King Wen of Zhou, led to the popular idea of hermits as virtue-barometers — they rose to the mountains when power was in the hands of immoral rulers, but would come back down to society when a sage king finally appeared. Patrician lords very much valued visits from men with reputations as righteous hermits, and this probably created the opportunity for men to appear at court seeking patronage on the basis of their eremitic purity. Possibly during the fourth century, this eremitic tradition seems to have generated a complex of new ideas that included appreciation for the majestic rhythms of the natural world apart from human society, a celebration of the isolated individual whose lonely stance signaled a unique power of enlightenment, and a growing interest in the potential social and political leverage that such renunciation of social and political entanglements seemed to promise. The product that emerged from these trends is the *Daodejing* of Laozi, perhaps the most famous of all Chinese books. This, along with the *Zhuangzi* attributed to Chuang Zu (or Zhuangzi) forms the foundation of Daoist thought and teaching.

Key Figures in Daoism

The main Taoist figures were Laozi, or Lao-Tzu (sixth century BCE) and Chuang-Tzu, or Zuangzi (fourth century BCE). They are notable for having characterized the notion of wu wei or non-action, a key element at the center of Daoist thought.

Laozi

Despite the fact that after his death he became one of the world's two or three bestselling authors, Laozi never actually died. In traditional China, many people believed that this was so because Laozi had possessed the secret of immortality and had evaded death by transforming his body into a non-perishable form, after which, being able to fly, he had moved his home to heavenly realms. Modern scholars believe that the reason Laozi never died is because he never lived. There was never any such person as Laozi. "Laozi" means "the Old Master." Lao is not a Chinese surname and Laozi was clearly never meant to be understood as an identifiable author's name.

The *Daodejing* is an anonymous text. Judging by its contents, it was compiled by several very different authors and editors over a period of perhaps a century, reaching its present form perhaps during the third century BCE. However, the authorial voice in the *Daodejing* is so strong that readers of the text were from the beginning fascinated with the personality of the apparent author, and among the deep thinkers who claimed to understand the book, there were some who also claimed to know all about the man who wrote it. Pieces of biography began to stick to the name Laozi, and, to make sure that readers understood that Laozi was a more authoritative person than Confucius, his biography came to include tales of his personal relationship to Confucius. Laozi, it seemed, had actually lived before Confucius and had actually been Confucius's teacher. Confucius had journeyed far to study with the great Daoist master, whose wisdom he recognized. Unfortunately, Confucius had not been wise enough to grasp Laozi's profound message and Laozi, for his part, had found Confucius to be a well-meaning but unintelligent pupil.

Chuang Tzu

More commonly known as **Zhuangzi** (literally "Master Zhuang") lived around the 4th century BCE during the Warring States period. He is credited with writing—in part or in whole—a work known by his name, the *Zhuangzi*.

The only account of the life of Zhuangzi is a brief sketch in chapter 63 of Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*, and most of the information it contains seems to have simply been drawn from anecdotes in the *Zhuangzi* itself. Sima Qian writes:

> *"Chuang-Tze had made himself well acquainted with all the literature of his time, but preferred the views of Lao-Tze; and ranked himself among his followers, so that of the more than ten myriads of characters contained in his published writings the greater part are occupied with metaphorical illustrations of Lao's doctrines. He made "The Old Fisherman," "The Robber Chih," and "The Cutting open Satchels," to satirize and expose the disciples of Confucius, and clearly exhibit the sentiments of Lao. Such names*

> *and characters as "Wei-lei Hsu" and "Khang-sang Tze" are fictitious, and the pieces where they occur are not to be understood as narratives of real events."*

Zhuangzi is traditionally credited as the author of at least part of the work bearing his name, the *Zhuangzi*. This work, in its current shape consisting of 33 chapters, is traditionally divided into three parts: the first, known as the "Inner Chapters", consists of the first seven chapters; the second, known as the "Outer Chapters", consist of the next 15 chapters; the last, known as the "Mixed Chapters", consist of the remaining 11 chapters. The meaning of these three names is disputed: according to Guo Xiang, the "Inner Chapters" were written by Zhuangzi, the "Outer Chapters" written by his disciples, and the "Mixed Chapters" by other hands; the other interpretation is that the names refer to the origin of the titles of the chapters—the "Inner Chapters" take their titles from phrases inside the chapter, the "Outer Chapters" from the opening words of the chapters, and the "Mixed Chapters" from a mixture of these two sources.

Zhuangzi was renowned for his brilliant wordplay and use of parables to convey messages. His critiques of society and historical figures are humorous and at times ironic.

Example from Psychology today

The Wisdom of Wu Wei:

Letting Good Things Happen

The Daodejing

Much of the attraction of the *Daodejing* is the product of its very powerful rhetoric. It is written in a uniquely resonant style, and fortunately it is possible to capture some of this resonance even in English translation. The arcane or mysterious style of the *Daodejing* is not an accident. It seems very clear that the composers of the text wanted the book to be mysterious. Part of the message that the *Daodejing* is meant to convey is precisely that there is a type of wisdom that is so subtle and esoteric that it is difficult for ordinary minds to comprehend.

Key Point

The opening phrase of the text sets its tone: "A Dao that may be spoken is not the enduring Dao." What does this say about the book we are about to read? Among other things, that it will not tell us what the Dao is, since this is beyond the power of words to convey.

In the original Chinese, the first line is famously difficult to understand. Since the term that the text chooses to use for the word "spoken" is Dao (which includes "to speak" among its meanings), the first six words of the book include the word Dao three times (more literally it reads: "A Dao you can Dao isn't the enduring Dao.") Throughout the *Daodejing* the very compressed language challenges readers to "break the code" of the text instead of conveying ideas clearly. Every passage seems to deliver this basic message: Real wisdom is so utterly different from what usually passes for wisdom that only a dramatic leap away from our ordinary perspective can allow us to begin to grasp it.

Basic ideas of the Daodejing

The *Daodejing* is often a vague and inconsistent book and it is sometimes tempting to wonder whether its authors really had any special insight to offer, or whether they just wanted to sound impressive. But the book does in fact articulate ideas of great originality and interest, ideas that have had enormous influence on Asian culture. The following eight points are among those most central to the text:

1. **The nature of the Dao.** There exists in some sense an overarching order to the cosmos, beyond the power of words to describe. This order, which the book refers to as the Dao, has governed the cosmos from its beginning and continues to pervade every aspect of existence. It may be understood as a process that may be glimpsed in all aspects of the world that have not been distorted by the control of human beings, for there is something about us that runs counter to the Dao, and that makes human life a problem. Human beings possess some flaw that has made our species alone insensitive to the Dao. Ordinary people are ignorant of this fact; the *Daodejing* tries to awaken them to it.

Key Takeaway: getting lost may be Dao

Try thinking through these ideas: The Dao of Getting Lost

- The uncarved block–pure potential

- Remove ego–it's not about me
- Get rid of any rigid plans, remove your destination
- Experiences are all valuable

2. **Changing perspective.** To understand the nature of human ignorance, it is necessary to undergo a fundamental change in our perspective. To do this, we need to disentangle ourselves from beliefs we live by that have been established through words and experience life directly. Our intellectual lives, permeated with ideas expressed in language, are the chief obstacle to wisdom.

3. **Value relativity.** If we were able to escape the beliefs we live by and see human life from the perspective of the Dao, we would understand that we normally view the world through a lens of value judgments — we see things as good or bad, desirable or detestable. The cosmos itself possesses none of these characteristics of value. All values are only human conventions that we project onto the world. Good and bad are non-natural distinctions that we need to discard if we are to see the world as it really is.

4. **Nature and spontaneity**. The marks of human experience are value judgments and planned action. The marks of the Dao are freedom from judgment and spontaneity. The processes of the Dao may be most clearly seen in the action of the non-human world, Nature. Trees and flowers, birds and beasts do not follow a code of ethics and act spontaneously from instinctual responses. The order of Nature is an image of the action of the Dao. To grasp the perspective of the Dao, human beings need to discard judgment and act on their spontaneous impulses. The *Daodejing* celebrates spontaneous action with two complementary terms, "self-so" and "non-striving" (ziran and wuwei). The inhabitants of the Natural world are "self-so," they simply are as they are, without any intention to be so. Human beings live by purposive action, planning and striving. To become Dao-like, we need to return to an animal-like responsiveness to simple instincts, and act without plans or effort. This "wuwei" style of behavior is the most central imperative Daoist texts recommend for us.

5. **The distortion of mind and language.** The source of human deviation from the Dao lies in the way that our species has come to use its unique property, the mind (xin). Rather than allow our minds to serve as a responsive mirror of the world, we have used it to develop language and let our thoughts and perceptions be governed by the categories that language creates, such as value judgments. The mind's use of language has created false wisdom, and our commitment to this false wisdom has come to blind us to the world as it really is, and to the Dao that orders it. The person who "practices" wuwei quiets the mind and leaves language behind.

6. **Selflessness.** The greatest barriers to discarding language and our value judgments are our urges for things we believe are desirable and our impulse to obtain these things for ourselves. The selfishness of our ordinary lives makes us devote all our energies to a chase for possessions and pleasures, which leaves us no space for the detached tranquility needed to join the harmonious rhythm of Nature and the Dao. The practice of wu-wei entails a release from pursuits of self-interest and a self-centered standpoint. The line between ourselves as individuals in accord with the Dao and the Dao-governed world at large becomes much less significant for us.

6. **Power and sagehood.** The person who embraces the spontaneity of wu-wei and leaves self-interest behind emerges into a new dimension of natural experience, and becomes immune to all the frightening dangers that beset us in ordinary experience. Once weakness, poverty, injury, and early death are no longer concepts we employ in our lives, we discover that such dangers do not really exist. Once we are part of the spontaneous order of Nature, it presents no threat to us and we gain tremendous leverage over it. We have the power of the Dao. This active power is wisdom, and the person who possesses it is a sage.

7. **The human influence of the sage.** The selfless power of the sage endows him or her with a social prestige that cannot be matched by ordinary people. So magnificent is the presence of the sage that those who come into contact with such a person cannot help but be deeply influenced. As in the case of Confucianism, de (character, virtue, power) has power over other people, who will spontaneously place themselves under the protection of and seek to emulate the sage.

8. **The political outcome.** As the Daoist sage comes effortlessly to subdue the world, he will necessarily be treated as its king. The rule of such a king will be to discard all human institutions and social patterns that are the product of human intellectual effort and value judgments. The people will be returned to a simple and primitive state close to animal society, and this social environment will itself nurture in the population a stance of wuwei. Ultimately, the world will return to the bliss of ignorance and fulfillment in a stable life of food gathering, food consumption, and procreation, all governed by the seasonal rhythms of Nature and the Dao.

> Example: The Daoist Farmer
>
> There was a farmer whose horse ran away. That evening the neighbors gathered to commiserate with him since this was such bad luck. He said, "Maybe." The next day the horse returned, but brought with it six wild horses, and the neighbors came

> exclaiming at his good fortune. He said, “Maybe.” And then, the following day, his son tried to saddle and ride one of the wild horses, was thrown, and broke his leg.
>
> Again the neighbors came to offer their sympathy for the misfortune. He said, “Maybe.” The day after that, conscription officers came to the village to seize young men for the army, but because of the broken leg the farmer’s son was rejected. When the neighbors came in to say how fortunately everything had turned out, he said, “Maybe.”

It is not hard to see how a philosophy along these lines could have emerged from a group of hermits who had withdrawn out of social disillusionment. The anti-Confucian elements of the *Daodejing* should also be easy to identify. The most important metaphors that the text uses to symbolize the Dao and the sage are an uncarved block of wood and an undyed piece of cloth, which contrast clearly with the Confucian celebration of the elaborate ritual patterns institutionalized by legendary sage kings. What is more surprising, however, is that the *Daodejing* proved to be a very popular text among the ruling class of late Classical China. This was the result of the fact that it seemed to provide a paradoxical path to social and political wealth and power through the act of renouncing interest in wealth and power. “The sage places his person last and it comes first,” the *Daodejing* tells us. Daoists who arrived at feudal courts in the Classical period found that they could attract the interest of ambitious men by linking their Dao of selflessness to an outcome in accord with the most selfish of ambitions.

One important difference between the ideas of the *Daodejing* and those of the Confucian writers is that while the Confucians made very clear the practical path that people needed to follow to achieve wisdom – the ritual syllabus of the Confucian Finishing School – the *Daodejing* is extremely vague when it comes to practical advice.

The following terms are considered key in Daoism, found in the Daodejing:

道 Dao—This term is often translated as “the Way,” but the increasing use of the Chinese term in contemporary English makes it better to leave the term untranslated. In ancient texts, the word Dao actually possesses a wide range of meanings. the word Dao derives its modern meaning of a path or way; from the formula of the dance, the word derives a meaning of “formula,” “method”; from the spoken element of the incantation, the word derives the meaning of “a teaching,” and also serves as a verb “to speak.” All ancient schools of philosophy referred to their teachings as Daos. Confucius and his followers claimed that they were merely transmitting a Dao — the social methods practiced by the sage kings of the past: “the Dao of the former kings.” Texts in the tradition of early thought that came later to be called “Daoist” used the word in a special sense, which is why the Daoist tradition takes its name from this term. Daoists claimed that the cosmos itself followed a certain natural “way” in its spontaneous action. They called this the “Great Dao,” and contrasted it to the Daos of other schools, which were human-created teachings, and which they did not believe merited the name Dao in their special sense.

德 de (character, power, virtue)– In its early uses, *de* seems to refer to the prestige that well-born and powerful aristocrats possessed as a result of the many gifts they dispensed to loyal followers, family members, and political allies (rather like the prestige associated with a Mafia godfather). Later, the term came to be associated with important attributes of character. Although it can be used to refer to both positive or negative features of person, it usually refers to some form of personal “excellence,” and to say that someone has much *de* is to praise him. The concrete meaning of this term varies among different schools. Confucians use it most often to refer to a person’s moral dispositions (moral according to Confucians, at any rate), and in this sense, the word is often best rendered as “character” or “virtue.” Daoists, however, speak of *de* as an attribute of both human and non-human participants in the cosmos, and they often describe it as a type of charismatic power or leverage over the limits of nature that the Daoist sage is able to acquire through self-cultivation. As such, it may be best rendered as “power.” The title of the famous book, *Daodejing* means “The Classic of the Dao and De,” and in this title, *de* is best understood as a type of power derived from transcending (going beyond) the limits of the human ethical world.

心) Xin (mind/heart)–In Chinese, a single word was used to refer both to the function of our minds as a cognitive, reasoning organ, and its function as an affective, or emotionally responsive organ. The word, xin, was originally represented in written form by a sketch of the heart. There are really four aspects fused in this term. The mind/heart thinks rationally, feels emotionally, passes value judgments on all objects of thought and feeling, and initiates active responses in line with these judgments. Sometimes, the “unthinking” aspects of people, such as basic desires and instinctual responses, are pictured as part of the mind/heart. However, the *Daodejing*, typically uses the term xin to denote the cognitive mind and its functions of contemplation, judgment, and so forth, all of which the text views as features that distance human beings from the Dao.

仁 Ren (benevolence)–No term is more important in Confucianism than ren. Prior to the time of Confucius, the term does not seem to have been much used; in the earliest texts the word seems to have meant “manly,” an adjective of high praise in a warrior

society. Confucius, however, changed the meaning of the term and gave it great ethical weight, using it to denote a type of all-encompassing virtue which distinguishes the truly ethical person. Confucian texts often pair this term with Righteousness, and it is very common for the two terms together to be used as a general expression for "morality." Other schools also use the term ren, but they usually employ it either to criticize Confucians, or in a much reduced sense, pointing simply to people who are well-meaning, kind, or benevolent. The *Daodejing* employs the term in this reduced sense, and tendentiously contrasts it with the amorality of the natural world and those who emulate the Dao.

聖 *Sheng* (sage)–All of the major schools of ancient Chinese thought, with the possible exception of the Legalists, were essentially prescriptions for human self-perfection. These schools envisioned the outcome of their teachings — the endpoint of their Daos — in terms of different models of human excellence. A variety of terms were used to describe these images of perfection, but the most common was sheng, or shengren 聖人, which we render in English as "sage person" or, more elegantly, "sage." The original graph includes a picture of an ear and a mouth on top (the bottom part merely indicates the pronunciation, and was sometimes left out), and the early concept of the sage involved the notion of a person who could hear better than ordinary people. The word is closely related to the common word for "to listen" (ting 聽). What did the sage hear? Presumably the Dao.

天 *Tian* (Heaven)–Tian was the name of a deity of the Zhou people which stood at the top of a supernatural hierarchy of spirits (ghosts, nature spirits, powerful ancestral leaders, Tian). Tian also means "the sky," and for that reason, it is well translated as "Heaven." The early graph is an anthropomorphic image (a picture of a deity in terms of human attributes) that shows a human form with an enlarged head. Heaven was an important concept for the early Zhou people; Heaven was viewed as an all-powerful and all-good deity, who took a special interest in protecting the welfare of China. When the Zhou founders overthrew the Shang Dynasty in 1045, they defended their actions by claiming that they were merely receiving the "mandate" of Heaven, who had wished to replace debased Shang rule with a new era of virtue in China. All early philosophers use this term and seem to accept that there existed some high deity that influenced human events. The Mohist school was particularly strident on the importance of believing that Tian was powerfully concerned with human activity. They claimed that the Confucians did not believe Tian existed, although Confucian texts do speak of Tian reverently and with regularity. In fact, Confucian texts also seem to move towards identifying Tian less with a conscious deity and more with the unmotivated regularities of Nature. When Daoist texts speak of Heaven, it is often unclear whether they are referring to a deity, to Nature as a whole, or to their image of the Great Dao.

無為 *Wuwei* (non-striving)–Wuwei literally means "without [wu] doing [wei]." The initial component, wu, indicates absence or non-existence. As a verb, the second term, wei, means "to do; to make," and therefore the compound term wuwei is sometimes rendered as "non-action": an absence of doing. However, in the *Daodejing*, the term is used to characterize the action of the Dao in its creative role and ongoing transformations, and clearly describes a manner of action, rather than an absence of action. The term wei 為 is both phonetically and graphically cognate to a word generally used pejoratively to mean "fake; phoney": wei 偽. The third century BCE Confucian thinker Xunzi, however, uses the term wei 偽 in a difference and, for him, very positive sense, meaning that which humans accomplish through planning and effort. In this, Xunzi was challenging Daoist celebration of the processes of the non-human, "Dao-governed" world, which are precisely "without wei 偽": that is, unplanned and free of any purposive intent. This is probably the best way to understand how wuwei functions in Daoist texts: action that occurs without the agency and intent that is characteristic of behavior governed by the human mind. The Daoist sage has perfected the ability to respond to his environment in this purpose-free way.

自然 *Ziran* (spontaneous, natural) –Like wuwei, ziran is a compound term; The initial component (zi) means "self; in itself," and the second term, ran, means "as things are; things being so." Hence, ziran describes a thing as it is in itself, without regard for forces that may act upon it: spontaneous. The term ultimately came to be used as a noun, meaning "Nature" (the non-human, or noncognition-influenced elements of the world we live in). In the translation here, ziran is rendered flexibly in context. For example: "To be sparse in speech is to be spontaneous (ziran)"; "That the Dao is revered and virtue honored is ordained by no one; it is ever so of itself. (ziran)" ; "Assisting the things of the world to be as they are in themselves (ziran)" . Ziran and wuwei are closely related terms in the *Daodejing*, since a thing or person that is spontaneous in the manner of its being may be understood to be acting without purpose and effort. In appreciating Daoist thought, it is useful to accommodate the notion that the ideals of ziran and wuwei do not inherently foreclose the notion of exerting purposive effort in the pursuit of a cultivated state of purposeless spontaneity.

Don't Force Anything – Alan Watts Wu Wei

While wuwei may be simple in the abstract (just behave more or less like your dog does), in practice there are problems (hey, nobody filled my dish!). The text stresses the concept of nonaction or noninterference with the natural order of things. *Dao*, usually translated as the Way, is difficult to describe. It has been likened to a path, a river, a balance of nature, as well as a vast void, and is

considered the origin of nature. If you spend one hour following the imperative to eliminate value judgments and the desires associated with them, you will discover that without a teacher or model rules to follow, it is difficult to follow the Dao of the *Daodejing*.

It may also be described as the origin of the forces of *yin and yang*. Yin, associated with shade, water, and feminine. and yang, associated with light, fire, and male, are the two alternating phases of cosmic energy; their balance brings cosmic harmony. The familiar image of the symbol reflects the intertwined duality of all things in nature, a common theme in Daoism. No quality is independent of its opposite, nor so pure that it does not contain its opposite. These concepts are depicted by the division between the portions, and the smaller circles within the large regions.

Another important concept in Daoism is *ch'ang*, i.e. the property of being constant, enduring, eternal. The central goal of Daoism is the attainment of *ch'ang-sheng pussu*, i.e. immortality. Philosophical Daoism conceives immortality as spiritual and explains it as enlightenment and oneness with the highest principle, the Dao, or The Way. A person who has attained oneness with the Dao is called *chen-jen*, i.e. a pure human being.

The Zuangzi

The ***Zhuangzi*** was one of the earliest texts to contribute to the philosophy of Daoism. Much of it teaches the reader to embrace a philosophy that disengages from such things as education, fashion, politics and the like, and instead encourages the cultivation of our natural inborn skills. One is taught to live a simple and natural life. This is still considered a full and rich life, but not one tied up in culture or other artificial activity.

The literary style of the *Zhuangzi* is unique, and the format of the text needs to be understood before reading selections from it. Most of the chapters are a series of brief but rambling essays, which mix together statements that may be true with others that are absurd, and tales about real or imaginary figures. It is never a good idea to assume that when Zhuangzi states something as fact that he believes it to be true, or that he cares whether we believe it or not. He makes up facts all the time. It is also best to assume that every tale told in the *Zhuangzi* is fictional, that Zhuangzi knew that he had invented it, and that he did not expect anyone to believe his stories. Every tale and story in the *Zhuangzi* has a philosophical point. Those points are the important elements of Zhuangzi's book (for philosophers, at any rate; the book is famous as a literary masterpiece too).

> Example: a story
>
> To wear out one's spirit-like powers contriving some view of oneness without understanding that it is all the same is called "three in the morning." What do I mean by "three in the morning?
>
> " A monkey keeper was handing out nuts. "You get three in the morning and four in the evening," he said. All the monkeys were furious. "All right," he said. "You get four in the morning and three in the evening."
>
> The monkeys were all delighted.
>
> There was no discrepancy between the words and the reality yet contentment and anger were stirred thereby – it is just thus with assertions of "this is so." Therefore, the Sage brings all into harmony through assertion and denial but rests it upon the balance of heaven: this is called "walking a double path."

Zhuangzi's chief strategy as a writer seems to have been to undermine our ordinary notions of truth and value by claiming a very radical form of fact and value relativity. For Zhuangzi, as for Laozi, all values that humans hold dear — good and bad; beauty and

ugliness– are non-natural and do not really exist outside of our very arbitrary prejudices. But Zhuangzi goes farther. He attacks our belief that there are any firm facts in the world. According to Zhuangzi, the cosmos is in itself an undivided whole, a single thing without division of which we are a part. The only true "fact" is the dynamic action of this cosmic system as a whole. Once, in the distant past, human beings saw the world as a whole and themselves as a part of this whole, without any division between themselves and the surrounding context of Nature.

But since the invention of words and language, human beings have come to use language to say things about the world, and this has had the effect of cutting up the world in our eyes. When humans invent a name, suddenly the thing named appears to stand apart from the rest of the world, distinguished by the contours of its name definition. In time, our perception of the world has degenerated from a holistic grasping of it as a single system, to a perception of a space filled with individual items, each having a name. Every time we use language and assert something about the world, we reinforce this erroneous picture of the world. We call this approach "relativism" because Zhuangzi's basic claim is that what we take to be facts are only facts in relation to our distorted view of the world, and what we take to be good or bad things only appear to have positive and negative value because our mistaken beliefs lead us into arbitrary prejudices.

The dynamic operation of the world-system as a whole is the Dao. The partition of the world into separate things is the outcome of non-natural, human language-based thinking. Zhuangzi believed that what we needed to do was learn how to bypass the illusory divided world that we have come to "see before our eyes," but which does not exist, and recapture the unitary view of the universe of the Dao. Like Laozi, Zhuangzi does not detail any single practical path that can lead us to achieve so dramatic a change in perspective. But his book is filled with stories of people who seem to have made this shift, and some of these models offer interesting possibilities. One of the most well known of these stories is the tale of Cook Ding, a lowly butcher who has perfected carcass carving to a high art. In the *Zhuangzi*, Cook Ding describes how the world appears to him when he practices his dance-like butchery:

> *When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now — now I meet it with my spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are.*

Key ideas in the text of the *Zhuangzi* include:

1. *Relative magnitudes in time and space:* Ordinary human life exists in arbitrary dimensions of size and duration. Why should we believe that the human perspective has any intrinsic validity, and why should we not wonder whether we could experience the world from other standpoints?
2. *The emptiness of words:* Zhuangzi attempts to show not only the arbitrary way that words "slice up" the unity of the cosmos, but also the way our faith in words gradually undermines our sensitivity to lived experience.
3. *The imperative of self-preservation*: the person who learns to dance towards self-preservation in every act, never allowing empty values such as loyalty, righteousness, or ren (the cardinal Confucian virtue of reciprocal moral empathy) to distract him from his main task of evading the dangers of the political world.
4. *The non-distinction between life and death:* Despite his commitment to self-preservation in the context of dangerous times, Zhuangzi claims that the line human beings draw between life and death is a non-natural one, and there is no reason for us to cling to life or fear death. The Dao embraces all as one, and once we come to view who we are only in terms of our participation in the Great Dao, we discard the illusion that somehow participation as a live human being is somehow more important or more desirable than participation as a rotting corpse fertilizing the fields, or in any of the endless forms that we may emerge as thereafter.

? Background and History

If you want more detail, you should take the time to read this article on the history of the development of Daoism and Daoist thought from Columbia University. Defining Daoism: a Complex History

- "*The Classic on the Way and Its Power* (*Dao de jing*) describes how the original whole, the *dao* (here meaning the "Way" above all other ways), was broken up: "The Dao gave birth to the One, the One gave birth to the Two, the Two gave birth to the Three, and the Three gave birth to the Ten Thousand Things."(1) That decline-through-differentiation also offers the

model for regaining wholeness. The spirit may be restored by reversing the process of aging, by reverting from multiplicity to the One. By understanding the road or path (the same word, *dao*, in another sense) that the great Dao followed in its decline, one can return to the root and endure forever."

- "Daoism has always stressed morality. Whether expressed through specific injunctions against stealing, lying, and taking life, through more abstract discussions of virtue, or through exemplary figures who transgress moral codes, ethics was an important element of Daoist practice."

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1. https://ealc.indiana.edu/people/eno-robert.html ↵

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2.2: Daoism Resources

"I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and in thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all beings in the world."
— Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching 67* (tr. Stephen Mitchell)

Useful Links

- Britannica on Daoism
- Dao de jing: translated by Robert Eno
- Zhuangzi: The Inner Chapters translated by Robert Eno
- Alta Lib Guides: Daoism
- Daoism and Art: The Met
- Stanford Encyclopedia: Daoism
- Center for Global Education: Daoism
- Chad Hansen's Chinese Philosophy Pages

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2.3: Confucian Thought

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=58

Confucianism was the official religion of China from 200 BCE until it was officially abolished when communist leadership discouraged religious practice in 1949. The religion was developed by "Confucius", which is the name by which English speakers know Kong Qiu 孔丘, born near a small ducal state on the Shandong Peninsula in 551 BCE.

We have open access materials from Robert Eno[1] of the University of Indiana, made available for educators.

"Confucius's father was a member of the low aristocracy of the medium sized state of Lu 魯. According to our best sources, he was an important aide to a major aristocratic, or "grandee" family. During his prime, this family had served the greatest power holders in Lu by controlling a domain assigned to them on Lu's southern border, near a small, non-Zhou cultural area called Zou 鄒. Shortly before Confucius's birth, the family's domain was relocated to the north, but Confucius's father, having by his primary wife and his concubines produced no healthy sons to carry on his line, and being now an older man, chose at this time to take as a concubine a woman of Zou. She soon gave birth to Confucius. Three years later, Confucius's father died, and Confucius apparently grew up with his mother's family in the border region between Lu and Zou. Reaching adulthood, he traveled to the feudal center of Lu to seek social position, based on his father's standing and connections.

When Confucius sought his fortune in Lu, he probably appeared there as a semi-outsider, the son of a "mixed" union between a man of Lu, who had long resided in Zou, and a woman of that non-Zhou place. But Confucius made his reputation as a strong advocate of a puristic revival of Zhou traditions in court conduct, religious ceremony, and every aspect of ordinary life. He became expert in these traditions, and it was on the basis of this knowledge and the persuasiveness of his claim that the way to bring order back to "the world" was to recreate early Zhou society through its ritual forms, or "li," that Confucius became known. The details of what Confucius saw as legitimate Zhou culture and why he thought its patterns were tools for building a new utopia are the principal subjects of the Analects.

His mastery of Zhou cultural forms allowed Confucius to become a teacher of young aristocrats seeking polish, and through their connections, he was able to gain some stature in Lu. Ultimately, he and some of his followers attempted to implement a grand restorationist plan in Lu that would have shifted power back to the ducal house. Shortly after 500 BCE, when Confucius was about

fifty, the plan failed, and Confucius was forced to leave his home state. For about fifteen years, he traveled with a retinue of disciples from state to state in eastern China, looking for a ruler who would employ him and adopt the policies he advocated. *The Analects* pictures some key moments in these travels, which ultimately proved fruitless. A few years before his death, one of Confucius's senior disciples, a man named Ran Qiu, arranged to have Confucius welcomed back to Lu, where he lived out his days as a teacher of young men, training them in the literary, ritual, and musical arts that he saw as central to the culture of the Zhou.

An extraordinary teacher, his lessons—which were about self-discipline, respect for authority and tradition, and ***jen*** (the kind treatment of every person)—were collected in a book called the *Analects*."

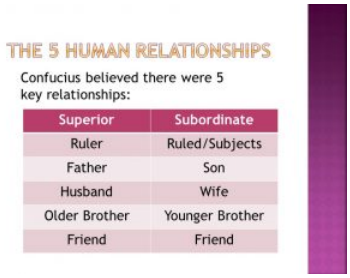
Some religious scholars consider Confucianism more of a social system than a religion because it focuses on sharing wisdom about moral practices but doesn't involve any type of specific worship; nor does it have formal objects. In fact, its teachings were developed in context of problems of social anarchy and a near-complete deterioration of social cohesion. Dissatisfied with the social solutions put forth, Confucius developed his own model of morality to help guide society.

Additional Reading

For more detail, read Columbia University's page on Confucius and the Confucian Tradition, part of their materials on Living in the Chinese Cosmos: The Three Teachings

- Confucius and Confucian Tradition

Confucius focused on human fulfillment in the social work–through relationships– for he believed that the way of life flowed through the human world just as it did in the rest of nature. Troubled by the political turmoil and what he perceived as a decline in civilization during his lifetime (you might want to read more about this, as China was in political turmoil at the time he lived), Confucius advocated installing a program of comprehensive education and the cultivation of special virtues in all people. He wanted to develop individuals who could be social leaders and who could create a harmonious society. In Confucian thinking, to a great extent, human beings are who they are because of their relationships. Careful attention to the duties and obligations of a person's different relationships with others was a central focus of his teaching. One must live up to the highest expectations or standards of various social roles one occupied, beginning with the family. (***xaio***)



Superior	Subordinate
Ruler	Ruled/Subjects
Father	Son
Husband	Wife
Older Brother	Younger Brother
Friend	Friend

So being a dutiful child, caring spouse, responsible parent, thoughtful friend–these are all the things that he emphasized in his teachings about how to achieve an ethical society. His emphasis was always on the community, not the individual's well-being.

The excellent or noble person (***junzi***) would have an inner integrity and a deep consideration for others (***ren***). This person would have mastered the social graces—all those countless rituals of propriety (***li***) that allow for smooth interaction between people. The noble person would avoid extremes in life, maintaining equilibrium and harmony. Additionally, the aesthetic self would be developed, demonstrated in a love for all the arts associated with civilization, such as poetry and literature, calligraphy, dance, painting, and music (***wen***). By automatically choosing to do what is right (after years of practice and study and by fulfilling one's job duties and social obligations properly), one would be united with the force of the universe, and the ancestors.

Sutra of Filial Piety from British Library Collection

Confucianism is one of the Three Teachings of China, its three most influential religious and philosophical systems. Confucianism became state-sponsored during the Han dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE). Buddhism and Daoism blended, in ritual and practice, with Confucianism and created a popular set of religious practices, some of which are still a part of Chinese practice.

A short timeline of Confucian impact on Chinese culture:

551 to 479 BCE Life and teaching of Confucius

470-c.380 BCE Arguments against Confucian teachings by Mozi

372-289 BCE Confucian revival

221-202 BCE Confucianism is suppressed by the Qin Dynasty.

136 BCE The Han Dynasty introduces civil service examinations modelled on Confucian texts.

9th century CE Confucianism is reborn as Neo-Confucianism.

> Example of modern interpretation

Melvyn Bragg examines the philosophy of Confucius. In the 5th century BC a wise man called Kung Fu Tzu said, ‘study the past if you would divine the future’. This powerful maxim helped form the body of ideas, which more than Buddhism, more than Daoism, more even than Communism has defined what it is to be Chinese. It is a philosophy that we call Confucianism, and as well as asserting the importance of learning from the past it embodies a respect for heirachy, ritual and parents. But who was Confucius, what were his ideas and how did they succeed in becoming the bedrock for a civilisation? With Frances Wood, Curator of the Chinese section of the British Library, Tim Barrett Professor of East Asian History at SOAS, the School of African and Oriental Studies at London University, and Dr Tao Tao Liu, Tutorial Fellow in Oriental Studies at Wadham College, Oxford University.

In Our Time: Confucius

The Analects (translation, Robert Eno)

“The Analects of Confucius, which is composed of about five hundred independent passages, is divided into twenty “books.” Some of these books seem to have originated as strips authored, over a period of years, by a single group, and separated into bundles according to dominant themes. Others of the books seem to have originated independently, and been brought together with the larger number of books at a later date. Within each book, the order of passages appears to have been disrupted over time, to greater or lesser degree, either by disarrangements that occurred after the string of a bundle broke, or because part of the composition process involved conscious rearrangement and insertion of later passages into existing bundles / books, in order to adjust the way the message of the overall text was conveyed. All of the books bear the traces of rearrangements and later insertions, to a degree

that makes it difficult to see any common thematic threads at all. If a full account of these alterations in the text could be made, it would likely provide a clear and valuable reflection of the way that the Confucian school and its various branches developed over the first two or three centuries of the school's existence. Recent finds of early manuscripts dating from c. 300 BCE have thrown additional light on these processes of text development

Although this is not clear on initial reading, the ideas of the Analects are importantly influenced by the literary character of the text, and the fact that it is presented chiefly as conversational interplay among a relatively limited cast of characters: Confucius ("the Master"), his disciples, and a group of power holders with whom Confucius interacts. The Analects was almost certainly used as a teaching text for later generations of disciples, who were taught not only the text but much detail about the contexts and characters now lost to us, and it is certain that the original audience of the text developed a grasp of the rich nuances conveyed by the way statements in the text are distributed among its various speakers. Most importantly, the disciples in the Analects provided a range of positive and negative models readers could emulate as they attempted to find their way into Confucian teachings, and develop into the true inheritors of the Dao of discipleship.

> Example: What are the main teachings of Confucius?
>
> Dr. Anu Mande is professor of World History courses at Fullerton College in California. She also has a Youtube Channel with some excellent materials. Here is a short presentation on Confucian thought, and if you would like to focus on the 5 Great Relationships, start at 17:20 in the video. The whole video (21:36 minutes) is well worth watching!
>
> - Confucianism Explained

The philosophy conveyed through the Analects is basically an ethical perspective, and the text has always been understood as structured on a group of key ethical terms. These (along with some terms key to other early streams of Chinese thought) are discussed in more detail in the Glossary to follow.

There is a group of key terms whose meaning seems to be so flexible, subtle, and disputed that it seems best to leave them untranslated, simply using transcription for them.

The first set of these terms include:

Ren 仁 – a comprehensive ethical virtue: benevolence, humaneness, goodness; the term is so problematic that many Analects passages show disciples trying to pin Confucius down on its meaning (he escapes being pinned).

Junzi 君子 – often used to denote an ideally ethical and capable person; sometimes simply meaning a power holder, which is its original sense.

Dao 道 – a teaching or skill formula that is a key to some arena of action: an art, self-perfection, world transformation.

Li 禮– the ritual institutions of the Zhou, of which Confucius was master; the range of behavior subject to the broad category denoted by this term ranges from political protocol to court ceremony, religious rite to village festival, daily etiquette to disciplines of personal conduct when alone.

Tian 天 – carrying the basic meaning of "sky," Tian becomes a concept of supreme deity, often translated as "Heaven," sometimes possessing clear anthropomorphic features, sometimes appearing more a natural force.

In addition to these items, other complex key terms are rendered by very vague English words, the meaning of which can only emerge as contextual usage is noted.

Two more difficult terms include:

de 德 – a very complex concept, initially related to the notion of charisma derived from power and gift-giving, developing into an ethical term denoting self-possession and orientation towards moral action. "Virtue" might be a possible choice of translations

wen 文 – denoting a relation to features of civilization that are distinctive to Zhou culture, or to traditions ancestral to the Zhou; wen can refer to decoration, written texts, and personal conduct, but most importantly, it points to the behavioral matrix underlying Zhou li. "Pattern" could be a simple, if inadequate, translation.

Finally, a set of important terms can be translated with some accuracy into English, but only with the understanding that the conceptual range of the Chinese term may not match English perfectly; in some cases, alternate English translations are used.

These include:

Right / Righteousness (yi 義)– often a complement to *ren*, denoting morally correct action choices, or the moral vision that allows one to make them.

Loyalty (zhong 忠) – denoting not only loyalty to one's superiors or peers, or to individuals, but also to office; an alignment of self with the interests of others, or of the social group as a whole.

Trustworthiness / Faithfulness (xin 信) – derived from the concept of promise keeping, meaning reliability for others, but also unwavering devotion to principle.

Respectfulness / Attentiveness (jing 敬) – derived from the notion of alertness, and fusing the attentiveness to task characteristic of a subordinate and the respect for superiors that such attentiveness reflects.

Filiality (xiao 孝)– a traditional cultural imperative, obedience to parents, raised to a subtle level of fundamental self-discipline and character building.

Valor (yong 勇) – in a feudal era marked by incessant warfare, bold warriors and adventurers were common; for Confucians, valor concerns risk taking on behalf of ethical principle.

These terms help convey the emphasis on relationship, obedience, ethics, and social structure that are found at the heart of Confucian ideals.

Key Takeaway: Modern ideas about Confucian Thought

Check out these simple articles from Harvard's Pluralism Project on the ideas in Confucian thought and how they traveled to America.

- Confucius and Sons
- The 21st Century: A Confucian Revival?

> How Confucius influenced–and still influences!–China
>
> "Imperial China was famous for its civil service examination system, which had its beginnings in the Sui dynasty (581-618 CE) but was fully developed during the Qing dynasty. The system continued to play a major role, not only in education and government, but also in society itself, throughout Qing times."

- Civil Service Exams in China, past and present

"In Our Time, Confucius." Edited by Melvyn Bragg, *BBC Radio 4*, BBC, 1 Nov. 2001, www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00547k8.

Eno, Robert. *The Analects of Confucius*, University of Indiana, 2015, chinatxt.sitehost.iu.edu/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf.

Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles. (2011). In *Big ideas simply explained: the philosophy book*. Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc. Credo Reference: http://lscproxy.mnpals.net/login?url...itutionId=6500

"Confucianism." *The Pluralism Project*, Harvard University, 13 Nov. 2014, pluralism.org/confucianism.

Mande, Anu. *Confucianism Explained*, 10 June 2020, youtu.be/Bj9JaYxsP4U.

Asia for Educators, Columbia University. "Confucius and the 'Confucian Tradition.'" *Living in the Chinese Cosmos | Asia for Educators*, 2021, afe.easia.columbia.edu/cosmos/ort/confucianism.htm.

1. https://ealc.indiana.edu/people/eno-robert.html ↵

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2.4: Confucian Resources

"He who learns but does not think is lost. He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger." Confucius, *The Analects*

Useful Links

- Analects: translated by Robert Eno
- Confucius: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Confucius: Britannica
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Confucius
- Center for Global Education: Confucianism
- Harvard University's Pluralism Project: Confucianism
- Confucian Weekly Bulletin
- National Association of Scholars: Confucian Institutes in America
- Confucian resources: Library of Congress

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2.5: Buddhism

Originating in northern India in the 5th-6th century BCE Buddhism is concerned with the universal searching for enlightenment. The Buddha lived as Prince Siddhartha Gautama before renouncing his family as an adult and leaving his life of privilege in search of enlightenment. The Buddha lived and taught in north-east India in the 5th century BCE, dying in his eightieth year. The Theravāda tradition puts his death in 486 BCE, while the Mahāyāna tradition has it in 368 BCE. Recent scholarly research suggests his most likely dates were 484–404 BCE.

Telling the Story of Buddha: Siddhartha Gautama

Film segments from the excellent PBS film: The Buddha (there are transcripts beneath the video if you would rather read this material) The total viewing time for these segments, together, is about 45 minutes.

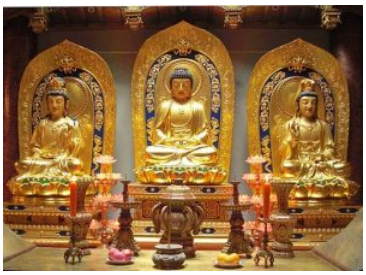
- Birth and Youth
- Seeking 3 parts, see under the title of the segment
- Enlightenment 3 parts, see under the title of the segment

Buddhism teaches that all of life is suffering, caused by desire. To cease suffering one must end desire and this can be achieved through following the Noble Eight-fold Path (eight rules that guides the life and morals of a follower). Buddhists believe that all actions bring reward or retribution.

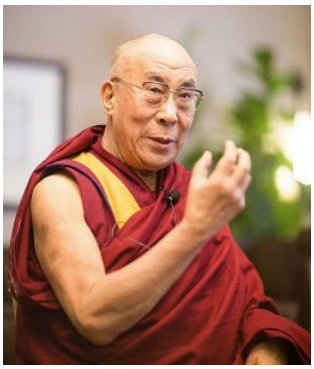
Buddha rejected many aspects of the Hinduism traditions and beliefs of his day. These included rejecting the caste system, an emphasis on rituals, and the belief in a permanent spiritual reality. He accepted Hindu ideas on karma and rebirth and the notion of liberation, which he called nirvana instead of moksha. In the centuries after his death, several schools emerged that eventually crystallized into the great branches of Buddhism recognized today: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

Branches

Theravada is the only surviving conservative school whose goal was to pass on the Buddha's teachings unchanged. Theravada Buddhism centers on the interdependence of the community of monks with ordinary people. Monks pursue nirvana supported by the people, who gain merit (good karma) by providing them with food, clothing, and provisions for the monastic life. Monks, in turn, are role models who offer advice, and run schools, meditation centers, and medical clinics. "In Theravada (Southern) Buddhist countries, the monks (bhikkhus) are easily recognized because they wear the characteristic orange robe, have their heads shaven, and go about barefoot. They are given a new name and the robe, and will live according to a code of 227 rules (the Vinaya). A monk may decide to disrobe (cease being a monk) at any time."[1]



The **Mahayana** branch subdivided into many different schools and introduced innovations in teachings and the practice of Buddhist life for ordinary people. The Mahayana ideal was the deeply compassionate person called a bodhisattva, who refused to fully enter nirvana, but stayed among people to help others end their suffering. The historical Buddha was deemphasized by a worldview that saw the universe populated by many Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Major schools of this form of Buddhism include Shingon, Tendai, Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen. In Mahayana (Northern) Buddhist countries there are two main branches, the Tibetan with monks wearing the characteristic maroon robe, and the Far Eastern Zen, which also has an unbroken line of nuns, where the robes are black or grey.



Dalai Lama

Associated with Tibetan Buddhism, **Vajrayana** combines Mahayana principles of living and teaching with various ritual practices incorporating mantras, mudras, and mandalas. An interesting feature is the transmission of leadership through reincarnations of other lamas (leaders). “Tibetan Buddhism is to be found not only in Tibet, but right across the Himalayan region from Ladakh to Sikkim, as well as parts of Nepal. It is the state religion of the kingdom of Bhutan. It also spread to Mongolia and parts of Russia (Kalmykia, Buryatia and Tuva) Tibetan refugees have brought it back to India, where it can be found in all the many Tibetan settlements. In modern times it has become very popular in the West. Tibetan Buddhism takes as its motivating spiritual ideal the way of the bodhisattva, the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment for all beings. All Tibetan traditions place special emphasis on the teacher-student relationship. This distinctive approach is based on the Indian ideal of the guru (Lama in Tibetan). The Vajrayana or Tantra is not considered separate from the Mahayana, but has a special connection within it, as it is based on an altruistic Mahayana motivation. Tantra is a path of transformation in which you work under the guidance of a suitably qualified teacher to allow you to access subtler and deeper states of consciousness such as transforming the emotions and ego.”[2]

Four Noble Truths

- ***Dukkha*** –all life is suffering, as one is incapable of finding ultimate satisfaction. This is an innate characteristic of existence in the realm of ***samsara*** *(the life cycle that includes reincarnation)*;
- ***Samudaya***–the origin, the arising of this suffering is craving, desire, wanting. Dukkha comes together with this ***taṇhā*** (“craving, desire or attachment”);
- ***Nirodha***– the cessation, the ending of this *dukkha*, this suffering, can be attained by the renouncement or letting go of this *taṇhā, the craving and desire*;
- ***Magga***–the way one gets rid of craving is through the path, the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the path leading to renouncement of *tanha* and cessation of *dukkha*.

The eight Buddhist practices in the Noble Eightfold Path are:

1. **Right View**: our actions have consequences, death is not the end, and our actions and beliefs have consequences after death.
2. **Right Resolve or Intention**: the giving up of home and adopting the life of a religious mendicant in order to follow the path; this concept aims at peaceful renunciation, into an environment of non-sensuality, non-ill-will (to loving kindness), away from cruelty (to compassion).
3. **Right Speech**: no lying, no rude speech, no telling one person what another says about him to cause discord or harm their relationship.
4. **Right Conduct or Action**: no killing or injuring, no taking what is not given, no sexual acts, no material desires.
5. **Right Livelihood:** beg to feed, only possessing what is essential to sustain life;
6. **Right Effort:** preventing the arising of unwholesome states, and generating wholesome states,
7. **Right Mindfulness**: "retention", being mindful of the *dhammas* ("teachings", "elements") that are beneficial to the Buddhist path.
8. **Right Concentration:** practicing four stages of *dhyāna* ("meditation"), which culminates into equanimity and mindfulness. In the Theravada tradition and the Vipassana movement, this is interpreted as concentration or one-pointedness of the mind, and supplemented with meditation, which aims at insight.

The Three Fires

(1) Desire/Thirst, (2) Anger (3) Delusion

"Your house is on fire, burns with the Three Fires; there is no dwelling in it' – thus spoke the Buddha in his great Fire Sermon. The house he speaks of here is the human body; the three fires that burn it are (1) Desire/Thirst, (2) Anger and (3) Delusion. They are all kinds of energy and are called 'fires' because, untamed, they can rage through us and hurt us and other people too! Properly calmed through spiritual training, however, they can be transformed into the genuine warmth of real humanity." [3]

Buddhists promotes virtues such as kindness, patience and generosity. The virtues of wisdom and compassion are valued most of all. ***Ahimsa*** or harmlessness, connected with a respect for all things, is described, in part, by the term compassion. This desire to cause no harm to all beings includes animals, plants, and the world in general. In addition, this is a tradition that asks one to think and reflect on all one's actions. Buddha himself told his followers not to believe statements or teachings without questioning, but to test each one for themselves.

Buddhists try to practice these Buddhist virtues actively in their everyday lives. The final goal of all Buddhist practice is to bring about that same awakening that the Buddha himself achieved through an active transformation of the heart and passions and the letting go of "self".

Summary information about Buddhism: Harvard University

Buddhism in Brief

The term 'Buddha' is not a name but a title, meaning 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'. The man Siddhartha Gautama is not seen as unique in being a Buddha, as Buddhas are seen to have arisen in past eons of the world, and will do so in future. They are not incarnations of a God, but humans who have developed ethical and spiritual perfections over many lives. A Buddha is seen as one who becomes awakened to the true nature of reality, and awakened *from* ingrained greed, hatred and delusion. They are enlightened in being able to clearly see the nature of the conditioned world, with its many worlds in which beings are reborn, and Nirvana, the timeless state beyond all rebirths. Moreover a Buddha is seen as a wise and compassionate teacher who shows people the path beyond suffering.

Devotees founded temples and monasteries and sponsored the writing of holy texts.

Read and watch a short video about the development of Buddhist Texts

Peter Harvey[4] has written for the British Library about the development of sacred texts within the varied branches of Buddhism. The article begins with a longer description of the enlightenment of Buddha, and then moves into talking about Buddhist Texts.

"**How were the Buddha's teachings collected?**

Soon after his death, 500 disciples who were enlightened *Arahats*, free of further rebirth, gathered to agree what he had taught, and arranged these into two kinds of text that could be communally chanted: *Vinaya*, on monastic discipline, and the *Suttas*, or discourses. At that time, writing was little used in India, but there was a well-developed tradition of passing on detailed texts orally.

Different group of monks in time had slightly different versions that they passed on, but there is a remarkable overall agreement. The form preserved by the Theravāda school, in Pāli, was written down for the first time around 20 BCE in Sri Lanka, running to over 40 modern volumes.

The *Suttas* do not focus on the person of the Buddha, but his *Dhamma* (Pāli, Sanskrit *Dharma*): his teachings, the realities they point to, especially the nature of the world and the Path to Nirvana, and experiences on the Path, culminating in Nirvana. The Buddha said, though, that 'he who sees the *Dhamma* sees me'."

- The Buddha and Sacred Texts

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=50

As the Buddha's teachings spread across Asia, different sects stressed particular aspects of the quest for enlightenment. In addition to spreading the practices and beliefs of Buddha, it is also true that Buddhism had a strong influence on the early trade routes in Asia. Buddhism started its development from India, and reached other regions along what are known as the Silk Roads. Because beliefs moved along the trade routes, as well as material goods, Buddhism practices changed from place to place, developing within particular communities according to the traditions of those cultures. Buddhist monasteries were built and established along the developing trade routes, so that one would say that these faith communities were linked to economic growth. The commercial exchanges that occurred contributed to the improvement of the Buddhist monks' lives. Because of the Buddhist concept of *Dāna* (generosity), monks received contributions from the merchants and traders along the Silk Roads. In return, monks provided spiritual guidance.

The development of trade amongst merchants of the region along the Silk Roads resulted in a further expansion of Buddhism towards eastern Asian lands, including in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. In addition, Buddhism moved north, to Japan, Korea, and areas in northern China. Goods and travelers from the Silk Roads moved north and Buddhism was one of the most influential imports brought to Japan along the trade routes. The ancient capital city of Nara, Japan, contains many Buddhist temples. Valuable items from the Silk Roads merchants and travelers are found in Nara's Shosoin Treasure Repository of the Emperor.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=50

Ted Talks from practitioners of Buddhism

Buddhism has spread well beyond Asia, and is somewhat familiar even in Western Countries. Check out these stories and reflections from Western Buddhists.

- All It Takes is 10 Mindful Minutes
- The Habits of Happiness
- We Can Be Buddhas

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2. https://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/p...etan-buddhism/ ↵
3. https://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/p...ntal-teachings ↵
4. Peter Harvey is Emeritus Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Sunderland. He was one of the two founders of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies and edits its journal, Buddhist Studies Review. His books include An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices (Cambridge University Press, 1990, and 2013), An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues (Cambridge University Press, 2000), and The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism (Curzon, 1995), and he has published many papers on early Buddhist thought and practice and on Buddhist ethics. Most recently, he edited an extensive integrated anthology of Buddhist texts, Common Buddhist Text: Guidance and Insight from the Buddha (2017) published for free distribution by Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University, Thailand. ↵

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2.6: Buddhist Resources

"It is like a lighted torch whose flame can be distributed to ever so many other torches which people may bring along; and therewith they will cook food and dispel darkness, while the original torch itself remains burning ever the same. It is even so with the bliss of the Way."
— Buddha Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni, The Sutra Of The Forty-Two Sections

Useful Links

- Discovering Sacred Texts: Buddhism
- Website of the Dalai Lama
- Alta Lib Guides: Buddhism
- The Buddhist Society
- The Expansion of Buddhism: Harvard University
- Tricyle: the Buddhist Review
- Buddhist Digital Resource Center Buddhism Resources: Library of Congress

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Indian Sub-Continent Origins

3.1: Hinduism
3.2: Hindu Resources
3.3: Sikhism
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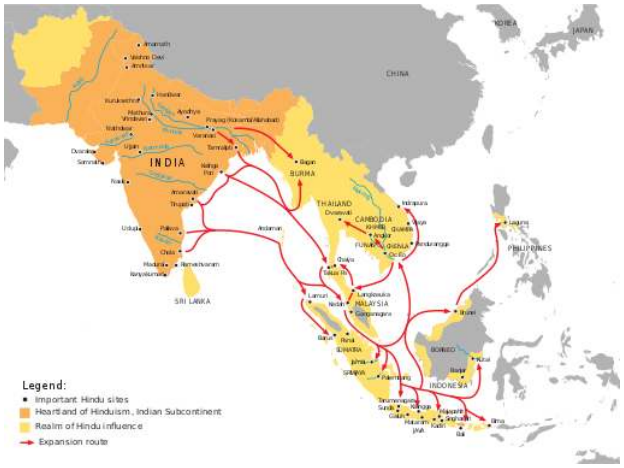
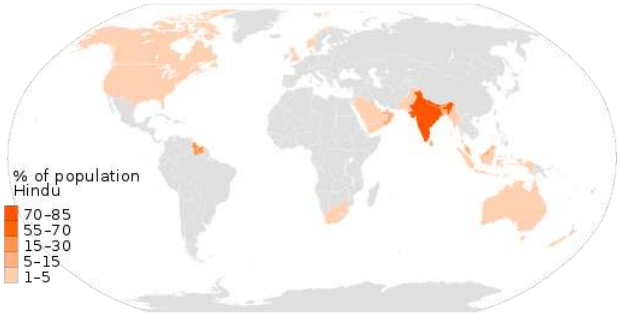
3.1: Hinduism

Hinduism is also known as '*sanatana dharma*' to Hindus. Considered the oldest organized religion in the world, Hinduism originated in the Indus River Valley about 4,000 years ago in what is now northwest India and Pakistan. With about 1.2 billion followers, about 15% of the world's population, Hinduism is the third largest of the world's religions. Hindus believe in a divine power that can manifest as different entities or avatars. Hindu practice has many seemingly independent centers of tradition, often with distinctive sacred texts, deities, myths, rituals, saintly figures, codes of conduct, festivals and so on, but on closer scrutiny these different centers can be seen to link up with each other. This also explains how, while other faiths and civilizations have come and gone, Hinduism continues to thrive and put out new shoots and roots, even when old ones have died away. Diversity is accepted in Hindu traditions, as it considers each path one of value.



Hinduism expansion in Asia, from its heartland in Indian Subcontinent, to the rest of Asia, especially Southeast Asia, started circa 1st century marked with the establishment of early Hindu settlements and polities in Southeast Asia.

Three main incarnations of the divine, called the Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—are sometimes compared to the manifestations of the divine in the Christian Trinity. They are considered the deities of creation, preservation and destruction. They are a part of Brahman–the One Ultimate Reality. Although there are many deities beyond these three, and many images of those deities, in various shrines, temples and holy places, there are no images of Brahman. That One Ultimate Reality is unknowable and beyond human comprehension. But all deities are a part of that One Ultimate Reality. And human goals are to become united with that One–to achieve moksha.



Hinduism percent population in each nation World Map Hindu data by Pew Research

History

Hinduism developed within a group of tribes who referred to themselves as Aryans. There are disputes concerning where they originated; some scholarship says that they were already present in western India, others that they came into the area from Central Asia, or even that they came from further west, including eastern Europe. It is known that the Aryans began to assert their presence in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent at about the beginning of the second millennium BCE, interacting with the Indus civilization that already existed there. The Indus civilization is so named because it seems to have spread out from settlements on the Indus river. They called the Indus river '*Sindhu*', and it is from this term that 'Hindu' comes. Hinduism thus signifies the Aryans' culture and religious traditions as they developed over time, incorporating elements from other cultures that the Aryans encountered along the way.

The religious tradition that emerged early on (almost before anything that looks like modern Hinduism) had a variety of gods and was centered on priests performing sacrifices using fire and sacred chants. This is much like traditions in many places around the continent.

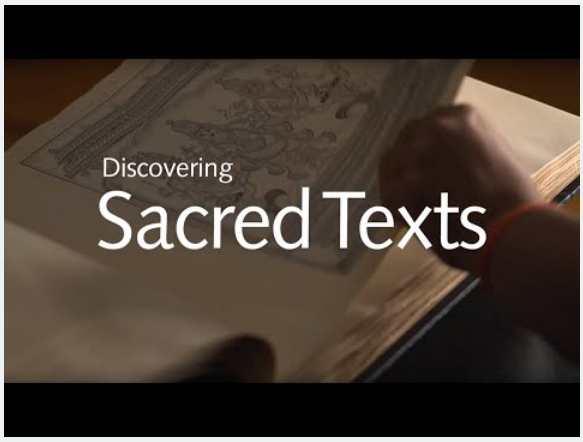
The Rig Veda is one of the oldest and most important texts in the śruti tradition of Hinduism.

The Indus river valley people create sacred texts, collectively called the Vedas, that contain hymns and rituals from ancient India and are mostly written in Sanskrit. The term Vedas means 'knowledge'. The Vedas were believed to have arisen from the infallible 'hearing' (*śruti*), by ancient seers, of the sacred deposit of words whose recitation and contemplation bring stability and wellbeing to both the natural and human worlds. The Vedas are believed to have developed over a span of 2000 years. The hymns in particular were largely directed at transcendent powers, most of whom were called *devas* and *devīs* (misleadingly translated as 'gods' and 'goddesses'). These powers, individually or in groups, were thought to exercise control over the world through cosmic forces. In this early phase of the Veda, there is reference to a One (*ekam*) that undergirds all being. During later periods of this earliest pre-Hindu tradition, questioning and changes in spiritual philosophy produced the Upanishads, an addition to the Vedas. These are also written in Sanskrit and contain some of the central philosophical concepts and ideas of the Hinduism we now know. These works record insights into external and internal spiritual reality (Brahman and Atman) that can be directly experienced.

Hindus generally believe in a set of principles called *dharma*, which refer to one's duty in the world that corresponds with "right" actions. Hindus also believe in *karma*, or the notion that spiritual ramifications of one's actions are balanced cyclically in this life or a future life (reincarnation).

Introduction to Hinduism: Discovering Sacred Texts in the British Library, PBS Learning

This excellent introduction to Hinduism is found at the really impressive British Library website exploring Sacred Texts of the world. Start here:



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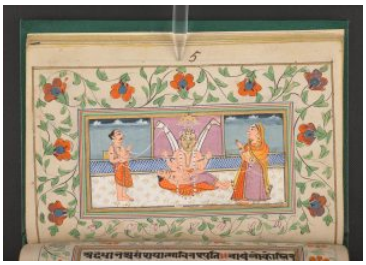
After this, watch this simple introduction to Hindu Concepts from PBS Learning Media:

- Core Tenants of Hinduism

Two other *dharma*-texts of a different order, the *Mahabharata* ('The Great Tale of the Bharatas') and the *Ramayana* ('The Coming of Rama) came later. Both compositions were originally compiled in Sanskrit verse over several hundreds of years, beginning from about the middle of the first millennium BCE. The *Mahabharata* narrates the story of the rivalry between two groups of cousin warriors, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. With the aid of hundreds of supporting characters and intriguing sub-plots, the story contains teaching about the nature of *dharma*. Embedded in book 6 of the *Mahabharata* is perhaps the most famous devotional sacred text of Hinduism, the 700 verse *Bhagavad Gita*, or 'Song of (Krishna as) God'. The *Gita*, as it is often called, mainly contains teachings by Krishna, as Supreme Being, to his friend and disciple Arjuna about how to attain union with him in his divine state.

The *Ramayana* recounts the adventures of the exiled king Rama and his various companions as they make their way to the island-kingdom of Lanka – off the southern tip of India – to rescue Rama's wife Sita, who had been abducted by Ravana, the ten-headed ogre-king of Lanka. For a great many Hindus, the *Ramayana*, and devotion to the *avatar* (the chief representation of the Supreme Being in human form) Rama offers an accessible path to salvation.



A finely illustrated manuscript version of the Bhagavad Gita, one of the most inspiring expressions of Hindu spirituality, produced in Rajasthan. in the 18th century.

The mysticism and abstractness of materials in the Vedas is balanced with practical religious elements that form the everyday spirituality of most Hindus. This practical approach described in the Gita states that one should first work to meet one's social obligations in life. Then the Gita recommends four paths, or **yogas,** that take into account one's caste and personality type. The paths of knowledge (jnana), action (karma), devotion (bhakti), or meditation (raja) may be practiced. Other yogas combine elements of these four. Yoga is considered a form of spiritual work in Hinduism.

Key Terms:

The term **Brahman** stands for a monistic outlook that sees one invisible and subtle essence or source of all reality—human, divine, and cosmic. All is ultimately one. (Monism is the metaphysical and theological view that all is one, that there are no fundamental divisions between anything, and that a unified set of laws underlie all of nature. The universe, at the deepest level of analysis, is then one thing or composed of one fundamental kind of stuff.) **Brahman** is the term used to describe "god" as this Oneness of the universe. Supreme Universal Spirit might serve as a better or more broad way to express this concept of Brahman. (do not confuse Brahma from the Trimurti with Brahman. They are completely different!)

Atman is the innermost spirit within all human beings, which ultimately is identical with Brahman. Sometimes we talk about the soul in about the same way. It refers to the real self beyond ego or false self.

Maya reflects a sense of magic and mystery and accounts for the perception of different forms or multiplicity in the world. Maya hides or veils the underlying unity of all things.

For more than two thousand years in Indian society there has been an organization of the society in the form of the **Caste** system, although this phrase is a 19th century term. Organization of Indian society had its own structure that, with the coming of the British in the colonial era, took on a much more rigid approach.

Varna is a term that literally means *type, order, or class* and it groups people into classes, a structure that was first used in Vedic times. The four classes were the Brahmins (priestly people), the Kshatriyas (rulers, administrators and warriors), the Vaishyas (artisans, merchants, tradesmen and farmers), and Shudras (laboring classes). It had an additional category, identifying people beyond societal status, considered the untouchables.

Jati is a term used in India to refer to a person's lineage and kinship group. Indians identify themselves by the community they belong to and these jati are sub-groups of specific castes. The status of the jati one is born into is still a factor in marriage selection, even though the strict isolation of caste in India is softening. Each jati, or subgroup of a caste level, has a set of jobs common to their position, but this can change with effort on the part of the community. Jatis are much less obvious in their caste associations than was previously thought.

The Indian Constitution outlawed the concept of Untouchability in 1947 upon receiving Indian independence from Britain, and the group called Dalit (once considered the untouchables) are working even now towards their civil rights.

> *The Indian Government has established special quotas in schools and Parliament to aid the lowest jatis. Caste discrimination is not permitted in gaining employment and access to educational and other opportunities. But this does not mean that caste is illegal or has faded away. Caste groups as political pressure groups work very well in a democratic system. Caste may provide psychological support that people seem to need. Economists and political scientists are finding that caste is no real barrier to economic development or political democracy.*[1]

Key Takeaway: The Dalit movement in the 20th century

Take some time to read this interview about the Dalits in modern India. *Michael Collins is a 2020 Kluge Fellow from the University of Gottingen. Collins is working on a project titled "From Boycotts to Ballots: Democracy and Social Minorities in Modern India." Boris Granovskiy, who recently detailed at the Kluge Center, interviewed Collins on his work.*

The 20th Century Transformation of the Dalit Movement in India

Karma and rebirth/reincarnation are important aspects of the Hindu worldview. Justice is built into the very fabric of reality. The moral consequences of one's actions will be experienced in this life or the next. So a belief in reincarnation is central to Hindu belief. One moves up or down the caste ladder depending on the caliber of one's life just lived.

Moksha represents the idea of final liberation or freedom from all limitations, especially the round of death and rebirth. Moksha entails going beyond egoism and identifying with the unity and sacredness that everything shares. After enough lifetimes, and learning achieved, one eventually leaves the cycle of rebirth and is liberated.

There are 4 goals in life:

According to Hinduism, the meaning (purpose) of life is four-fold: to achieve **Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha**.

The first, **dharma**, means to act morally and ethically throughout one's life. However, dharma also has a secondary aspect; since Hindus believe that they are born in debt to the gods and people, dharma calls for Hindus to remember these debts. These include

debts to the Gods for various blessings, debts to parents and teachers, debts to guests, debts to other human beings, and debts to all other living beings.

The second meaning of life according to Hinduism is **Artha**, which refers to the pursuit of wealth and prosperity in one's life. Importantly, one must stay within the bounds of dharma while pursuing this wealth and prosperity (i.e. one must not step outside moral and ethical grounds in order to do so). So it is considered good to prosper, but not at the expense of others.

The third purpose of a Hindu's life is to seek **Kama.** In simple terms, Kama can be defined as obtaining enjoyment from life. Again, this is not to be done at the expense of others, but it is considered a good thing in life to have joy and pleasure.

The fourth and final meaning of life according to Hinduism is **Moksha**, enlightenment. By far the most difficult meaning of life to achieve, Moksha may take an individual just one lifetime to accomplish (rarely) or it may take several. However, it is considered the most important meaning of life and offers such rewards as liberation from reincarnation, self-realization, enlightenment, or unity with God. Often, in human lives, people focus on this goal as elders. As a young person, the other goals may be more important, or more demanding.

There are stages to human living, too, according to Hinduism:

Ashrama, also spelled asrama, Sanskrit āśrama, in Hinduism, is any of the four stages of life through which a Hindu ideally will pass.

The stages are those of:

1. **the student** (*Brahamacari)*, marked by chastity, devotion, and obedience to one's teacher,
2. **the householder** (*Grihastha)*, requiring marriage, the begetting of children, sustaining one's family and helping support priests and holy men, and fulfillment of duties toward gods and ancestors,
3. **the forest dweller** (*Vanaprastha*), beginning after the birth of grandchildren and consisting of withdrawal from concern with material things, pursuit of solitude, and ascetic and yogic practices, and
4. **the homeless renouncer** (*Sannyasi*), involving renouncing all one's possessions to wander from place to place begging for food, concerned only with union with *brahman* (the Absolute). Traditionally, *moksha* (liberation from rebirth) should be pursued only during the last two stages of a person's life.

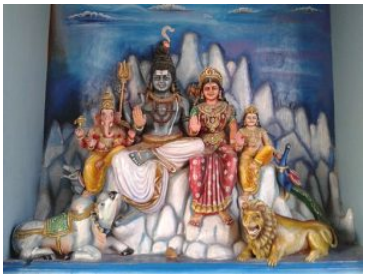
> Exercise: Flashcards

One fun way to get a handle on difficult or new terms is through flashcards. Try these, just for fun

- Brainscape on Hinduism

The Divine

The multiple gods and goddesses of Hinduism are a distinctive feature of the religion. However, **Professor Julius Lipner**[2] explains that Hinduism cannot be considered polytheistic and discusses the way in which Hindu culture and sacred texts conceptualize the deities, as well as their role in devotional faith. (the full texts, of which this material is only excerpts, can be found at The Hindu Sacred Image and Iconography, Hindu Deities)



"One of the most striking features of Hinduism is the seemingly endless array of images of gods and goddesses, most with animal associates, that inhabit the colorful temples, and wayside shrines and homes of its adherents. Because of this, Hinduism has been called an idolatrous and polytheistic religion.

Hinduism can be likened to an enormous banyan tree extending itself through many centers of belief and practice which can be seen to link up with each other in various ways, like a great network that is one, yet many. The concepts of deity, worship and

pilgrimage in Hinduism are a prime example of this ‘polycentric’ phenomenon.

Deities are a key feature of Hindu sacred texts. The Vedic texts describe many so-called gods and goddesses (*devas* and *devīs*) who personify various cosmic powers through fire, wind, sun, dawn, darkness, earth and so on. There is no firm evidence that these Vedic deities were worshipped by images; rather, they were summoned through the sacrificial ritual (*yajña*), with the deity *Agni* (fire) generally acting as intermediary, to bestow various boons to their supplicants on earth in exchange for homage and the ritual offering. Some Vedic texts speak of a One that seemed to undergird the plurality of these *devas* and *devīs* as their support and origin. In time, in the Upanishads, this One (***Brahman***) was envisaged as either the transcendent, supra-personal source of all change and differentiation in our world which would eventually dissolve back into the One, or as the supreme, personal Lord who was the mainstay and goal of all finite being. In both conceptions, we have the basis for subsequent notions of a transcendent reality that is accessible to humans by meditation and/or prayer and worship.

> Exercise: watch this short video about Hindu deities

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Avatars

It is in the *Bhagavad Gita* that we first find sustained textual evidence of developed thinking about devotional faith in a personal God, named Krishna. In this text, Krishna teaches his friend and disciple, Arjuna, about his divine nature and relationship with the world, and how the devoted soul can find liberation (*moksha*) from the sorrows and limitations of life through loving communion with him. Here, also for the first time in Hinduism, we encounter the doctrine of the *avatāra* (also known as ***avatar***), which teaches that the Supreme Being descends periodically into the world in embodied form for, according to the *Gita*, ‘re-establishing *dharma*, protecting the virtuous and destroying the wicked.’ The doctrine of multiple *avatars* with their specific objectives was to develop subsequently over the centuries in various sacred texts.

Places of worship

The first archaeological evidence we have of standing temple construction and its implication of image-worship of the deity occurs in about the 3rd century BCE – of a Vishnu temple (in eastern Rajasthan) and of a Shiva temple not too far away. Presumably, since these were constructions of mud, timber, brick, stone etc., the process of temple-building had begun appreciably earlier, though we cannot say exactly where or when. We can also assume from textual and archaeological evidence that image-worship in Hinduism was present by about the 6th to the 5th century BCE.

Companions

Most deities have an animal associate (*vāhana*) which helps identify the deity and express the latter’s specific powers; this was achieved too by an artistic device that attributed multiple body-parts, such as hands and heads, adorned by weapons and other objects, to the image. There are many stories, especially in the Purāṇas, which describe the origin and role of the *vāhana* and the weapons and other attributes associated with the image.

Worship

Other than by forms of temple worship, which include both personal prayer and various rituals conducted by priests, the deity may be worshipped at home too, in a format called *puja*. In its simplest form, *puja* usually consists of making an offering of flowers or fruit to an image of a god at a home shrine. It can also happen by way of meditation (*dhyāna*). *Dhyāna* can include highly specialized kinds of visualization of the deity invoked, in which the deity is often envisaged as communicating with the worshipper.

Another form of worshipping the deity in Hinduism is through pilgrimage (*yātrā*). Pilgrimage is a way of creating a sacred landscape, of indicating that the whole world, including the pilgrim, belongs to the deity and is under its rulership. Through every pilgrimage, Hindus encounter a *tīrtha*, a sacred ford or crossing-point between heaven and earth, by which they may come to terms with this world of sorrows and arrive at the threshold of liberation. Over time, a great many *tīrthas* have developed across the Hindu sacred landscape."

> How to look at Hindu mythology

You may be finding the concept of the divine, or dealing with all these deities, really confusing. Try listening to this Ted Talk, which may help:

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Bhakti

Dr Rishi Handa[3] looks at *bhakti* in Hinduism, exploring its common modes, the Hindu concept of enlightenment and how to achieve it, the importance of the Divine Name and the veneration of forms of the deities.

"If any aspect of religiosity can be said to pervade India, it is *bhakti*. In a land whose culture is filled with a plethora of *devīs* (goddesses) and *devas* (gods), it is the foremost way by which Hindus express and experience the Transcendent.

Bhakti is best rendered in English as 'loving devotion', but it is much more than that. While common objects of *bhakti* can be one's *guru* (teacher) and one's country, this *bhāva* (emotion or feeling) is typically directed to *īśvara* (the divine, 'God'). *Bhakti* can be articulated through gratitude, honoring of the deities, engaging in formal ritual service to a deity, hymn-singing, reading devotional scriptures, and constantly remembering the name of one's deity. This list is certainly not exhaustive.

The nine modes of *bhakti*

According to a number of Hindu texts, there are nine ways of expressing *bhakti*. These differ depending on the text. According to two of the key Purāṇas of Hinduism, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* centred on Krishna (also spelt Kṛṣṇa), and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (focused on Vishnu, also spelt Viṣṇu), the nine ways are:

1. *Shravana*: Hearing the Lord's virtues, glories and stories.
2. *Kīrtana*: Singing the Lord's glories in the form of hymns.
3. *Smarana*: Remembering the Lord at all times.
4. *Pādasevana*: Serving the Lord's Feet.
5. *Archanā*: Honouring the Lord.
6. *Vandanā*: Prayer and prostration unto the Lord.
7. *Dāsya bhakti*: Being a servant of the Lord.
8. *Sākhya bhakti*: Friendship with the Lord.

9. *Ātma-nivedana*: Self-surrender to the Lord.

> A little summary…

You might be feeling a little overwhelmed by all of this detail and history. Try a summary from Crash Course:

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1. https://asiasociety.org/education/ja...e-system-india ↵
2. Julius Lipner is Professor Emeritus in Hinduism and the Comparative Study of Religion in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. He specializes in Hindu philosophical theology and modern Hinduism and in the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. His published works include The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the

Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja (1986), Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary (1999), Ānandamath or The Sacred Brotherhood (2005), Hindus: their religious beliefs and practices (2nd ed. 2010), and Hindu Images and their Worship with special reference to Vaiṣṇavism: A Philosophical-Theological inquiry (2017), and numerous journal articles. He is an Emeritus Fellow of Clare Hall, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of the British Academy. ↵

3. Dr Rishi Handa is Head of Sanskrit at St James Senior Boys school. ↵

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3.2: Hindu Resources

"The essence of Hinduism is the same essence of all true religions: Bhakti or pure love for God and genuine compassion for all beings." – Radhanath Swami

Useful Links

- Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
- Harvard University's Pluralism Project: Hinduism
- Alta Lib Guides: Hinduism
- British Library: Sacred Texts/Hinduism
- Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life: Hinduism
- Hinduism in the News: the BBC
- Asia Society
- Hinduism: Library of Congress

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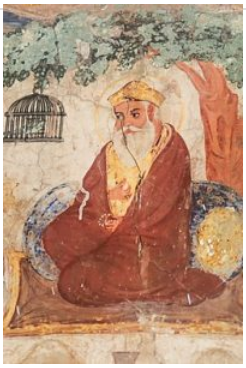
3.3: Sikhism



19th century mural painting from Gurdwara Baba Atal depicting Nanak

The Sikhs are a later development in the Dharmic traditions, and came about through one man, initially, Guru Nanak. Gurus are central to Sikh beliefs and values, and there are 10 that were followed in the beginning as this tradition developed.

Getting Started: a little history and background

An overview of the founding of the Sikh religion started by Guru Nanak.

Introduction to Sikhism

We then use materials from a number of articles written by Eleanor Nesbitt [1], through the British Library Sacred Texts site:

" There are currently about 24 million Sikhs worldwide. The majority live in the Indian state of Punjab. They regard Guru Nanak (1469–1539 CE) as the founder of their faith and Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708 CE), the tenth Guru, as the Guru who formalized their religion. Religions and religious teachers do not exist in a vacuum: India, in the Gurus' time, was ruled by Mughal emperors who were Muslim. Punjabi society was a mix of Muslims and Hindus.

The Sikh religion has evolved from the Gurus' teachings, and from their followers' devotion, into a world religion with its own scripture, code of discipline, *gurdwaras* (places of worship), festivals and life cycle rites and Sikhs share in a strong sense of identity and celebrate their distinctive history.

A central principle of the Gurus' teaching is the importance of integrating spirituality with carrying out one's responsibilities. Sikhs should perform *seva* (voluntary service of others) while at the same time practicing *simaran* (remembrance of God). The ideal is to be a *sant sipahi* (warrior saint) i.e. a person who combines spiritual qualities with a readiness for courageous action. Guru Nanak, the first Guru, and Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, continue to feature prominently in Sikhs' experience of their religion.

This painting shows Guru Nanak sleeping inside the main mosque in Mecca with his feet towards Kaaba. An upset Muslim cleric is asking him to turn his feet away from the symbol of God.

Who was Guru Nanak?

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in Talvandi, a place now renamed Nankana Sahib, in the state of Punjab in present-day Pakistan. His parents were Hindus and they were Khatri by caste, which meant that they had a family tradition of account-keeping. The name 'Nanak', like Nanaki, his sister's name, may indicate that they were born in their mother's parents' home, known in Punjabi as their

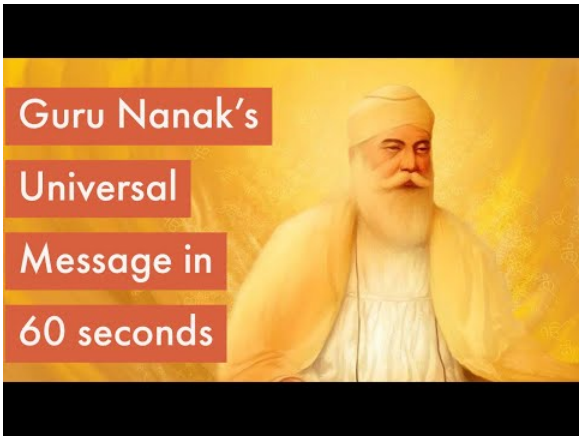
nanake. Guru Nanak's wife was called Sulakhani and she bore two sons. Until a life-changing religious experience, Nanak was employed as a store keeper for the local Muslim governor.

One day, when he was about thirty, he experienced being swept into God's presence, while he was having his daily bath in the river. The result was that he gave away his possessions and began his life's work of communicating his spiritual insights. This he did by composing poetic compositions which he sang to the accompaniment of a *rabab*, the stringed instrument that his Muslim travelling companion, Mardana, played. After travelling extensively Guru Nanak settled down, gathering a community of disciples (Sikhs) around him, in a place known as Kartarpur ('Creator Town').

Guru Nanak's poems (or *shabads*) in the Guru Granth Sahib (scripture) give a clear sense of his awareness of there being one supreme reality (*ik oankar*) behind the world's many phenomena. His *shabads* emphasize the need for integrity rather than outward displays of being religious, plus the importance of being mindful of God's name (*nam*) and being generous to others through *dan* (pronounced like the English word 'darn') i.e. giving to others. His poems are rich in word-pictures of animals and birds and human activities such as farming and commerce.

> Example of the central concept in Guru Nanak's ideas

Watch this story by Jagjit Singh from the organization "Zero Hunger with Langar" about his meeting with a Muslim Imam in a village in Africa. Sharing Guru Nanak Dev Ji's simple message of One God and Many paths, and respecting ALL. Be the best you Sikh, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jew you can be!



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Guru Nanak's importance results not just from his inspirational teaching but also from the practical basis he provided for a new religious movement: he established a community of his followers in Kartarpur and he appointed a successor, Guru Angad, on the basis of his devoted service. Guru Nanak is respected as 'Baba Nanak' by Punjabi Muslims as well as by Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus.

Each year Sikhs celebrate his birthday on the day of the full moon in November. Like other *gurpurabs* (festivals commemorating a Guru) it is marked by an *akhand path* (pronounced like 'part'), a 48-hour, continuous, complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib which ends on the festival morning. Commemorative events in 2019 celebrated the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak's birth.

What is the concept of Guru in Sikhism?

At first Nanak was called 'Baba Nanak', with 'Baba' being an affectionate term, like 'grandfather', for an older man. These days he is better known as Guru Nanak. Just as the word 'Sikh' means learner, so 'Guru' means teacher.

Key Takeaway

"Just as the word 'Sikh' means learner, so 'Guru' means teacher. "

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=52

Sikhs explain 'Guru' as meaning 'remover of darkness'. There have been just ten human Gurus. Their lives spanned the period from Nanak's birth in 1469 to the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. Since then the Sikhs' living Guru has been the **Guru Granth Sahib**, the sacred volume of scripture. The Guru Granth Sahib is much more than a book: it is believed to embody the Guru as well as containing compositions by six of the ten Gurus. The preeminent Guru (Nanak's Guru) is God, whose many names include 'Satguru' (the true Guru) and 'Waheguru' (a name which began as an exclamation of praise).

Centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib

The Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred text of the Sikh community and the embodiment of the Guru. It is central to the lives of devout Sikhs, both in the sense of being physically present in the *gurdwara (*place of worship*)* and as Sikhs' ultimate spiritual authority. Moreover, each day devout Sikhs hear or recite the scriptural passages that constitute their daily prayers and the Guru Granth Sahib also plays an integral part in life cycle rites and festivals.

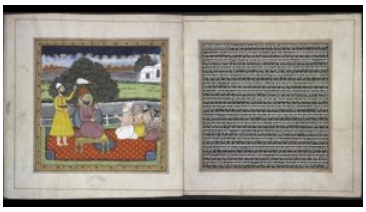
The Chauri is a whisk that is waved when the Guru Granth Sahib is being read.

As the Granth Sahib is Sikhs' spiritual teacher, their Guru, it is honored as a sovereign used to be, centuries ago in India. The 1430-page volume is enthroned under a canopy and it reposes on cushions on the *palki* (literally palanquin i.e. the special stand). An attendant waves a *chauri* above it when it is open and being read: the *chauri* is a fan consisting of yak tail hair set in a wooden handle. When not being read, the volume is covered by red and gold cloths known as *rumalas*, and in many *gurdwaras*, after the late evening prayer, it is ceremonially carried to a special bedroom where it is laid to rest.

Those Sikhs who keep the Guru Granth Sahib at home honor it in a room of its own. If a copy is temporarily housed in a Sikh's home for the duration of a *path* (reading of the entire volume) strict rules are observed – for example no non-vegetarian food is kept or cooked. In other words, the house is temporarily a gurdwara.

> Example of the Guru Granth Sahib

The sheer size of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* and the rituals that are observed when it is enthroned and opened for recitation, make for difficulties in its use as a book of private devotion. From quite early on it therefore became common to compile *gutke* or short anthologies of the principal hymns, the best-known being those called *pañj-granthī*, containing five major hymns. Over time other hymns were also added.



This *gutkā* (anthology) was prepared between 1828–1830 for Mahārānī Jind Kaur, popularly known as Rānī Jindān (1817–1863). It consists of three compositions from the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, beginning with Gurū Nānak's *Sidh Gosṭi*, followed by *Bāvan Akharī* and *Sukhmanī*, two compositions by the fifth spiritual master of the Sikhs, Gurū Arjan.

Sikhs believe that all ten human Gurus embodied the same spirit of Guruship and that their different styles were appropriate to the differing circumstances in which they lived. Guru Nanak's first four successors, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev, were also poets. Their compositions, together with Guru Nanak's, became the basis of the Guru Granth Sahib. While their spiritual emphasis seamlessly continued Guru Nanak's, each made a distinctive contribution to Sikh community life. Guru Angad formalized the Gurmukhi script in which the scripture is written. It was almost certainly developed from the shorthand that accountants used for keeping their accounts, as a simpler version of the script that is still used for the older language of Sanskrit.

Sikhs turn to the Guru Granth Sahib for guidance when they face a dilemma. The time-honored method is for the volume to be opened at random and for the words of the hymn at the top of the left-hand page to be taken as the Guru's response. This guidance is called a *vak*. A *vak* is taken each day in all gurdwaras and the words are displayed for everyone to read.

Life Style Features of Sikh Life

Guru Amar Das made the *langar* a key feature of Sikh life: a shared vegetarian meal eaten by people of all ranks sitting together regardless of their social status. His other innovations included setting up a Sikh place of pilgrimage and appointing preachers to lead local Sikh congregations. His son-in-law and successor, Guru Ram Das appointed stewards-cum-missionaries to organize worship and collect offerings and he started the settlement which in due course was renamed Amritsar.

In observant Sikh families a child's name is chosen on the basis of a *vak*, as the first word of the hymn on the left-hand page provides the initial for the infant's given name. So, if the first word began with 's', names such as Sukhvinder, Satnam and Simran might be considered. Most Sikh forenames are unisex: in a boy's case his name will be announced as, for example, 'Satnam Singh' while a girl would be 'Satnam Kaur'.

The Guru Granth Sahib is literally at the heart of the rite of *anand karaj* (marriage), as – linked by a scarf that hangs over the groom's

A Sikh couple getting married. Anand Karaj ceremony.

right shoulder – the couple walk around it clockwise four times, with the groom leading the way and the bride following close behind him. She is helped on her way by her close male relatives. Before each round, the officiant reads one stanza of Guru Ram Das's hymn entitled *Lavan* (Guru Granth Sahib, page 773) and the *ragis* (musicians) sing this again as the bridegroom precedes the bride around the *palki*. The stanzas of the *Lavan* evoke the progress of the human soul and the enthroned scripture is witness to the marriage. The service concludes with six verses of Anand Sahib (Guru Amar Das's composition on pages 917-922 of Guru Granth Sahib), followed by the *Ardas* (congregational prayer) and a distribution of *karah prasad* (made from ghee, sugar, wheat flour and water).

At a Sikh's funeral, the late evening prayers (*kirtan sohilla*) are recited and, following someone's death, the entire Guru Granth Sahib is read over a period of up to ten days (this is known as a *sahaj path* or *sadharan path*). The ashes of the deceased person are immersed in a river – in many cases the river Satluj at the town of Kiratpur in north India.

The Darbar Sahib of a Gurdwara in New Delhi, India.

Sikh Worship

Sikhs worship in Gurdwaras.

A *gurdwara* is a building in which Sikhs gather for congregational worship. However, wherever the Guru Granth Sahib is installed is a sacred place for Sikhs, whether this is a room in a private house or a *gurdwara*. The word is often translated as 'doorway to the Guru' and it means the place in which the Guru, embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib, is resident and honoured. In the 18th and 19th centuries the word *gurdwara* gradually replaced the earlier term 'dharamsala' for rooms used for religious purposes during the Gurus' lifetimes.

There are *gurdwaras* in every country where Sikh communities have settled. In the UK alone there are probably about 300 *gurdwaras*. In the early years of Sikh settlement in the UK, rented premises served as *gurdwaras*. The next stage was to purchase a building and modify it for Sikh worship. An increasing number of *gurdwaras* are purpose-built, with architectural features inspired by historic *gurdwaras* in India.

In a *gurdwara* both men and women must wear a head covering to show their respect for the Guru Granth Sahib and footwear must be removed on entering the building. No tobacco or non-vegetarian food is allowed inside and no-one may enter under the influence of alcohol. In the worship hall it is respectful to bow before the enthroned Guru Granth Sahib and then sit on the floor, cross-legged and facing the Guru Granth Sahib.

Most of the Sikh historic *gurdwaras* are in north India though some are in Pakistan. (In the Gurus' time, and until 1947, the Punjab region was not bisected by a national frontier, as Pakistan had not been created.) The architecture of major historic *gurdwaras*, involving fluted cupolas (*gumbads*), is influenced by Mughal style. Famous gurdwaras in Pakistan commemorate Guru Nanak's life: in Nankana Sahib a *gurdwara* marks the place where he was born and at Kartarpur Sahib a *gurdwara* stands where he founded a settlement and (in 1539) passed away. Equally well-known is Panja Sahib *gurdwara* in Hasan Abdal (about 40 kilometres north-west of Islamabad), where a rock bears what is believed to be the imprint of Guru Nanak's hand.

The title '*sahib*' in the names of cities (e.g. Anandpur Sahib) and major *gurdwaras* expresses Sikhs' reverence for locations associated with their Gurus' lives.

Five notable *gurdwaras* in India are known as *takhts*: *takht* means throne or seat of authority.

> Example of a Gurdwara: HARIMANDIR SAHIB(Golden_Temple)

Sikhs emphasize the fact that Harmandir Sahib has entrances on all four sides, reminding them that the *gurdwara* is open to every sort of person. This symbolises a Sikh commitment to equality regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity. According to tradition, at Guru Arjan Dev's invitation, a *pir* (Muslim spiritual master) laid the gurdwara's foundation stone, so affirming inter-religious friendship.

The Akal Takht ('throne of the Timeless One') is in Amritsar (Punjab), facing the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), and it is the highest seat of authority. The Akal Takht was first established by Guru Hargobind and the two *nishan sahibs* (pennants flying from flagpoles, honored and clad in orange cloth) are a reminder of his two swords that signified the principle of *miri piri* (a balance of worldly and spiritual authority).

What are the Sikh festivals?

The Sikh religious calendar consists of *melas* (literally 'fairs') and *gurpurabs* (anniversaries of Gurus). The Vaisakhi festival in April is the

A demonstration of the Vaddah Chakar, the Sikh martial arts weapon, during the 2010 Vaisakhi Festival in Southampton

most important mela, a commemoration of the founding of the *Khalsa* in 1699 at the first *khande di pahul* on what was already a spring harvest day in the calendar of Punjabi celebrations. Notable *gurpurabs* are the birthdays of Guru Nanak (celebrated on the day of the November full moon) and Guru Gobind Singh; the *shahidi* (martyrdom) days of Guru Arjan and Guru Teg Bahadar and the anniversary of the day when the Guru Granth Sahib was installed in the Harmandir Sahib.

Until recent years Sikh festivals were observed according to the north Indian Bikrami calendar. As most anniversaries were determined by the phase of the moon, the date would vary each year by the secular western calendar. In the 21st century many Sikhs instead follow the Nanakshahi calendar in which most festivals' dates have a fixed date according to the secular calendar.

48 hours before the morning of the festival, an *akhand path* begins. On major festivals there is an extended *kirtan* in the *gurdwara* and, in some cities, Vaisakhi or the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh may be celebrated with a *nagar kirtan*. This means that the Guru Granth Sahib, duly enthroned and attended, is driven slowly through the streets. *Panj piare*, dressed in orange, blue or white, provide the vanguard and hundreds or thousands of Sikhs follow in joyful procession, while refreshments are offered to the walkers by volunteers along the route.

> The evolution of a religion…from the Khan Academy

- Sikh Connections to Islam and Hinduism

> Listening to a modern Sikh woman talk about love.

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1. Written by Eleanor Nesbitt Eleanor Nesbitt is Professor Emerita (Religions and Education) at the University of Warwick. Her ethnographic studies have focused on Christian, Hindu, Sikh and 'mixed-faith' families in the UK. She has published extensively on Hindu and Sikh communities. Her recent publications include: Sikhism A Very Short Introduction (2nd edn 2016, Oxford University Press) and (with Kailash Puri) Pool of Life: The Autobiography of a Punjabi Agony Aunt (2013, Sussex Academic Press). She is co-editor of Brill's Encyclopedia of Sikhism and her forthcoming publication is Sikh: Two Centuries of Western Women's Art and Writing (2020, Kashi Books). ↵

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3.4: Sikh Resources

There is but One God, His name is Truth, He is the Creator, He fears none, he is without hate, He never dies, He is beyond the cycle of births and death, He is self illuminated, He is realized by the kindness of the True Guru. He was True in the beginning, He was True when the ages commenced and has ever been True, He is also True now.”
— Guru Nanak

Useful Links

- The Sikh Coalition
- Sikhri
- Sikh Resources: UC Santa Cruz
- National Sikh Campaign
- Alta Lib Guides: Sikhism
- Pluralism Project: Sikhism
- Sikh Resources: Library of Congress

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3.5: Jainism

We begin looking at the Jain faith tradition with help from Nadini Balbir[1], from the British Library Sacred Texts website. If you would like to read the full text in the original, with illustrations, you would enjoy reading here:

An Introduction to the Jain Faith

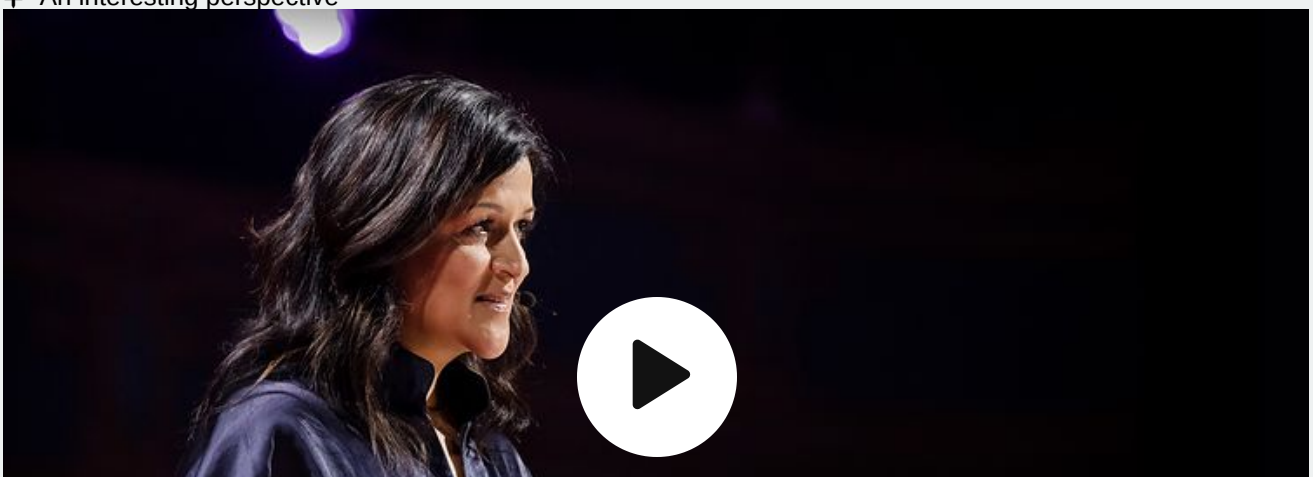
"The Jain faith is one of the oldest faiths in India. Its presence is attested since the 6th–5th century BCE. This was the time when Mahavira preached in the eastern part of India, then known as Magadha. Since then the faith has been present on the Indian subcontinent, without any break. There is no way to historically pinpoint when it began; virtually no archaeological Jain ruins predate this time in India, but the earliest evidence there is suggests that Jainism was already a well-established faith. Today the Jains form a significant minority in Indian society, even though they make up hardly one percent of the total population, and have important diaspora communities in the UK, North America, Singapore, Belgium, etc.

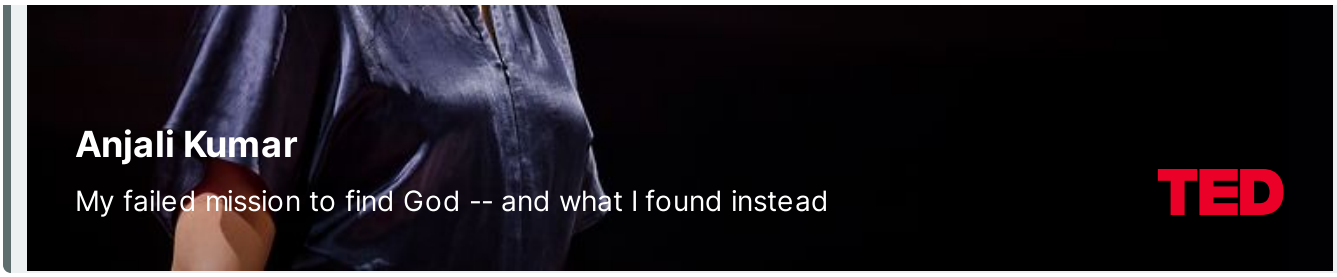
District wise Jain population percentage India census 2011

Who do the Jains worship?

The Jain faith does not believe in a creator god like Hinduism or the Abrahamic faiths. In a way similar to Buddhists, the Jains venerate perfect ascetics who have been provided with valid authority on account of their career and abilities. They are named Jinas ('Conquerors') or Tirthaṃkaras ('ford-makers', because they have crossed to liberation) who provide ultimate models to the followers, the Jains. Mahavira was the twenty-fourth Jina. His predecessors are not historical figures, but this does not affect their place in respect and worship. Their existence lays emphasis on the idea of lineage which is at the center of Jainism. Mahavira is thus a continuator and a reformer rather than a founder, which he is often said to be.

An interesting perspective





What is a Jina?

All Jinas led similar lives. They were born as princes in royal families and withdrew from society in order to take up religious initiation, either before or after marriage, depending on the case.

The first stage of their ascetic life was full of tests that they had to overcome, showing their perseverance when faced with challenges. This spiritual evolution finally led to full enlightenment, known in Jainism as omniscience (*kevalajñāna*). When a Jina reaches this state they are then able to grasp everything everywhere whether it relates to past, present or future. They can then teach others the principles of the doctrine. This takes place during a general assembly where the Jina sits at the center, heard and seen by all beings wherever they are.

He then utters the divine sound which results in teaching expanded by him and his direct disciples, and builds around him a community of monks, nuns and lay followers. When his lifespan comes to an end and he has attained full perfection, the Jina leaves the human body for good and attains liberation from the cycle of rebirths.

What are the main features of the Jain worldview?

The Jain faith can be best labelled as a path to liberation or a path of purification. This is defined as consisting of correct faith, correct understanding and correct conduct. The Jain teaching in its multiple shapes is an expansion of these 'three jewels', the sequence of which is significant and emphasizes a concern for rationality as one leads to the other: one can have a proper conduct only if one is aware of the proper way to analyze what exists.

Correct faith means recognizing the existence of nine verities or principles.

They are:

1. the fact that there are sentient souls or living beings (*jīva*)
2. the fact that there are non-sentient or material things (*ajīva*) such as time or space
3. the fact that karma flows in the soul (*āsrava*)
4. the fact that once in the soul karma is attached to it (*bandha*)
5. the fact that there are forms of activity that are good (*puṇya*)
6. the fact that there are forms of activity that are bad (*pāpa*)
7. the fact that flowing of karma should be blocked (*saṃvara*)
8. the fact that karma that has flowed in should be annihilated (*nirjarā*)
9. the fact that once all karmas have been eliminated final liberation from the cycle of rebirths takes place (*mokṣa*)

This systematic worldview forms the basis for the Jains way of life and their religious practices.

What is Karma ?

Example: Karma and how we create it

Most of us think of karma as something like "what goes around come around". This is not quite so accurate, at least not for the Jains. Listen to this young man speak about his understanding of Karma and how it is created. We don't WANT karma. That's the point.

The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word Karma is deeds, including thoughts and words. However, according to Jainism, Karmas are thought to be invisible, and yet are fine particles of matter that exists all around us just like air particles. Our souls attract these karmas through activities involving mind, body and speech. This means every time we get annoyed, we attract karmas, every time we insult someone, we attract karmas, every time we lie or become steal or cheat, we attract karmas. These karmas form layers over our souls and keep us from realizing our true potential.

As the theory goes, the true nature of soul is clean, clear and full of knowledge. The karmas separate the soul from the truth and the soul goes through the cycles of birth and death.

The strength and duration of karmic bonds are very much dependent on the intensity of our intent. Our motives at the time of performing any act determines the strength and duration of the karma. Motive, intent, and purpose count in Jainism: two people performing similar activities could acquire karma quite differently. For example, a person killing an animal to eat, intentionally, is producing a karmic bond much stronger than a person killing insects unintentionally while walking or driving. Both involve an act of killing but the karma acquired will be different in these two situations.

Types of Karmas: From Harvard's Jainism Literature Center

There are 8 different types of Karmas in Jain belief :

1. **Knowledge-obscuring** (Gyanavaraniya) Karma: Gyan means knowledge. Varaniya means stoppage. This karma prevents the soul from acquiring true knowledge and keeps us ignorant just as a blindfold keeps us from seeing. How can we improve our lot unless we know what we are?
2. **Perception-obscuring** (Darshanavarniya) Karma: Darshan means faith or perception. This karma prevents us from having a rational, common-sense approach towards our lives and surroundings.
3. **Feeling-producing** (Vedaniya) Karma: This karma makes us experience either the sweetness of physical happiness or the bitterness of misery.
4. **Deluding** (Mohaneeya) Karma: This karma, like too much alcohol, confuses all the human faculties and makes us forget what is right and what is wrong. It makes the souls bewildered and perplexed.
5. **Life-span-determining** (Ayu) Karma: This karma determines the life spans of all living beings.
6. **Physique-determining** (Nam) Karma: This karma determines the looks, skin, form etc. of the bodies of living beings.
7. **Status-determining** (Gotra) Karma: This karma determines the family and status of our birth.
8. **Obstructing** (Antaraya) Karma: This karma prevents us from doing a good deed or undoing a bad action when there is a desire to do it. For example, we may want to give donation to a charity but this karma might put obstacles in our path and stop us from doing so.

The Jain faith in practice

Since the beginning, the Jain society has taken account of the fact there are two ways of life, a stricter one for ascetics and a milder one for non-ascetics, who live in the world engaged in professional and family life and are often called lay followers. Male and female mendicants, on the one hand, male and female lay followers, on the other hand, form the fourfold Jain community.

Monastic life is regarded as an ideal aim but Jainism has devised a lot of possibilities for lay people to live their faith earnestly in daily practice.

A mural depicting Ganeshprasad Varni at a Jain temple in Katni, MP, India.

Jain mendicants are people who have become monks or nuns after the official initiation ceremony called *dīkṣā*. They renounce ordinary life, receive a new name and the monastic equipment in accordance with the monastic order to which they will belong. Then they lead a life of itinerancy, walking long distances and not using any mode of transportation as a general rule.

They conform to the **'five great vows'** (*mahāvratas*) which provide a broad frame of behaviour.

- Non-violence (ahiṃsā)
- Truth (satya)
- Not taking what has not been given (asteya)
- Celibacy (brahmacarya)
- Non-attachment or non-possession (aparigraha)

Necessary adjustments (*aṇuvratas*) are made to some of the same vows for lay followers. For instance, the mendicant ideal is complete celibacy, the lay ideal is satisfaction with one's own partner. Jain mendicants practice non-attachment through a nomadic lifestyle, depending entirely on the lay followers for subsistence.

Lay followers are engaged in economic life and earn money, so in their case non-possession often means extensive charity in the form of donations to the temples. Such is the broad frame in which Jain mendicants and lay followers live. But there is a wide range of practices that strengthen the main concepts of the faith.

Non-violence and its manifestations

The foundational Jain principle of non-violence is the consequence of an in-depth analysis of the Jain classification of life forms. These are based on the number of sense-faculties life forms possess, ranging from one to five, and apply to all living organisms, be them human, animal, plant or microbe. The most visible expression of this principle is the strict practice of vegetarianism, a key expression of Jain faith. Besides not consuming meat and fish, dietary restrictions extend to root vegetables such as onions, garlic, potatoes, fruits with a large number of seeds, alcohol (as fermentation means destroying minute life-forms), eggs and honey. Another aspect of food in religious life is the offering of alms to the mendicant, which is ritualized and obeys very strict rules. For mendicants as well as for lay people, fasting is one of the most common practices.

Symbol of Ahimsa in Jainism

Jain faith puts a lot of emphasis on respect and worship to the religious teachers, from the ordinary mendicant up to the Jinas. This is expressed in the daily prayer known as the 'Fivefold homage' (*Navakāramantra* or *Pañcanamaskāra*) which is a chanting of mantras or recitations, and is endowed with protective values. It is a key component of Jain worship, similar to the three refuges for the Buddhists or the *Gāyatrīmantra* for Hindus.

Fivefold Homage: Namaskāra-mantra

The **Namaskāra-mantra** is the fundamental prayer of the Jains. It pays homage to the five types of holy beings:

1. **arhat** – enlightened teacher
2. **siddha** – liberated soul
3. **ācārya** – mendicant leader
4. **upādhyāya** – preceptor or teacher
5. **sādhu** – mendicant

Note that this is not praying for something material, asking for something, or otherwise encountering the divine. It is a recognition of these people and their role in human lives.

Other important religious acts include mantras for confession and repentance, meditating on key topics (*anuprekṣā*) such as impermanence, impurity of the body, etc., singing praises to the Jinas, worshipping Jina images in the temples, remembering important dates in the Jinas' lives through festivals or pilgrimage to Jain sacred places.

Do all Jains believe the same thing?

With such a long and vital history it is to be expected that Jains have not always agreed on everything and that these differences in belief or practice resulted in divisions. However, divisions are based on practices, rather than doctrines, and all Jains agree on the foundational principles of karma and *ahiṃsā*.

The oldest division goes back to around the 1st century CE and remains the most important today. It produced the separation between the Śvetāmbaras and the Digambaras who hold various differences, the Digambaras being more strict in their practices and beliefs.

Who, or what, is the Jain source of authority?

The Jains do not believe in any god as creator of the universe or in any divine source of revelation who teaches humanity how to think and behave. For them the only

This statue was found by archaeologists in early 20th-century about a mile north of Sravana Belgola – the famous Digambara Jain site. The front show the 24 Tirthankaras, while the back is inscribed. It was a part of a Jain temple in Santinatha Basti that also featured a mixture of Jain and Hindu images of "Jinas, Yakshas, Yakshis, Brahma, Sarasvati, Manmatha, Mohini, drummers, musicians, dancers", according to pages 7–9 of the Archaeological Survey of Mysore Annual Report for the Year Ending 30th June 1913.

source of wisdom and authority are the Jinas. These royal-born human beings renounced their royal destiny in their youth, took to asceticism and slowly became all-knowers. As a consequence they emit the 'divine sound' (*divyadhvani*) which is the ultimate source of all teaching and is understood by every being in his own language. There are twenty-four Jinas but the last one, Mahavira, is regarded by the Jains as the source of their body of doctrine. In Mahavira's time (5th–6th century BCE) the teaching was transmitted orally to his chief disciples (the *gaṇadharas*), who taught their own disciples, etc.

This mode of transmission remained prevalent for several centuries, but, as tradition puts it, with the passing of time knowledge was forgotten bit by bit. For example, all Jains agree that the *Earlier* texts (the *Purvas*), considered to go back to the Jina's direct disciples, are long since lost. The last person who mastered them was Bhadrabahu who died around 350 BCE.

What is the Jain canon of scripture?

It is important to bear in mind that the teaching of the Jains is not associated with a single book but disseminated over the various texts described, which are often labelled as 'canonical'. This term, however, is increasingly felt inadequate because it implies a fixed body of texts sanctioned by a central authority. Jains commonly use the words *siddhānta* and *āgama*, which are pan-Indian terms. The former term conveys the idea of validity and authority, and is perhaps more common among Digambaras. The latter term means 'what has come down to us' or tradition. In addition, the Jain scriptural tradition goes much beyond those put into writing in the first centuries of the Common Era. Jain mendicants in large number, and lay followers in a lesser degree, have contributed to transmission of the faith, and to Indian literatures, through rewritings, abridgments or new modes of presentation of earlier material.

Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras do not recognize the same body of scriptures as authoritative, however one should not conclude from this that they differ a lot on the fundamentals.

Digambaras

According to the Digambaras, a lot of teaching has been lost, but there were a few ascetics who could remember the essentials. One of them was Dharasena (ca. 137 CE) who transmitted them to his disciples, Puṣpadanta and Bhūtabali. They wrote the *Teaching in six parts* (*Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*). Then another ascetic called Guṇabhadra

The Two-and-a-Half Continents is the only area in the three worlds where human beings can be born, and is frequently depicted in detailed maps in manuscripts or paintings.

wrote a *Treatise on passion* (*Kaṣāyaprābhṛta*). These large and complex treatises form the first authoritative works for the Digambaras. They provide technical expositions on cosmology, karma theory and the way karmic matter attaches to the soul as a result of desire and passions.

Śvetāmbaras

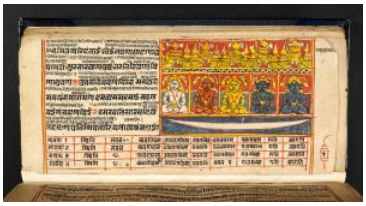
According to the Śvetāmbaras, the teaching was collected and put to writing in its final redaction during a collective recitation which took place in Valabhī (Gujarat) around 450 CE. This was led by Devarddhigaṇi Kṣamāśramaṇa. The teaching was organised in a set of texts divided into various categories (Angas, Upāngas, Chedasūtras, Mūlasūtras, Prakīrṇakas). A junior monk or nun starts with the basic texts (Mūlasūtras) and in time progresses to read more technical texts as he becomes more senior. The texts are varied; they are made up of prose and verse, and take the form of philosophical dialogues, poetry depicting ascetic life or exhorting ascetics to follow the ideal mendicant's way of life, legends or parables, hymns to Mahavira and lists of concepts.

Within the scriptures, some groups of texts are unchanging while others show fluidity and divergences. The number of accepted scriptures among Śvetāmbaras corresponds to a sectarian division that took shape from the 15th century onwards. Mūrtipūjaks consider there to be forty-five scriptures while Sthānakavāsins and Terāpanthins state there are thirty-two.

In Mahavira's time the prevalent sacred language was Sanskrit. It was associated with the Vedas, the earliest sacred texts of Hinduism, and with the brahmins, the religious elite in charge of their transmission. In contrast, Mahavira, like the Buddha, did not use Sanskrit as a preaching language, but Prakrit.

Contents and forms of the teaching

Jain teaching was thus fixed into writing in the middle of the 5th century CE, at the latest. It was available first in the form of hand-written manuscripts. Those which have come down to us, however, are not older than the end of the 11th century. Nothing before this time could be preserved due to the Indian climatic conditions. In



manuscript of Śrīcandra's Saṃgrahaṇīratna from British Library

Northern India, manuscripts of Jain texts were first copied on palm-leaf and, from the 14th century onwards, on locally made paper. They were produced in large numbers in India and started entering European libraries in the last decades of the 19th century. The then India Office Library and British Museum were among the main institutions with collections of Jain manuscripts. The richness of Jain manuscript culture is a sign of the importance attached to scriptural knowledge (known as *śrutajñāna*) in this faith: knowledge being one of the three requisites for spiritual progress.

The fundamentals analyzed in canonical scriptures of both Jain groups are retold through concise definitions in *That Which Is* (*Tattvārthasūtra*), a Sanskrit handbook that has a special place in Jain tradition because it transcends the boundary between Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras and is recognized by both of them.

Example of Jain Storytelling

On February 18th and 19th, 2012, dancer and storyteller Pranita Jain from Kalapriya Center for the Indian Performing Arts, led a special interactive storytelling demonstration animating tales of King Vikramaditya with mudras (gestures) and facial expressions at the Asian Art Museum.

Story-telling has always been considered a crucial medium of teaching by the Jains. Mahavira's career and the legendary lives of the other Jinas are the first source of stories. They form an essential part of one canonical scripture, the *Kalpasūtra*. Its text has often been accompanied by gorgeous paintings in manuscripts.

✔ Example **3.5.1**

View the beautiful Samgrahaniratna at the British Library:

- Cosmology through images

Several books of the Śvetāmbara canon show the doctrine in acts through the eventful lives of good and bad characters who illustrate the working of the karma-theory and the circulation of souls up and down the three worlds. The *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*, a Śvetāmbara canonical scripture memorized and studied by new ascetics at the beginning of their religious lives, combines didactic chapters with legends, providing rich material for willing painters of manuscripts.

A broad repertoire of heroes and heroines is thus produced, and enlarged over the centuries through rewritings in all the languages used by the Jains and all the poetic forms evolved in Medieval and modern times. The British Library manuscript of the *Story of the Sunday's Vow* is an instance of a text in Old Hindi produced among the Digambaras in the 17th century. The language, the poetic form and the pictorial style, all illustrate how the Jain tradition has been able to adjust to new means in order to hand down the key-values of its faith and satisfy new audiences.

Scripture-worship

Not only do the Jains respect the contents of sacred texts. They also venerate them as holy objects in themselves. Scriptures are sometimes found in temples in the shape of books, symbols or quotations inscribed on the walls. In addition, the Digambara *Teaching in Six Parts* is housed in a temple in Mudbidri, Karnataka. For a long time it was worshipped without being studied. It became available to study only in the 1930s. On the Śvetāmbara side, since at least the 14th century, the *Kalpasūtra* has been used during the yearly Jain festival of Paryushan (August–September), with parts of it being read in temples and manuscripts (or now printed books) being displayed ceremoniously during processions. Both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras have a festival in honor of scriptural knowledge which is the occasion to clean and restore manuscripts or books and to worship then as embodiments of knowledge.

Summary

The Jain faith's primary concern is to purify and liberate the soul from the perpetual cycle of death and rebirth. The *Jinas*, practicing meditation and conforming to fundamental vows such as non-violence and truthfulness, have overcome attachment and desire and set the supreme example for all Jain followers. The path to liberation is defined by three main principles, the so-called three jewels of Jainism: right faith, right understanding and right conduct.

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1. Nalini Balbir is a Professor of Indology at Sorbonne Nouvelle University Paris, where she teaches Sanskrit. She has specialized in research on various aspects of the Jain tradition. Her publications include a Catalogue of the British Library Jain manuscripts (2006, with co-authors K V Sheth, K K Sheth and C B Tripathi). She has also contributed to the JAINpedia website which includes digitized Jain manuscripts from various London collections. ↵

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3.6: Jain Resources

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self."
— Mahavira

Useful Links

- Federation of Jain Associations in North America
- National Geographic: Jainism
- Harvard's Pluralism Project: Jainism
- Jainism: The British Library
- Alta LibGuides: Jainism
- Jainpedia
- Jain Resources: Library of Congress

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Middle Eastern Origins

4.1: Jewish Resources
4.2: Christianity
4.3: Christian Resources
4.4: Islam
4.5: Muslim Resources
4.6: Baha'i
4.7: Baha'i Resources
4.8: Judaism

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4.1: Jewish Resources

"I do not want followers who are righteous, rather I want followers who are too busy doing good that they won't have time to do bad." – *Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk*

Helpful Links

- British Library: Sacred Texts/Judaism
- Jewish Virtual Library
- Harvard University's Pluralism Project: Judaism
- Yad Vashem: Jerusalem's Holocaust Museum
- US Holocaust Museum
- US Jewish Museum: New York
- Union for Reform Judaism
- United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism
- Orthodox Union
- Reconstructing Judaism
- Yale Open Courses: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
- Jewish Food for Thought

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4.2: Christianity

18

Christianity

Last Supper fresco from Kremikovtsi Monastery, Bulgaria, 16th century AD

In the beginning of the movement that became Christianity, the earliest followers were not actually “Christians”. They were Jewish, loyal followers of the rabbi Jesus, and, especially at the very beginning of the movement, were focused on reforming Judaism. They talked to anyone who would listen, instructing their fellow Jews on the ideas taught by Jesus, this itinerant rabbi whom they eventually came to believe was the longed for messiah from numerous Hebrew prophecies.

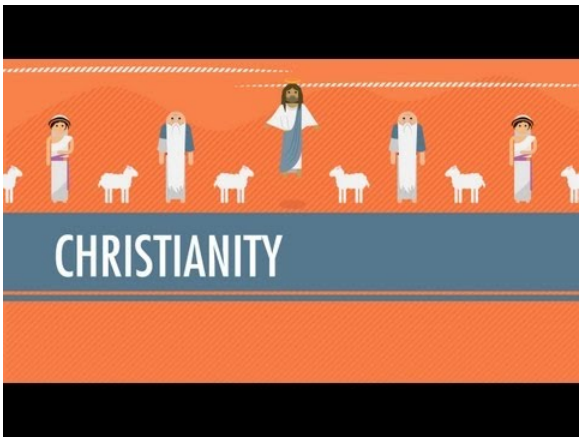
Jesus was born in Palestine about 4 BCE.[1] He lived life as a Jew, in northern Judea, which had been conquered and was occupied by the Roman Empire. His teaching ministry was, at most, three years long. Jesus was thought to be in his thirties when he was put to death by crucifixion, a commonly used Roman style of execution of serious criminals. His followers said that they found his tomb empty three days after the execution. It is said that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and that he appeared before the disciples and followers, ate and talked with them, and proclaimed the kingdom of God to them before ascending to heaven.

Jesus did not write his message down in any way during his lifetime, nor did others who were immediate followers write about him during his ministry. Written materials started emerging in letters and gospels about 25-30 years after his lifetime.

Today Christianity has three major divisions, each possessing its own branches: the Catholic Church, Orthodox Christian churches, and Protestant churches. Within this broad framework, created by disagreement over tradition, belief and belief, are contained literally hundreds of smaller groups.

> Learning Object

A quick and slightly tongue in cheek summary of some of the following content:



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Title: Face of Christ on St. Veronica's Cloth. Artist: Claude Mellan (French, Abbeville 1598–1688 Paris) Date: 1649

Christianity is centered on the person of Jesus. He was alive during a time of great religious and political unrest in Israel, which was a country that had been conquered (yet again!) and was under Roman rule. Many Jews believed that they were living in the "end times" and so expected God to intervene on their behalf, which would include the appearance of a political leader called the Messiah.

Jesus was a teacher and preacher, talking to people along the road, in groups in a field or on a hill or beside a lake. He talked in parables, which are small stories that make a point, a bit like Aesop's fables or other stories–short, moral, and instructive. He is said to perform miracles of healing, of transformation and even of returning people from death to life.

The Messianic prophecies had suggested that they could expect a new King David, a warrior, but also a devout follower of the Jewish faith. Jesus was not quite like this–certainly not a warrior, nor a rebel, nor a military leader.

After his very brief teaching ministry, Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem at Passover time by authorities who considered him a heretic, and even a threat to the tentative peace that the leaders tried to maintain with the Romans. He was soon tried by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Israel at that time, and was executed by crucifixion by the Romans. Three days after he was killed, his followers found an empty tomb. Other followers reported appearances and visitations by a transformed Jesus who had been resurrected from the dead.

Pantokrator (Agios Nikolaos church, village Skopos, Greece). Roof fresco.

Christian scriptures say that forty days after finding the empty tomb, Jesus ascended to the heavens, promising to return again.

The content of the preaching from Jesus and his followers focused on the "great commandment" to love one's neighbor as oneself. "Neighbor" is defined not just as the person living next door, but as including all people, especially the poor, the needy, the outcast, the foreigner, the unloved and societally outcast. He warned people to remember their own flaws before judging others and invited those who were completely without sin to "cast the first stone", referring to a practice of that era of stoning prostitutes. This acceptance of all into the Kingdom of God was not popular with the rich or elite or the powerful religious leaders, but offered hope to those who felt shunned by their religion, their society, their country. The preaching of a Kingdom of God offered to all was a departure from traditional religious teaching at the time.

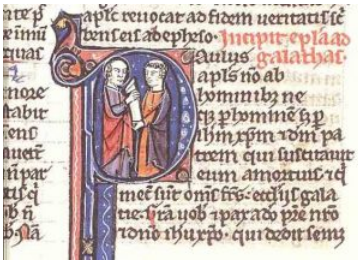
The Writings

Virtually all we know of Jesus comes by way of the four Biblical Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Christian New Testament. These four accounts describe the life and teachings of Jesus. The four portraits of Jesus were recorded some time after his death, with estimates of dates of writing being between 65-100 AD, more than a generation after the death of Jesus. Each gospel reflects the distinctive viewpoints and culture of the individual writers. Jesus is portrayed as a Jew accepting the practices and authority of his Jewish tradition, preaching from the prophets and writings of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus centers his teaching on the subject of the Kingdom of God. He emphasizes love for God and love and compassion for other people. He recommends not judging others, giving help to the needy and oppressed, offering forgiveness, and practicing nonviolence. The writers turned oral stories and teachings into written materials in the genre called a gospel.

Four Evangelists, miniatures from the Gelati (Georgia) Gospels, Eleventh century.

Originally there were many gospels, few of which were included in the Bible. We know of some of these gospels that did not become part of the canon (the accepted authoritative list of Biblical books) , such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary, the Gospel of Peter, various infancy Gospels, some gospels mentioned by early church writers that no longer exist in any written format, gospels from the Gnostics, and fragments of many more. What we can actually know about the ministry and person of Jesus and his followers is limited to what writers created from oral transmission, and that still exist in some form today.

The small group of Jesus' followers were inspired to travel and create communities of believers throughout the Mediterranean world and, eventually, throughout the rest of the world. It was in Antioch, now in Turkey, that they were first called "Christians". Some of the traveling preachers wrote encouragement, instruction and correction to a number of these small congregations, and these letters, which are found in



Beginning of the New Testament Epistle to Galatians translated from Greek into Latin. An illuminated manuscript, in the picture Apostle Paul hands his Epistle to a Galatian

the Christians scriptures under the genre of Epistle, are considered the earliest indications of the movement that would come to be called the Christian church. A man named Paul wrote many of the letters, but some of the letters are titled but unattributed, and some bear the name of someone else who was well known in the early churches. These were likely not actually written by that leader, but just written under those important names, to lend authority to the messages contained within.

Paul is largely responsible for the spread of belief in Jesus as messiah beyond the Jewish world through his extensive travels and powerful letters. Because of Paul's leadership, the early church finally decided that converts to the Christian faith did not have to observe Jewish religious laws. Gentiles were then accepted as believers in the communities around the Mediterranean.

Apostle Paul, Rembrandt

In Paul's view, a right relationship with God came only through faith in Jesus. Following moral rules was done willingly out of gratitude for what God had accomplished through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Essentially, Paul's views on the meaning of Jesus, morality, and Christian practice became the norm for most of the Christian world. Paul's ideas are still sometimes preached more frequently than those of Jesus.

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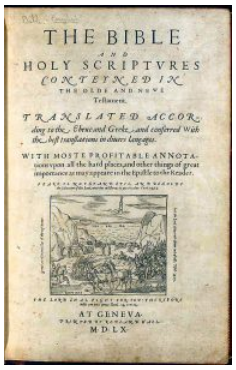
With help from Scott McKendrick[2], we see some of the history and content of the Christian Bible. Christians use both the Hebrew Scriptures (which they call the Old Testament, as opposed to the Jewish term Tanakh for these writings) and the writings of the first and early second century church leaders, called the New Testament.

The Christian Bible has had a long and complex genesis. The term 'bible' is derived from the Greek word βιβλία (books), which in turn is based on the Greek word for papyrus (βύβλος or βίβλος). (Throughout antiquity papyrus was the principal material from which books were made.) As reflected in its name, the Christian Bible is a book made up of many books, incorporating a large number of Jewish scriptures as its first section, known as the Old Testament (derived from the Latin word *testamentum*, in the sense of dispensation or covenant), and a smaller corpus of Christian texts as its second section, the New Testament. Although the Christian Church regards both Testaments as inspired, it also holds as a fundamental doctrine that the New Testament bears witness to the fulfilment of the Old.

Early Christians adopted a Greek version of the Jewish scriptures that had been produced for Jews residing in Egypt and other Greek-speaking territories, who were less familiar with Hebrew. Known as the Septuagint ('seventy' in Latin), this translation was traditionally attributed to seventy or so scholars working in Alexandria for Ptolemy II Philadephus (308–246 CE). The Septuagint has at its heart the three key elements of Jewish scripture. The first, the Torah, is traditionally ascribed to Moses and comprises the five books from Genesis to Deuteronomy. The second is the twenty-one books of the Prophets, including the twelve Minor Prophets. The third, the Writings, comprises thirteen assorted books: the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles 1–2. The shaping of these thirty-nine books had evolved over nearly a millennium.



Geneva Bible 1560

The Septuagint also contains several texts that are excluded from the canon of Jewish scripture, most notably Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch and the two books of Maccabees. These texts were thus accepted by early Christians, who developed their canon based on the Greek rather than the Hebrew version of the Jewish scriptures. When St Jerome (c. 342–420 CE) undertook the translation of the Bible into Latin, he advocated that the Church follow the Jewish canon, and designated these extra texts as Apocrypha (from ἀπόκρυφος, hidden). Because the Protestant reformers of the 16th century used copies of the Jewish Hebrew canon of Scripture as the basis for their translations, these texts either do not form part of Protestant Bibles, or are included in them separately as apocrypha or deuterocanonical books (from the Greek word δεύτερος, or second canon). The apocrypha do, however, remain part of Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles.

Whereas their opinions differ over the Old Testament, Protestants, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians all accept the same New Testament canon. This was formed over a much shorter period than the Jewish scriptures, but similarly comprises several distinct texts. The core of the New Testament is the Four Gospels. The word ‘gospel’ is possibly derived from the Old English translation of the Latin word *evangelium*, which is itself based on the Greek εὐαγγέλιον (good news) and is the origin of the term for the authors of these texts, the Evangelists. The Four Gospels of Sts Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were widely accepted as uniquely authoritative from an early date.

A Bible manuscript from 1300, National Museum of Israel Collection

The other twenty-three books of the New Testament include the Acts of the Apostles, in which St Luke recounts the life of the Church immediately after Jesus’s ascension, letters to early Christian communities or individuals written by the Apostle Paul and other early Christian leaders, and an apocalyptic account, or revelation, traditionally attributed to St John. Although the core of the New Testament canon, the Four Gospels and thirteen Epistles of St Paul, was established by the middle of the 2nd century, the full canon of twenty-seven books was formally confirmed only during the 4th century CE. Until then, some books, such as Hebrews and Revelation, were in doubt, and other texts, such as the Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermas, were considered authoritative by some Christians. All of the books of the New Testament were originally written in Greek, the language of the predominant literate community in the region, to further the evangelizing purpose of the New Testament.

The Creeds

The Apostles Creed European Tapestry Date circa 1550 –1600 Metropolitan Museum of Art

One feature found in most of Christianity is its emphasis on a creed, a summary statement of faith. The earliest creeds were the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed, both of which were eventually validated by councils of church leaders.

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man: Who for us, too, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered, and was buried: the third day He rose according to the Scriptures, ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of the Father: He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son: Who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified: Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy, Christian, and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and life of the age to come.
Amen.

The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 CE, was the most important of these early church councils. In some groups (understandable given the amount of time that had passed since the life of Jesus) some believers had proposed that Jesus Christ was not really human at all, but was God appearing to be human, while others had proposed that he was only a human being. The early church rejected both of these views as it worked together to articulate a consistent expression of faith for all followers: that Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully human. The concept of Incarnation was solidified–that God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus, who was born of a virgin girl called Mary.

Key Takeaway: From the Harvard Pluralism Project/Christianity

"The Latin term *credo* is often translated today as "I believe…" but it is important to remember that its literal meaning is "I give my heart…" It is language of the heart, a profound expression of commitment, not simply a list of statements to which one gives intellectual assent. When the early church was being persecuted, commitment to the way of Christ was often dangerous, requiring true courage."

Creeds came into use during the ritual of baptism. Baptisms had been performed in Judaism as a rite of cleansing and renewal, and could happen more than once. In the early Christian tradition, a person would put on new white clothing, and become a Christian by a ritual immersion in water, often a running river or stream, and their affirmation of commitment to the Christian beliefs. Christian baptism is a one time event.

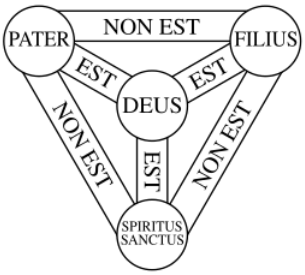
Among the oldest creeds of the Christian church is the Apostles' Creed, formed from questions that were began to be composed about 150 CE and were used ritually at the time of Christian baptism.

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostle's Creed came to its final form in southwestern France in the early 7th century CE. This creed had, through its series of questions, replaced other baptismal liturgies and was finally acknowledged as the official statement of faith of the entire Catholic church in the West in the early 13th century CE. As well as the Catholic church, the creedal Protestant churches accept the Apostles' Creed and use it in worship. (Some churches delete the line "He descended into Hell.") Not all Protestant churches use creeds. Some use what are called Professions of Faith, and some are called Covenantal churches, expressing their ideas in simpler expressions of faith.

Beliefs



Compact version of a basic minimal (equilateral triangular) version of the “Shield of the Trinity” or “Scutum Fidei” diagram of traditional Christian symbolism, with original Latin captions.

The Christian theology took many centuries to be fully worked out through discussions, controversies, and great councils that produced the central creeds of the faith. One vital idea developed is that of the **Trinity**, which is the belief that God, although one, is three “persons.” The Father is the guiding intelligence that created the universe and made human beings an important part of the divine plan. The Son is Jesus Christ, who has both a fully human and a fully divine nature united in one person. His presence in the world is called the **Incarnation** of the divine. The Holy Spirit is the power of God that guides all believers.

Christians believe in life after death, a resurrection of all people, and a final judgment. Controversies over doctrine and church structure led to schisms in the church, which then produced the great branches of Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christianity—with Protestantism itself subdividing many more times. Christian practice is rich, complex, and varied in beliefs and practices within the different branches.

All Christians practice baptism and observe the Lord’s Supper, with varying understandings of what each practice actually means. Holidays that mark significant times in the life of Christ and the early church, such as Easter and Christmas, are celebrated. Christianity has had a profound effect on the arts in the fields of architecture, painting, sculpture, and music. Its themes and stories are echoed in much great literature.

Now, people seem to think that Christians, at least at some point, all believed the same things and thought about their faith in the same ways. This has simply never been the case.

According to Wayne A. Meeks, Woolsey Professor of Biblical Studies at Yale University:

> *“The early Christians put a great emphasis upon unity amongst one another, and the odd thing is they seemed always to have been squabbling with one another over what kind of unity they were to have. The earliest documents we have are Paul’s letters and what do we find there? He is, ever and again, having defend himself against some other Christians who have come in and said, “No, Paul didn’t tell it right. We have now to tell you the real thing.” So, it is clear from the very beginning of Christianity, that there are different ways of interpreting the fundamental message. There are different kinds of practice; there are arguments over how Jewish are we to be; how Greek are we to be; how do we adapt to the surrounding culture – what is the real meaning of the death of Jesus, how important is the death of Jesus? Maybe it’s the sayings of Jesus that are really the important thing and not his death and not his resurrection.*

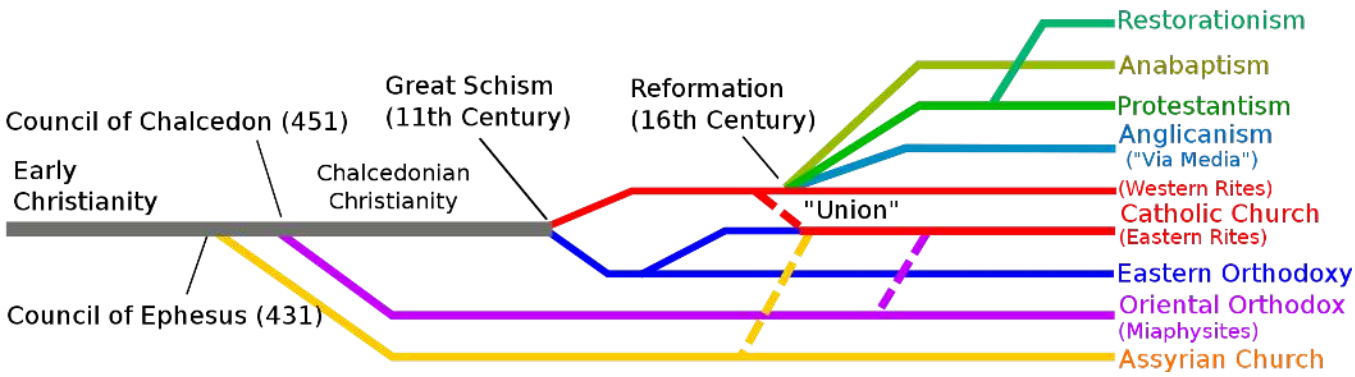
> *Now, this runs very contrary to the view… which the mainstream Christianity has always quite understandably wanted to convey. That is, that at the beginning, everything was unity, everything was clear, everything was understandable and only gradually, under outside influences, heresies arose and conflict resulted, so that we must get back somehow to that Golden Age, when everything was okay.*
>
> *One of the most difficult things which has emerged from modern historical scholarship, is precisely that that Golden Age eludes us. The harder we work to try to arrive at that first place where Christianity were all one and everything was clear, the more it… seems a will-o'- the-wisp. There never was this pure Christianity, different from everybody else and clear, in its contours….The notion of Orthodoxy, which is only the flip-side of the notion of heresy, [developed in the second century]. So heresy which… simply means [in Greek], a choice, and is most commonly used to talk about a philosophical school, now takes on a negative connotation for the Christians. [It] first of all implies a schismatic group, a choice, which is different from the mainstream,… and then secondarily, [implies] people have wrong ideas, people who think wrongly about this or that, notably about the identity of Jesus Christ. The other side of that, of course, is our side, which has orthodoxy, that is, right thinking. The great controversies of the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries, which create what we will know as orthodoxy, and in the west, Catholicism, emerge from this very drive to create a a unified body of opinion."*

The Divisions

The three big branches of Christianity are Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Churches and Protestant Churches. Each has additional branches within, but these are the umbrella categories of Christians. (There are groups that don't fit within these branches that also call themselves Christian, but the debate over their place in Christianity is ongoing.)

As Christianity moved away from Judea and the small house churches that developed early in the faith, and as centuries passed, belief and practices in the communities of faith began to differ according to location, history, and cultural ideals. Long-rising disagreements about belief and practice between the churches who looked to Rome for leadership and those Byzantine churches who looked to Constantinople (now called Istanbul) resulted in a split that divided the European Christian church into two major branches: the Western Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. This split is known as the Great Schism, or sometimes the "East-West Schism" or the "Schism of 1054 CE."

Major branches within Christianity



The divide between East and West did not stop Christians from their disagreements, however. Many issues continued to cause deep concern and outrage, ranging from the power (and often corruption) of the clergy and the church in ordinary people's lives, to the money taken by the church from the people, to the inability of ordinary people to read the Bible, and much more.

Although there were other early church reformers and group of protesters, it is generally held that the Protestant Reformation began in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517.

Martin Luther (1483–1546) painted by Lucas Cranach the elder

On this day, **Martin Luther,** a teacher and a monk, published a document he called Disputation on the Power of Indulgences, or 95 Theses, and nailed them to the door of the cathedral there. The document was a series of 95 ideas about Christianity that he challenged the church to consider.

Following Luther at about the same time period came people such as John Calvin, William Tyndale, Huldrich Zwingli, John Knox, and many more. From this early start come Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and eventually groups like Quakers, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and so forth. In the modern era, there are hundreds of Protestant denominations, split from original groups over belief, practice, style of worship, politics, dress, social issues, and much more.

> Interesting data

There are some interesting statistics about Christians in various groups, across the globe. Check out this data from Pew Research about the various branches of Christianity:

- 5 Facts about Protestants Around the World
- Q&A: A Closer Look at Orthodox Christians
- The Global Catholic Population

Growth

The spread of Christianity took place gradually, moving around the Mediterranean basin for the first decades, and gradually into mainland Europe. It is not, originally, a European movement, however. With a little help from Brian Stanley[3], we get some more history.

Christianity was not originally a western religion. It originated on the western fringe of Asia – what we tend to call the 'Middle East'. However, for many centuries the expansion of Christianity into the rest of the world was directed from Europe and became entangled with the growth of the great European empires.

The earliest growth centered around the Mediterranean, both the African and European shores. With time, the messages of Christianity moved further inland, again into Africa and Europe, but also into Asia Minor. It was not until the 9th century CE that any major inroads in converting Scandinavia occurred, for example. (An excellent article with more detail about this process can be found at the National Museum of Denmark's website–Christianity comes to Denmark)

The Christian Church has sent out missionaries from the days of the Apostle Paul down to the present day. In the 16th and 17th centuries CE many of them belonged to the Catholic religious orders – societies of men (and later women) who followed a strict rule of life and committed themselves to the task of spreading the faith. The Society of Jesus – or Jesuits – established by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1534 was especially influential in China. Jesuit missionaries were also active in South America and in the ancient Kongo kingdom in West Africa. Although Latin remained the language of liturgy used in the Mass throughout the Roman Catholic Church until after the Second Vatican Council of 1962–65, some Catholic missionaries were quick to realize the importance of teaching the faith in the languages of the people to whom they were sent.

Our belief in the integrity and value of all human cultures is quite a recent development. From the early 20th century, anthropologists have taught us to try to understand all societies in their own terms. Before then, Europeans believed that all peoples could be placed somewhere along a single spectrum from primitive superstition to modern civilization and rational ways of thinking. Such ideas profoundly influenced Christian missionaries, who frequently assumed that part of their job was to move people along the spectrum so that they would become civilized.

A good example is provided by the Puritans who emigrated to North America in the early 17th century CE. The Puritans made strenuous efforts to bring the gospel to the indigenous inhabitants of the New England colonies. Like other Europeans of the time, their most notable missionary, John Eliot (1604–1690 CE), believed that they needed to be taught the principles of ‘civilization’, which meant persuading them to exchange their nomadic pattern of life for a settled existence under European supervision. Such attempts to reform the traditional lifestyle of the indigenous peoples proved misguided, as they increased their vulnerability to European diseases, to which they had no resistance.

The Protestant churches that were formed as a result of the 16th-century Reformation lagged behind the Catholics in their involvement in overseas mission, though the efforts of the New England Puritans were a notable exception. John Wesley (1703–1791), the Anglican clergyman who became the founder of Methodism, is another example from a century later.

The legacy of Christian missionaries is mixed. Christians outside Europe may remember them with affection as their spiritual fathers and mothers. However, in Europe some find their forebears’ unquestioning confidence in their own religious beliefs disturbing. Perhaps the most lasting cultural impact of the missionaries has come through their contributions to Bible translation and education. By translating the Bible into the language of a non-European people, missionaries had to become pupils, learning the finer points of a local language from indigenous teachers.

The ten first of the Salvation Army´s selected Swedish missionaries to India, together with two Indian captains, during a farewell meeting in Stockholm on 13 September 1887

They had to express Christian doctrines using the terms already available in that language – and that meant allowing Western ideas of Christianity to be modified by the cultural assumptions that shaped the language. What’s more, by giving a people education, missionaries not only taught them Christian beliefs, they also gave them tools that they could put to any purpose they wished.

But the motivation of the missionaries, while perhaps at times well intentioned, was so focused on the urge to convert all people to Christian European practices and belief that there was a devastating effect on the health, cultures and societies of people across the globe.

Christianity in America

Some excellent materials on American Christianity can be found in this article and this interview. Both offer insightful commentary on how Christianity has impacted American policies, life and history, and what is happening with Christianity in American more recently.

- Martin Marty on America's Changing Religious Landscape
- Charles Lippy on Christianity in America

Knowing something about the setting of the origins of the faith, the basic beliefs, the traditional practices, and the ongoing developments help all understand the enormous impact of Christianity on our world.

Learning Summary

If you have time, you might enjoy the very fine production from PBS's Frontline on "From Jesus to Christ", which is released on line in 2 segments, both almost 2 hours long.

https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/f...showsreligion/

McKendrick, Scott. *British Library: Discovering Sacred Texts*, 2019, www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/the-christian-bible.

"Christianity – Research and Data from the Pew Research Center." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 2021, www.pewresearch.org/topic/religion/religions/christianity/.

"Introduction to Christianity." *The Pluralism Project*, Harvard University, 2021, pluralism.org/introduction-christianity.

Lippy, Charles. *British Library*, Discovering Sacred Texts: Christianity in America, 2019, www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/christianity-in-america.

"Martin Marty – America's Changing Religious Landscape." Edited by Krista Tippet, *The On Being Project*, 21 May 2020, onbeing.org/programs/martin-marty-americas-changing-religious-landscape/.

Meeks, Wayne A. "The Diversity of Early Christianity | From Jesus to Christ – the First Christians | Frontline." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 1998, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/diversity.html.

"Christianity Comes to Denmark." *National Museum of Denmark*, 2021, en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-viking-age/religion-magic-death-and-rituals/christianity-comes-to-denmark/.

crashcourse. "Christianity from Judaism to CONSTANTINE: Crash Course World History #11." *Crash Course World History*, 5 Apr. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG55ErfdaeY.

1. early calendars in the Common or Christian era were based on approximate guesses as to the date of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and are judged to be slightly off ↵
2. Dr Scot McKendrick is Head of Western Heritage Collections at the British Library. His recent publications include Codex Sinaiticus: New Perspectives on the Ancient Biblical Manuscript (BL Pubs, 2015) and The Art of the Bible: Illuminated Manuscripts from the Medieval World (Thames and Hudson, 2016). ↵
3. Brian Stanley is Professor of World Christianity in the School of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh. He has published widely on the history of the missionary movement and its offspring – what is now called 'world Christianity'. His most recent book is Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History (Princeton University Press, 2018). ↵

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4.3: Christian Resources

19

Christian Resources

"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times."
Martin Luther

Helpful Links

British Library: Sacred Texts/Christianity

Harvard University's Pluralism Project: Christianity

The Vatican

Orthodox Church in America

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Church of England

Alta Lib Guides: Christianity

Links to various Christian resources from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Open Yale Courses: Introduction to New Testament History and Literature

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4.4: Islam

Muslim calligraphy

Islam is an Arabic word which means “submit.” Islam is described as being a way of living one’s life that is centered around submitting to God’s will and plan. A Muslim is one who attempts to live their life according to the ideas that God has made plain in the Qur’an, the revelation from God to Muhammad, the final prophet. The Arabic word for God is Allah, and Muslim people in all cultures and in all languages still use the Arabic to identify and call on their divine.

Like the other Abrahamic traditions, Christianity and Judaism, Islam originated in the Middle East, but is now a global faith. There are more than one billion Muslims living all over the globe. According to Muslims, Allah’s final prophet and messenger was Muhammad, and Allah’s final word the Qur’an. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, communities of Muslims been following the path of Islam in many cultural contexts.

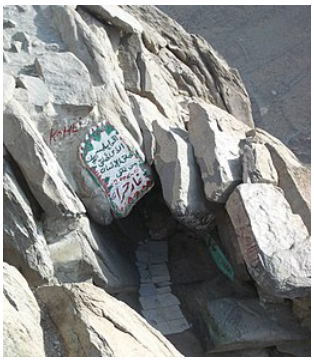
Try this!

Take this quiz from the Pew Research Center and test your knowledge of Islam. Once you have taken it, it will give you statistics comparing you to others in the US:

Muslims and Islam

The beginnings

Born in the city of Mecca on the Arabian peninsula, a man named Muhammad was born in 570 CE to a powerful tribe, the Quraish, who were merchants. He was raised an orphan in his uncle’s house. He married an older woman, the widow Khadijah, for whom he had worked in the caravan trade as a merchant. Muhammad performed devotions each year on Mount Hira, outside of Mecca. The year he was 40 years old, he began a series of visions that would change his life, and change the world.



Cave at Hira, near Mecca

One year, Muhammad reported having a strange encounter during his devotions. The angle Gabriel, ((*Jibra’il* in Arabic)) commanded him, “Recite!” Twice Muhammad asked, “Recite what?” After he had asked this three times, the angel replied: “Read! In the name of your Lord who created: He created man from a clinging form. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by [means of] the pen, who taught man what he did not know.” (Qur’an, 96:1-5).

Muhammad felt “as though the words were written on [his] heart.” He ran down the mountain, but he heard a voice from the sky: “Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.”

From about 610CE until his death in 632CE, the Prophet Muhammad received the revelations first at Mecca and subsequently at Medina, to where he had emigrated in 622CE. The messages that he received warned of divine judgment and an invitation to return to the ways of the earlier prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus. As he gained more followers, these revelations challenged his society. His world was polytheistic at the times, and the revelations to Muhammad spoke of the unity and oneness of the divine being. Meccan merchants were afraid that trade, which they believed was protected by the pagan gods, would suffer if polytheism was destroyed. Tribal feuds were a common part of the social structure, but the Prophet spoke of a universal community, or *ummah*. The revelation Muhammad received demanded social justice and reform: one should not only perform regular prayers, but also care for the poor and the weak.

As his message gained followers, Muhammad was threatened in Mecca. For a time, the influence and status of his wife Khadijah and his uncle, Abu Talib, the chief of the clan, protected Muhammad. After they died, however, Muhammad's situation in Mecca changed.

The early Muslims encountered increasingly harsh persecution. In a forced flight in 622 CE, the Prophet and his followers emigrated north from Mecca to Medina. This event became known as the *hijrah*. The Prophet became the actual leader of all of Medina, establishing order and unity in the town. In 630 CE, after a series of military battles and negotiations with enemies in Mecca, Muhammad returned to the city with most of his followers. Many Meccans then embraced Islam, and the Prophet dedicated the *Ka'bah*, which had been a

Kaaba in Mecca

place of pilgrimage even before the beginning of Islam, to the worship of the this one God. By the time of the Prophet's death in 632 CE, much of the Arabian peninsula had embraced Islam.

When Muhammad died he had not named a successor to lead the Muslims as they expanded across Arabia and into Africa. One faction, the Shi'a, believed that only individuals directly descended from the Prophet could lead the Muslim community righteously. They thought that 'Ali, Muhammad's closest surviving blood male relative, should be their next leader. The other faction, the Sunnis, believed that the Prophet's successor should be determined by a consensus of the followers, and so they successively elected three of his most trusted companions, commonly referred to as the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman), as leaders of the Muslim community; 'Ali succeeded them as the fourth caliph.

Today Islam remains divided, largely, into Sunni and Shi'a branches. Sunnis revere all four caliphs, while Shi'as regard 'Ali as the first caliph. The division between these two groups, based on their ideas about proper leadership for the people of Islam, has resulted in differences in worship as well as varied political and religious views. Sunnis are in the majority and occupy most of the Muslim world such as Syria, Egypt, Yemen and large majorities in southeast Asia, while Shi'a populations are concentrated in Iran and Iraq, with large numbers in Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Key Takeaway

To quote Harvard's Pluralism Project: "Most Muslims are careful to insist, however, that "Muhammad is no more than a messenger" (Qur'an 3:144), and not a divine being. When Muslims refer to the Prophet Muhammad, to show reverence, his name is often followed by the phrase "salla llahu alayhi wa sallam" meaning "May the prayers and peace of God be upon him." In writing, this may be abbreviated as (sa), SAW, or PBUH meaning "peace be upon him," while in other cases the calligraphic Arabic form is written."

5 Pillars of Islam

The Five Pillars are the core beliefs and practices of Islam:

- **Profession of Faith (shahada)** The belief that "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God" is central to Islam. Saying this once, with sincere conviction, is what makes one a Muslim.

- **Prayer (salat)** Prayers happens at least 5 times a day and specified times. This can be literally anywhere, as the belief is that holy space is created where one is when one prays. These prayers happen at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and after dark. Prayer includes a recitation of the opening chapter (*sura*) of the Qur'an, and is sometimes performed on a small rug or mat used expressly for this purpose.
- **Alms (zakat)** A fixed percentage of one's excess income must be given to the poor and needy. This can be done in a variety of ways and for a variety of causes, ranging from feeding the poor to building a library. The rate of zakat is generally 2.5 percent of annual accumulated wealth, including savings and nonessential property.
- **Fasting (sawm)** Fasting happens during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan. This includes abstaining from food, drink, and sex. During Ramadan they share the hunger and thirst of the needy as a reminder of the religious duty to help those less fortunate.
- **Pilgrimage (hajj)** At least once in the life of each Muslim whose health and finances permit , one is required to go to Mecca on hajj. The men then receive a title of Hajji, and women Hajja.

> Exercise: watch a clip from National Geographic about the Hajj

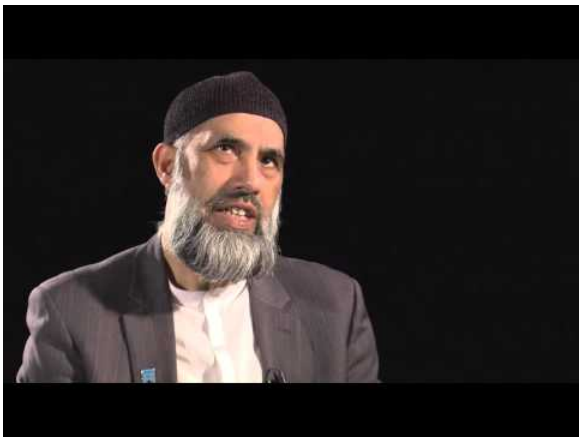
A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=44

Beliefs

Diverse traditions within Islam have different interpretations of the Qur'an, the Hadith (teachings of Prophet Muhammad), and views on designating leadership within Islam. The main branches of the tradition are: Sunni, Shi'a, and one that connects at times with both, the Sufi movement. All agree on most beliefs, but the differences in practice are real.

1. The Oneness of God

> About Allah



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2. Belief in Angels

Angels, "Malaikah" in Arabic, are beings made of light who make plain God's commands and plan for humanity. Islam claims a function for a number of angels, including Mika'il, (known in the west as Michael), who is believed to guard places of worship and reward people's good deeds. As the Angel of Mercy, he asks Allah to forgive people's sins. It is believed that both the Angel Jibril and the Angel Mika'il will be present on the Day of Judgment. Another angel is Izra'il, also known as the Angel of Death, who takes the souls at the time of death,. Raqib and 'Atid record the deeds of every person, both good and bad, and Munkar and Nakir will question the soul after death. The most important function however, is that of the archangel Jibril, (also known as Gabriel in the west), who conveyed God's revelations to divinely chosen persons known as prophets.

> *"The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], 'We make no distinctions between any of His messengers.' And they say, 'We hear and obey. [We seek] your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination.'" (Qur'an 2:285)*

3. Divine Revelation

Negel Quran, 4th century Anno Hegirae, Negel village, Hawraman-Kurdistan

Allah is beyond being directly perceived by humans, so over time angels have conveyed the commands and desires of Allah to all of the prophets, and these prophets spread theses ideas and commands to the rest of humanity. Muslims believe that while Muhammad was given the Qur'an by Jibril, , previous prophets were also given revelations from God: the Scrolls to Abraham, the Torah to Moses, the Psalms to David, and the Gospel to Jesus. However, since the Qur'an is considered the final scripture and final words for all of humanity, it supersedes all previous revelations and writings until the Day of Resurrection. Memorizing parts or the entirety of the Qur'an is an activity that is encouraged and is common for most Muslims. **Hafiz** is a title in Islam, which is used for someone who has completely memorized the Qur'an.

4. Prophets and Messengers

Indigo colored leaf glided tile. Painted over glaze, Takht-e Soleyman, 1270-1275. National Iran Museum, Tehran.

Prophets are people who lived in many different centuries and were required to deliver God's messages and commands to humanity. Muslims believe the prophets should be respected but never worshipped, however. There are twenty-five prophets explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an. These include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Muslims believe that while prophets are sinless human beings, they do not believe that any prophet share any aspect of divinity. Prophets are examples of how to put Allah's teachings into practice. Muhammad is considered the final prophet, and it is held that he was sent to all of humanity for all times and places, and with him all revelation is complete.

5. Day of Judgement

According to Islam, every prophet came to warn their people about the impending Day of Judgment; the time in which a person's deeds will be judged and they will be sent either to Paradise (*jannah*) or to Hell (*jahannam*). Hell is described as physical and spiritual suffering, while Paradise gives joy, comfort, and bliss. Entrance into Paradise earned by following the word given by prophets and living a pious and devout life, while an afterlife in Hell is warranted by rejecting Allah's revelations and prophets, and living an immoral life. Paradise is ultimately given to human individuals based on Allah's mercy – a person's sins can be forgiven Allah decrees this, and no one enters Paradise except by Allah's mercy . Forgiveness is key to this set of beliefs, and Muslims are encouraged to repent and ask for forgiveness for their sins.

6. Divine Decree

from Library of Congress http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.amed/ascs.071 The first chapter of the Qur'an entitled al-Fatihah (The Opening). Recited at the very beginning of the Qur'an, this surah proclaims God as Gracious and Merciful, the Master of the Day of Judgment, and the Leader of the straight path.

Judgement Day is based on a key belief that all people have been given free will. To some extent, this contradicts the idea that Allah is all-knowing, including knowing each person's destiny in the afterlife. Allah is believed to be just in all judgment and will do what is considered right for each person at the time of judgment. Each person will be judged according to the free choices they have made. Allah will know all the choices a person might make, however. The contradiction between a belief in free will and in stating that Allah knows and predicts all is generally settled in the phrases like "insha-Allah" (God-willing), and "masha-Allah" (God willed it).

> *"The Lord has created and balanced all things and has fixed their destinies and guided them". (Qur'an 87:2)*

While Shi'a Muslims generally agree with Sunnis in the aforementioned beliefs, they differ primarily by the inclusion of the doctrine of Imamate.

Imamate

Though the Prophet Muhammad died, Shi'as do not believe this means humans were left without a guide or leadership after his death. The Imams, a group of individuals descended from the Prophet Muhammad's family, are those leaders. They show how to live Allah's teachings. There were 12 Imams in sequence after the death of Muhammad. Although the twelfth Imam died long ago, it is believed that he still guides people and will come again at the End of Times to restore peace and justice to the world. For Zaydi Shi'as, these were five individuals, not twelve, and their leadership has continued with successive rulers. For Isma'ili Shi'as, the Nizari branch holds that the Imams have continued up until the present, with the current Imam referred to as the "Imam of the Time". Beliefs about the character, role and functions of the Imams change with the various branches of the Shi'as.

A 14th century Mamluk Qur'an, held at the British Library

The Qur'an

Islam's main sacred text is the Qur'an. According to Muslim tradition the Qur'an is the actual word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the Arabic language through the intermediary of the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel).

The Qur'an consists of 114 *surahs*, or chapters. The text is traditionally read aloud, as Muhammad was instructed in the first revelation he received: 'Recite in the name of your Lord' (Surah 96. 1). The word Qur'an comes from the Arabic verb meaning 'to read'.

After Muhammad's death, his secretary, Zayd ibn Thabit, compiled the revelation into a book, and the text was later collated and definitively codified by order of Caliph 'Uthman in 651CE . This is the text used in all Qur'an manuscripts, although the styles of calligraphy and illumination depend on the place and date of production.

The Qur'an, the central scripture of Islam, begins with *al-Fatihah*, literally "the Opening":

> *In the name of God, The Lord of Mercy, The Giver of Mercy!*
> *Praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds,*
> *The Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy,*
> *Master of the Day of Judgment.*
> *It is You we worship; it is You we ask for help.*
> *Guide us to the straight path:*
> *The path of those You have blessed*
> *those who incur no anger*
> *and who have not gone astray.*

With help from Mustafa Shah[1], we consider the Qur'an in more detail:

Preserved in the language of Arabic, the Qur'an is Islam's sacred text. It is believed that the Qur'an enshrines the literal word of God. With its unique composition and style, the Qur'an is also considered the pre-eminent literary masterpiece of the Arabic language and one of the earliest extant Arabic literary sources. Its contents, which focus on the theme of God's unity of being and his transcendence, provide the foundations of the beliefs of Islam. Emphasizing the theme of continuation, the Qur'an does not present its teachings as representing a new religion, but rather the revivification of an ancient monotheistic tradition of faith which shares the same spiritual legacy with Judaism and Christianity.

The Islamic literary sources intimate that at the age of forty, while secluded in a cave on the outskirts of Mecca, the very first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Muhammad by the Archangel Gabriel, thus marking the beginning of his call to prophethood.

> *Recite in the Name of your Lord who created;*
> *Created man from a congealed clot of blood;*
> *Recite and indeed your Lord is most merciful;*
> *He who taught by the pen;*
> *Taught man what he knew not.*

According to Muslim literary sources, when the Prophet passed away in 632 CE the Qur'an did not formally exist as a fixed text but was 'written down on palm-leaf stalks, scattered parchments, shoulder blades, limestone and memorized in the hearts of men'. During the rule of one of Muhammad's later successors, the caliph Uthman (r. 644–656 CE), a standardized copy of the Qur'an was compiled and distributed to the main centers of the Islamic Empire. Although the caliph's original codices have not survived, his introduction of a

Two pages of the Qur'an by Yaqut al Musta'sim

fixed text is recognized as one of his enduring achievements. One of the oldest copies of the Qur'an, which is dated to the 8th century, is held in the British Library; it includes over two-thirds of the complete text.

The traditional view is that the Qur'an's contents were revealed piecemeal. Revelation identified with the early Meccan years focused primarily on the accentuation of God's unity and transcendence. Early Qur'anic revelation includes declarations about the omnipotence and omniscience of God, the resurrection of the dead, the impending Day of Judgement and rewards and punishment in the hereafter. The theme of personal morality and piety is also promoted, while polytheism and idolatry are condemned. The imposition of a detailed system of ritual practices and laws occurs in the post-*Hijrah* period, while the people were in Medina. Set times for prayer, fasting, the giving of alms, and the performance of pilgrimage were made obligatory by the Qur'an at Medina. A range of legal measures was introduced, including rules for inheritance and dietary guidelines, the proscription of usury, laws on marriage and divorce and a penal code.

The requisite practice of committing the whole text to memory has an extended history, and still forms an integral part of the curriculum followed in seminaries throughout the Islamic world. The preservation and study of the Qur'an led to the flourishing of literary traditions of learning, including grammar, philology and even poetry, as scholars used insights from such scholarship to interpret the Qur'an.

Hafiz literally meaning "guardian" or "memorizer", depending on the context, is a term used by Muslims for someone who has completely memorized the Quran

Definition of *hafiz*

: a Muslim who knows the Qur'an by heart —used as a title of respect, so "Hafiz " and then the name.

In the Qur'an, Muhammad is designated as being the final prophet sent to mankind and is hailed as being one of a distinguished line of divinely appointed messengers who were sent to proclaim the message of God's unity. It states:

> *Indeed, those who believe, the Jews, the Christians, and the*
> *Sabians – all those who acknowledge God and the Last Day and*
> *perform good works – will be granted their rewards with their Lord.*
> *Fear shall not affect them, nor shall they grieve (Q. 2.62)*

Confirming the shared spiritual heritage with Judaism and Christianity, the tribulations and triumphs of biblical personalities are also portrayed in the narratives of the Qur'an. Teachings on Jesus emphasize his human nature, although the Qur'an upholds the notion of his immaculate conception and the miracles he performed. However, it rejects the claim that Jesus was the Son of God and also the concept of the divine Trinity; the Qur'an also denies the Crucifixion. Jesus is lauded as a prophet to the Children of Israel, and his mother Mary is held in great esteem, even having a chapter of the Qur'an named after her. It is significant to note that in deference to the sacred status of their revealed scripture, the Qur'an describes Jews and Christians as being 'the People of the Book'.

> Exercise: watch this!

Watch this video from the British Library on the Qur'an

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=44

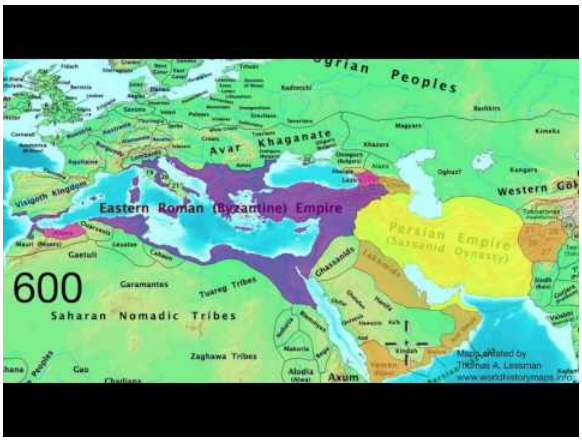
Growth

Over the centuries, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam was spread throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa, into Asia, and beyond. Some of the spread was peaceful and associated with trade and scholarship, art and architecture. Some of the spread of Islam came along with the conquering of lands and other tribes.

Muslim rulers, soldiers, traders, mystics, scholars, poets and architects all contributed to the shaping of distinctive Islamic cultures. Across the expanding Islamic world, religious beliefs began to blend with various cultures and traditions to produce local versions of Islam. Not all ritual and practice was the same from place to place, although the stated beliefs carried through. Various dynasties of powerful families rose, and as they converted to Islam, their tribes or countries converted with them. Trade and the travel of scholars had a large influence on the expansion of the faith.

These two brief videos (each about 8 minutes) will give you a map and some indications of where, when, and how the religion spread. Because it was both a spiritual as well as political expansion, you can often see differences in how things happened and how local populations responded to the new Islamic Empire.

Key Takeaway: The Context for the development of Islam–Khan Academy



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Key Takeaway: The Spread of Islamic Culture

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According to the Harvard Pluralism Project:

> ***Under each of these empires, transregional Islamic culture mixed with local traditions to produce distinctive forms of statecraft, theology, art, architecture, and science. Further, many scholars argue that the European Renaissance would not have been possible without the creativity and myriad achievements of Muslim scholars, thinkers, and civilizations.***

"Basic Beliefs of Islam – God." *Basic Beliefs of Islam: God*, University of Nottingham, England, 26 Jan. 2016, youtu.be/05b1BwNvqCk.

"Islamic Beliefs." *The Pluralism Project*, Harvard University, 2021, pluralism.org/islamic-beliefs.

"Muhammad: The Messenger of God." *The Pluralism Project*, Harvard University, 2021, pluralism.org/muhammad-the-messenger-of-god.

Shah, Mustafa. “The Qur’an.” *British Library: Discovering Sacred Texts*, 2019, www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/the-quran.

“Qur’an: The Word of God.” *The Pluralism Project*, Harvard University, 2021, pluralism.org/qur%E2%80%99an-the-word-of-god.

“Discovering Sacred Texts: Islam.” *Discovering Sacred Texts*, British Library, 2 Oct. 2019, youtu.be/2_CDBv6CICc.

“Islam Introduction.” *British Library*, Discovering Sacred Texts: Islam, 2019, www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/islam-introduction.

“Spread of Islamic CULTURE: World History: Khan Academy.” *Khan Academy*, 26 Apr. 2017, youtu.be/sDSTgKIQAzE.

“Contextualization–Islam | World History | Khan Academy.” *Khan Academy*, 16 June 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=gB7ya6386iA.

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1. Mustafa Shah is a Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). His principal research interests include classical Qurʾanic commentary, ḥadith scholarship, classical theology and Arabic linguistic thought. Among his publications is the collection of articles devoted to Qur’anic exegesis: Tafsīr: Interpreting the Qur’an (Routledge, 2013). He is also joint editor of the Oxford Handbook of Qur’anic Studies (OUP 2019). ↵

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4.5: Muslim Resources

"O mankind! Truly We created you from a male and a female, and We made you peoples and tribes that you may come to know one another. Surely the most noble of you before God are the most reverent of you. Truly God is Knowing, Aware."
— *Qur'an 49:13* (ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr)

Helpful Links

Discovering Sacred Texts: Islam

Alta Lib Guides: Islam

Harvard University's Pluralism Project: Islam

Pew Research Center: Islam

Khan Academy: Islam

The Maydan

Islamic Societies with Ira Lapidus

Islam and the West with John L. Esposito

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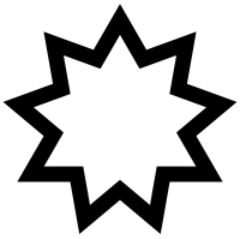
4.6: Baha'i

God grant that the light of unity may envelope the whole earth, and that the seal, ‘the Kingdom is God’s’, may be stamped upon the brow of all its people.

Bahá’u’lláh



Summary

The **Baha’i Faith** originated in 19th-century Iran as a development from Shi’a Islam. As a new monotheistic global religion it emphasized the ‘oneness’ of God, with different faiths representing different approaches to the one religion. The central figure is Mirza Husayn ‘Ali Nuri (1817–1892), who took the title Baha’u’llah, and whose writings represent the latest revelation of the Word of God. He was preceded by Sayyid ‘Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819–1850), the Bab (‘Gate’), whom Baha’is regard as having paved the way for Baha’u’llah.

Both the Bab and Baha’u’llah are termed ‘Manifestations of God’, and are viewed as intermediaries between God and humanity. Baha’u’llah was succeeded by his eldest son ‘Abbas Effendi, known as ‘Abdu’l-Baha (1844–1921) and after him by ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897–1957). Today a nine-man body, the Universal House of Justice, first elected in 1963, is the international governing body of the worldwide Baha’i community.

History and Context

With help from Peter Smith[1] and Moojan Momen[2]:

The Baha’i Faith is a dynamic world religion with several million adherents from a variety of different religious and cultural backgrounds. The central figure of the religion is Baha’u’llah, and Baha’is consider him to be the latest in a series of divine messengers. His writings, which promote peace and unity, are at the heart of the Baha’i Faith. He was born into the Iranian nobility but spent the majority of his life living in exile in the Ottoman Empire due to his involvement with the Babi movement, and later his own claims to divine mission.

Siyyid Mirza Ali-Muhammad Shirazi, known as the Bab

The Babi movement began in Iran during the 1840s and early 1850s. In 1844, a young Shirazi merchant named **Sayyid ‘Ali Muhammad** (1819–1850) had announced that he was the intermediary (the ‘*bab*’ or ‘gate’) between the Shi‘a faithful and the expected messianic figure of the Twelfth Imam, a concept from Shi’a Islam.

The Bab quickly attracted followers (‘Babis’) throughout Iran and the Shi‘a areas of what is now Iraq. He also presented his own book of laws (the *Bayān*) to replace those of Islam, and announced that he would eventually be followed by the further messianic figure of ‘He whom God would make manifest’.

Baha'u'llah

Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri (1817–1892), who became known as 'Baha'u'llah', claimed to be that Twelfth Imam. After a series of religious experiences he wrote a number of major books that provided the Babis with guidance and hope. These works included *Hidden Words*, *Seven Valleys*, and *Book of Certitude.*

Once Baha'u'llah had announced that he was the promised one foretold by the Bab, many Babis accepted him, adopting the name of 'Baha'is', i.e. 'followers of Baha'u'llah'.

The majority of the Báb's followers accepted Baha'u'llah as the Twelfth Imam and became Bahá'ís by the 1870s. Under Baha'u'llah's leadership, an emphasis was place on converting of Shi'ite Muslims to Bahá'i. By the 1880s, Iranian Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians began to convert to being Baha'i. Traveling preachers went to nations surrounding Iran and continued to convert people, the majority converted being Shi'a Muslims.

Baha'u'llah was exiled from Iran in December 1852, after a time in prison after a group of Bábís attempted to assassinate the Shah of Iran. Because of his claims to be the Twelfth Iman, and in some measure due to his growing stature as a religious figure and leader, Baha'u'llah was repeatedly banished. He went from Baghdad to Istanbul to Edirne, a small city in European Turkey, and ultimately, in 1868, to Akka, a prison city in Palestine. There he lived out the rest of his days either in prison or under house arrest. Except for the years 1868-1870, however, Baha'u'llah was able to receive visitors and had the freedom to write.

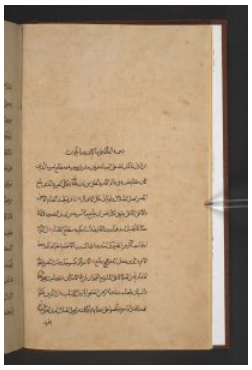
Map of Baha'u'llah's banishment from Iran to ultimately Acre in the Ottoman Empire.

Baha'u'llah died in 1892 at the age of 74. His writings throughout his life are considered divine revelations. The followers considered his revelation the ultimate unfolding of all religions.

The Tablets

Baha'is refer to the works of Baha'u'llah as being the 'Revelation' of the Word of God and to Baha'u'llah's writings (which comprise of letters to individuals and some books) as '**Tablets**'. Over 20,000 unique works by Baha'u'llah have been identified at the Baha'i World Centre, comprising just under seven million words. The Baha'i Faith is a scriptural religion; the current written texts are considered fully authoritative. Oral reports, although they exist, are considered too unreliable to be fully authoritative and are to be discounted completely if they contradict the written text. Most of Baha'u'llah's writings are in a mixture of Arabic and Persian, although there are some that are just in Arabic, some in Persian and some in pure Persian (*farsi-e sareh*, Persian with little or no use of Arabic and other loan words).

As Baha'u'llah spent most of his adult life in exile, remote from the majority of his followers in Iran, his communication with them was mostly through the written word in the form of Tablets, which were often written in response to questions sent by the Baha'is. These would be taken to Iran by a few dedicated couriers and a steady flow of pilgrims who made the arduous journey.



Manuscript copy of Baha'u'llah's most important book, the Kitāb al-aqdas (The Most Holy Book). The copyist is Mulla Zayn al-'Abidin Najafabadi who was given the title Zayn al-Muqarrabin. He made copies of Baha'u'llah's writings for onward transmission to Iran and elsewhere. His copies are highly regarded for their accuracy.

As each Tablet arrived in Iran, it would be studied by its recipient and copies made to distribute to other Baha'is. These Tablets formed the main source of inspiration and guidance for the community, comprising Baha'u'llah's theological, mystical and ethical teachings and laws for the individual; his social teachings; and teachings intended to bring peace and harmony at the global level.

In Iran, when a Tablet arrived in a town or village, the local Baha'is would gather to hear it read out to them and they would consult about it. Copies of it would be made and many of the Baha'is would have bound compilations of these Tablets either written out by themselves or by a local Baha'i with good handwriting.

The Baha'i scriptures encourage individuals to transform themselves from self-centeredness and a desire for wealth and power into individuals with spiritual attributes such as love, justice, patience, trustworthiness and truthfulness. This transformation best occurs when the individual lives a life of service to others; a cohesive interaction of an individual's 'being' and 'doing'. The framework for this endeavor are the laws regarding prayer, fasting and meditation given by Baha'u'llah. The aim is to be of service to the wider society, not just the Baha'i community.

These scriptures also give instructions and guidance for the institutional structure of the Baha'i community. They seek to create communities in which power has been removed from individual members of political and religious hierarchies and given instead to elected councils which operate by a consultative decision making process that Baha'u'llah and his successors have developed. The result is the formation of elected councils (the Spiritual Assemblies at the local and national levels) and the establishment in 1963 of the supreme global elected council of the Baha'i community, the Universal House of Justice.

What do Baha'is believe?

Baha'is emphasize the importance of their own authoritative texts in describing Baha'i beliefs and practices. These comprise of the authenticated writings of Baha'u'llah, considered the 'Word of God', together with the interpretation of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi and the legislation of the Universal House of Justice. The writings of the Bab are relatively neglected, seen as a source of inspiration, but not binding in terms of practice. A substantial 'canon' of authenticated material now exists.

Key Takeaway

"Baha'u'llah's key theme is world unity. The goal of developing a new world society is a paramount need at the present time. Central to the Baha'i Faith is that all human beings are equally God's creation regardless of gender, race, nationality or creed and should be respected and treated without prejudice. It is essential to work for the equality of men and women and the emancipation of minority groups. For the world's peoples and nations to live together in peace, international institutions need to be developed and systems of governance have to promote justice and human wellbeing for all."

The central principles of the Bahá'í Faith are:

- the oneness of God,
- the oneness of religion, and
- the oneness of humanity.

The purposes of life are to know and worship God and to contribute to the advancement of civilization. The teachings of the Bahá'í offer solutions to problems that have been barriers to the achievement of this unity and to the establishment of peace in the world. Because of their affirmation of the divine origin of all faiths, Bahá'ís are actively involved in interfaith dialogue and understanding.

Human beings have the spiritual capacity to recognize God and to follow his teachings as revealed through his messengers. Evil has no independent existence, such as a figurehead of Satan, but consists of rejecting God's teachings and allowing oneself to become immersed in selfish desires.

Baha'is believe that the individual soul survives after the death of the body, but the afterlife is beyond our worldly understanding.

Baha'is believe that we have free will, to turn towards God or reject him. They also believe that true religion is compatible with reason, and the Baha'i teachings encourage people to use their intellect in understanding the world (and religion).

The Bahá'í calendar, originating with the Báb 's ministry in 1844, is a solar calendar divided into nineteen months of nineteen days each with four or five intercalary days to bring the total number of days in the year from 361 to 365 (366 in a leap year). The year begins on the vernal equinox, March 21. The Bahá'í year includes nine holy days, most of which commemorate events in the lives of the Báb and Baha'u'llah, on which Bahá'ís should suspend work. Holy days, like all Bahá'í days, start at sunset and end the following sunset. They are generally celebrated by a worship program followed by refreshments. All holy day observances are open to non-Bahá'ís.

> Example of a Baha'i Calendar

From the Montreal Baha'i Community:

2021-2022 Baha'i Calendar

Near the end of each year, during the Bahá'í month of *'Ala* or "Loftiness," which begins at sunset March 1 and ends at sunset, March 20, Bahá'ís observe a period of fasting. The Bahá'í fast involves abstaining from food, drink, and tobacco from sunrise to sunset each day. Exempted from fasting are those under the age of fifteen or over age seventy; women who are pregnant, nursing or menstruating; travelers; the ill; and those performing heavy physical labor. Bahá'ís often gather at restaurants or in each others' homes to pray and eat before dawn, or to pray and break their fast in the evening. The purpose of the fast is to remember one's dependency on God and to learn detachment from material things.

Baha'u'llah revealed three obligatory prayers. Bahá'ís are under a spiritual obligation to choose one of these prayers and perform it each day. The Long Obligatory Prayer can be said any time within a twenty-four hour period and is repeated only once. The Medium Obligatory Prayer must be repeated three times in a day, once between dawn and noon, once between noon and sunset, and once between sunset and midnight. The Short Obligatory Prayer is said once a day, between noon and sunset. These Obligatory Prayers are always performed in private.

> Example: the texts of the Obligatory Prayers

The Obligatory Prayers

What are the Manifestations of God?

The Baha'i faith is strictly monotheistic. There is only one God, he is exalted above human understanding, so can only be understood and approached via his prophets and messengers (the 'Manifestations of God'). All the major world religions originally stem from the teachings of the Manifestations of God and comprise an essential unity. The Manifestations of God include Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Zoroaster, Krishna and the Buddha, and in the contemporary period, the Bab and Baha'u'llah. There will be more Manifestations in the distant future.

Shrine of the Bab in Haifa, Israel. Commissioned by the Baha'u'llah. Photo by Marco Abra More information at http://www.bahaipictures.com/shrine.htm

Each Manifestation addresses both eternal spiritual truths and the particular needs of his time. These needs change over time, so divine revelation is progressive in nature.

Baha'u'llah's key theme is world unity. Central to the Baha'i Faith is that all human beings are seen as equally God's creation regardless of gender, race, nationality or creed and should be respected and treated without prejudice. It is believed that for the world's peoples and nations to live together in peace, international institutions need to be developed and systems of governance have to promote justice and human wellbeing for all.

Shrine of Baha'u'llah in Akka, Israel. Photo by Marco Abra. For more information, go to http://www.bahaipictures.com/bahji.htm

Baha'is regard each of the prophet founders of the major religions of the world as being the Manifestations of the Names and Attributes of God (Manifestations of God for short). They have a dual station: in their higher reality, they are essentially one; but in their earthly station, they each come with a unique name and a special mission that is related to the time and circumstances of their coming. This can be likened to the series of teachers that a child has at school. Each teacher builds on what the teacher before has taught and the scriptures of each religion can be likened to the textbook that each teacher brings to the child. So each teacher is equally important to the child and they all have the same station.

However, the series of Divine teachers, the Manifestations of God, has no end. Baha'u'llah teaches that he is not the last one. Whenever humanity needs further guidance, a Manifestation of God will be sent, but Baha'u'llah says that this will not be for at

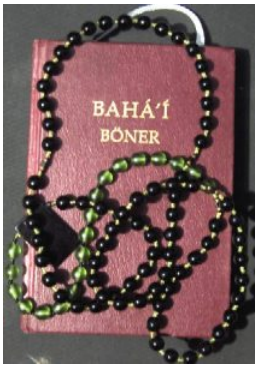
least another one thousand years.

Map of locations of Bahá'í Houses of Worship in the world. Countries with an existing or under construction House of Worship are in green. Countries with a previously existing House of Worship (now destroyed)are Iran and Turkmenistan, also in red. Where known, exact locations are marked with a black dot: •

How is the Baha'i community organized?

Those who are formally members of the Baha'i Faith register with its community organization at a local or national level, and are encouraged to become actively involved with its activities. They also become subject to the provisions of Baha'i law. Religious membership is regarded as a matter of individual choice and should never be compelled. Baha'i community life is structured around their own distinctive calendar.

On the first day of each Baha'i month, the Baha'is in a locality meet together for prayers, consultation on community activities, and a social get-together. They also meet to observe the Baha'i holy days commemorating various significant dates in their history as well as their new year celebration at the March equinox (Spring in the northern hemisphere). Additional meetings may be arranged for study of the Baha'i teachings, prayer and community development. Baha'is have a number of holy sites, some of which they perform pilgrimages to, notably at the present time the shrines of Baha'u'llah, the Bab and 'Abdu'l-Baha, and other places associated with their lives located in the Haifa-Akka area. The Baha'is also have a small number of temples around the world which are used for devotional services and are open to non-Baha'is.



Bahá'í Book of Prayers covered with a Bahá'í chaplet

Baha'i law includes both individual obligations (including daily prayer and observing a nineteen-day sunrise-to-sunset fast prior to the Baha'i new year), and social regulations (including obtaining parental consent for marriage and not getting involved in divisive party politics). Observance of individual obligations is regarded as a matter of personal conscience, but the social laws are obligatory. The Baha'i administration comprises both locally and nationally elected councils ('spiritual assemblies') responsible for the day-to-day management and direction of Baha'i community affairs, and various ranks of teachers (Counsellors, Board Members), who are appointed for fixed terms to encourage and inspire the Baha'is in their efforts, particularly in promulgating their religion. The Universal House of Justice is presently elected every five years by the members of all the Baha'i national councils.

Baha'i World Center. For more information check their website at https://www.bwc.org/

Regular practices of the Baha'i

An assembled crowd sings songs at the National Baha'i Centre in Vientiane, Laos, in August 2009.

The Bahá'í have no clergy, so worship is planned and led by anyone, female or male, young or old. Common elements of worship are the reading or chanting of scripture, music, and prayers. Music that is written to be performed in a worship context usually incorporates passages from the Bahá'í scriptures, and is acapella. Contemporary American Baha'i music now incorporates many genres, including jazz, blues, hip hop and gospel.

Key Takeaway: an example of a Baha'i house of worship

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=46

The Bahá'í tradition does not require weekly worship services, but instead a regular gathering known as a **Nineteen Day Feast**. Generally held on the first evening of each Bahá'í month, or once every nineteen days. It is open only to Bahá'ís.

Another tradition is a **Fireside**. This is usually an event in a home, where people are invited to come and learn more about Baha'i and to socialize.

Study circles, social activities, education of youth and service are all components of Baha'i life.

The spread and development of the Baha'i Faith

After Baha'u'llah's death, the Baha'is turned to his eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, known as 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921), and after him to 'Abdu'l-Baha's eldest grandson Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897–1957). Shoghi Effendi was childless so after a brief 'inter-

regnum', a nine-man elected body, the Universal House of Justice, was formed in 1963. Referred to repeatedly in the Baha'i writings, the Universal House of Justice remains the Baha'is' ruling body up to the present-day.

Beginning in the 1890s, the Baha'is began to attract a wider following outside of the are and faith of its origin. Baha'i teachers who settled in North America found a receptive audience for the Baha'i message and a number of active Baha'i groups were established. American Baha'is in turn spread the Baha'i teachings to Europe. These developments were greatly welcomed by 'Abdu'l-Baha, who wrote extensively to the new Western Baha'is addressing their concerns, and himself made lengthy visits to the West in 1911–1913. In turn, Shoghi Effendi organized campaigns of expansion to the rest of the world, and since the 1950s, an expansion into many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia has occurred. There are now Baha'i communities in almost every country in the world, and Baha'is are drawn from all religious backgrounds and ethnicities.

Bahá'í beliefs and ideas were brought to the United States by immigrants from the Middle East. One of them, Ibrahim George Kheiralla, an Arab Christian from what is today Lebanon, became a Bahá'í in 1889 while living in Egypt. Kheiralla arrived in Chicago in spring of 1894 and was giving classes to interested people in the area. The majority of converts who found the messages and beliefs in universal peace and the oneness of all religion appealing to them were middle- and working-class white Protestant Christians.

American growth of Baha'i was slowed by the World War I and by continued uncertainty about basic Bahá'í teachings. But continuing effort meant that by 1925 the organization of small gatherings had evolved into the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. Although the growth rate slowed, and was never very fast, the American Bahá'í community has continued to increase. By 2013 the membership was approximately 171,000. Immigration added to the numbers more than conversion.

From 1975 to 1980 as many as 10,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian Bahá'ís settled in the United States. In the late 1970s and the 1980s they were joined by 10,000-12,000 Iranian Bahá'ís, who fled persecution after Islamic government took power in Iran.

The Bahá'í community has a serious commitment to the abolition of racism, the development of society, and the establishment of world peace. It has increasingly expressed its commitments through a series of core activities devoted to empowering youth of all ages and adults to make changes in their own neighborhoods and villages.

> Example of Baha'i thought in current times

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=46

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1. Now semi-retired, Associate Professor Peter Smith founded and for many years chaired the Social Science Division at Mahidol University International College, Thailand, where he still teaches courses on the History of Social and Political Thought and on Modern World History. He has published extensively on Baha’i Studies, including An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) and A Concise Encyclopedia of the Baha’i Faith (Oneworld). He holds a PhD in the Sociology of Religion from the University of Lancaster in England. ↵
2. Dr. Moojan Momen was born in Iran, but was raised and educated in England, attending the University of Cambridge. He has a special interest in the study of Shi`i Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and more recently the study of the phenomenon of religion. His principal publications in these fields include: Introduction to Shi`i Islam; The Phenomenon of Religion (republished as Understanding Religion); Understanding the Baha’i Faith; and The Baha'i Communities of Iran (1851–1921). He has contributed articles to encyclopaedias such as Encyclopedia Iranica and Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World as well as papers to many academic journals. ↵

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4.7: Baha'i Resources

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Baha'i Resources

In reality all are members of one human family – children of one Heavenly Father. Humanity may be likened unto the vari-coloured flowers of one garden. There is unity in diversity. Each sets off and enhances the other's beauty.

'Abdu'l-Baha, *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy*

Helpful Links

British Library: Sacred Texts/Baha'i

Harvard University's Pluralism Project: Baha'i

Alta Lib Guides: Baha'i

The Baha'i Faith

Sacred Texts Archive: Baha'i

The Baha'i World

Baha'i Reference Library

Baha'i World Heritage Site

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4.8: Judaism

a close-up photo of the Shema inscription on the Knesset Menorah in Jerusalem.

Judaism is the oldest monotheistic religion in our world. There have been and are those who argue for Hinduism being monotheistic, and those who point to Egyptian Akhenaten as leading the brief monotheistic sect of Aten worship. But there are arguments against each of these being true monotheistic faiths, and for the most part, scholars agree that it is Judaism that introduces real monotheism–the worship of only one god–to the organized world religions.

Video 1: Judaism Through Its Scriptures. Learn about the key beliefs and practices of Judaism through an examination of its sacred texts and their interpretation.

The history of the Jews can be divided into four general periods of time

In the **first** period in the early history of the Hebrew people included nomadic and tribal life. There are various important events in the lives of these people, most of which we have no real historic or archaeological proof of being factual. These are elemental stories that inspire and show a covenant between the people and God, however, and the point of the stories is not really to be history, but to be inspirational. Early Jews followed various prophets from Abraham and his sons and grandsons, all the way to Moses and Joshua, and the tribes eventually found a homeland in what is now called Israel/Palestine.

This first period is marked with the milestones of establishing first a tribal confederacy with judges ruling, eventually a kingly dynasty, the establishment of a capital in Jerusalem, and the first temple for sacrificial worship. The three great kings in Jewish tradition are Saul, David and Solomon. The approximate dates for this royal dynasty are **1020 to 922 BCE.** These kings might more closely resemble tribal chieftains than European royals, but they were war leaders and lead a united kingdom of the tribes. After the reign of Solomon ended, the nation of Israel divided into two due to civil war, and after this the north was still called Israel, and the south, was then called Judah. The first historic indicator that we have indicating the factual reality of a nation called Israel comes from an Egyptian artifact called the Merneptah Stele, found at a dig in 1896 CE. On this item, which is a celebratory marker which writes about Merneptah conquering various neighboring nations, is found the name of the nation of Israel. The stele dates to 1208 BCE, and firmly establishes some kind of timeline for the nation's existence. Although the texts talks about virtually eradicating Israel from existence, that clearly is an exaggeration.

A **second** period began between the eighth to the sixth century BCE when the kingdom of Assyria conquered northern Israel ion about 722 BCE, and then the kingdom of Judah and its first temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and the people were forced into a fifty-year exile in Babylon starting in about 596 BCE. Although there were many Jews forced to leave Judah, the majority of those so exiled were the educated, skilled, and upper classes of the Jewish people. Peasants, farmers, and those at a distance from population centers did not leave the country. This caused some rifts in the Hebrew people over time, especially when the exiles returned to Israel. This event called the Exile, however, led to the emergence of the synagogue style of worship instead of temple sacrifices, as the people in exile had no temple to use, and prompted putting religious law and history into a written form to guarantee its survival. Oral tradition translated into written materials, and we see psalms, the Torah, and other bits of writing coming from that era.

A second temple was eventually built in Jerusalem when the exiles were allowed to return home to Israel from Babylon. They began writing down in more permanent form what is now the first half of the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures. Influences from the surrounding cultures entered into Jewish life both before and after this era. From the Babylonians came Zoroastrian ideas, such as the dualism of heaven and hell, and later the appeal of Hellenistic/Greek culture impacted Jewish worship and practice. Tensions arose because of differing ideas and practices in Judaism, and the differences between accepting and rejecting of these foreign influences led to the rise of Jewish factions after 165 BCE. These groups included the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Zealots, and the Essenes, who assembled the Dead Sea Scrolls. This period also saw the growth of the Diaspora, Jewish communities established outside the land of Israel.

The **third** period was initiated in the Common Era when the second temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, as they violently put down a Jewish rebellion against the Roman occupation of Jewish land. This destruction of both the city and the temple ended the power of the temple priesthood, as sacrificial rituals were no longer possible, and forced the religion to move toward a greater focus on scripture. The Hebrew canon (the established list of books in the Hebrew scriptures) was finalized and

commentaries about them were written in the next several hundred years. Classical Judaism and traditional Jewish life were also established during this time. Great communities of Jewish people in the Diaspora (non-Israeli lands) both flourished and endured persecution, mainly at the hands of European Christians. Considered “Christ Killers” by the Catholic and eventually Protestant churches, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Pogroms, and much general restriction and persecution took place during the entire Christian Era (post 30 CE). The Nazi era was actually preceded by hundreds of years of killing, persecution and hatred aimed at the Jewish people.

The **fourth** and final period, called the Reform Period, began in about 1800 CE as a response to the European Enlightenment. It was a time to question and modernize traditional Judaism, and it helped produce diverse branches within Judaism today, which hold differing views on Jewish identity and practice. The standard branches of Judaism came to be–the Orthodox, the Conservative, and coming out of the more academic and liberal wing of Judaism, the Reform Jews. These three became identifiable branches of the faith, with the Reconstructionist Jewish group coming about in the late 20th century CE. Centuries of persecution reached a climax with the Holocaust under the reign of Adolf Hitler. One-third of all Jews in the world were killed. Shortly after the end of World War II, the nation of Israel was born. Zionism, which is the concept of returning Jews to a Jewish homeland in what had been historic Israel, was born in the 3rd period, and came to full fruition in the 4th period with the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. The centuries of conflict between the monotheistic faiths, between Europe and the Middle East, and between people who had lived in the Palestine/Israel area for many years, and those who immigrated there and bought land has continued to this day.

Judaism and their Sacred Texts

Judaism is often associated with its most important writings. The Hebrew Bible contains a variety of material that records interactions and responses between the people and a God who is portrayed in complex ways, perhaps reflecting different ancient traditions that were ultimately combined. The scriptures are divided into three parts.

First is the **Torah,** the sacred core of five books containing stories of the Creation, Adam and Eve, a Great Flood, the Hebrew patriarchs and matriarchs, and Moses, the great liberator and lawgiver. It includes laws about religious ritual and daily conduct, including the Ten Commandments.

Video: Discovering Sacred Texts: Judaism

The Torah

We look at the major scripture of Judaism–the Torah–with assistance from Maryanne Saunders[1], writing for the British Library, The entire text of the article on the Torah can be read here at The Torah:

Jewish boy holding a scroll with the names of Holocaust death camps and slave labor camps at his Bar Mitzvah.

Torah (תורה) in Hebrew can mean teaching, direction, guidance and law. The most prominent meaning for Jews is that the Torah constitutes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (also called the Pentateuch, 'five books' in Greek), traditionally thought to have been composed by Moses. These sacred texts are written on a scroll and kept in a synagogue. Sometimes the word Torah is used to refer to the whole Hebrew Bible (or ***Tanakh***) which additionally contains *Nevi'im* (נביאים), which means Prophets, and *Ketuvim* (כתובים) meaning Writings. Torah can also refer to wider scriptural commentaries (*Talmud*) and even all Jewish religious knowledge. It is in this sense that Jews will often speak of the importance of living a life guided by Torah.

Example: the 10 Commandments

1. I am the Lord thy god, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
2. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the **Sabbath** day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet anything that belongs to thy neighbor.

These five books are the same five books that make up the start of the Christian Bible. The Torah text can be written out by a scribe in Hebrew onto a scroll and used

Reading of the Torah, Aish Synagogue, Tel Aviv, Israel.

in public prayer services or printed in books for individuals and congregations to study. The Torah has central importance in Jewish life, ritual and belief. Some Jews believe that Moses received the Torah from God at Mount Sinai, whilst others believe that the text was written over a long period of time by multiple authors. The scroll must also be written entirely in Hebrew with no vowels or indication of how the words are pronounced. This means that readers must have existing knowledge of the Torah to identify what each word means, emulating the texts and scholars as they were millennia ago. The text within is divided up into fifty-four portions, so that one (or sometimes two) can be read per week for a year, before starting again on a holiday called ***Simchat Torah*** ('Rejoicing with the Torah'). Scrolls are generally required to be made out of animal skins and can take up to two years to produce, mainly due to the rules against erasing any of the words – which means that the scribe cannot make a single mistake without starting again. It was not until the 4th century BCE that the Torah became a holy object reserved for public readings. The text of the Torah would have originally been written down on papyrus scrolls to be studied and discussed by scholars. It is only after the Babylonian Exile in 444 BCE as the Jews returned to Israel, that Ezra the scribe is recorded as having read aloud from the five books of Moses (Nehemiah 8).

Page pointers for reading of Torah, El Transito Synagogue, Spain.

Traditionally, the Torah is read four times a week in the synagogue: at the Sabbath (Saturday) morning and afternoon services and in the morning service on Mondays and Thursdays. Additional readings may occur on high holy days such as *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) or *Rosh Hashana* (New Year). Many synagogues are in possession of more than one scroll, but all are housed in the Ark, a large cabinet positioned to face Jerusalem. As a sign of the sacred status of the Torah, the scroll is often covered with a decorative mantle. As well as being covered, the Torah is not read without a pointer to highlight and direct the reader. Hands don't touch the surface, but instead a silver or bone pointer is used.

The Torah is chanted in the synagogue by the rabbi, the cantor (singing leader) or a person who has been called up to the *bimah* (an honour called *Aliyah*).

> Example: Psalm 23

Cantor and senior Rabbi Angela Buchdahl from Central Synagogue, New York City

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=40

Whether there is any musical accompaniment depends on the denomination of the synagogue: for example, in Orthodox congregations the singing is in classical Hebrew, unaccompanied and without a microphone; on the other hand, in Reform synagogues there may be a choir, musical instruments and vernacular language used.

Another way in which the denomination of a synagogue may affect services is the degree to which women are included. In Orthodox and some conservative congregations, women are seated separately from men, in a gallery or behind a screen. In these congregations it is less likely that a woman would be permitted to go up to the *bimah*, read from or even touch the Torah scroll. On the other hand, Liberal, Reform and other synagogues allow women to be ordained as rabbis, lead prayer services and sit with whomever they please.

The Talmud

The Talmud is a set of writings about faith, and how to live the law. The Talmud, meaning 'teaching' is an ancient text containing Jewish sayings, ideas and stories. It includes the **Mishnah** (oral law) and the **Gemara** ('Completion'). The Mishnah is a large collection of sayings, arguments and counter-arguments that touch on virtually all areas of life. The Gemara is known as a 'sea' of learning, a collection of stories about biblical characters, sober legal arguments and fanciful imaginings of the world of old and the world to come.

Babylonian Talmud, vol XXII, Masechet Sanhedrin, Edit. & Print A.J. Menkes & S. Sprechner, Lwow (Lemberg) 1864

The Talmud developed in two major centers of Jewish scholarship: Babylonia and Palestine. The Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud was completed about 350 CE, and the Babylonian Talmud (the more complete and authoritative) was written down about 500 CE, but was further edited for another two centuries. The Talmud served as the basis for all codes of rabbinic law.

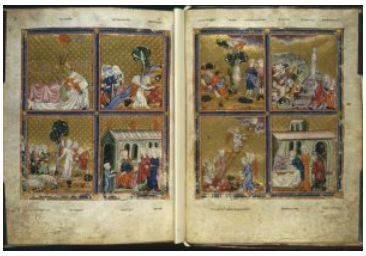
From the Palestinian tradition of Jewish worship came the Ashkenazi rite used in Western and Eastern Europe and Russia. From the Babylonian tradition came the Sephardi rite followed in Spain, Portugal, North Africa, and the Middle East. Both rites, as well as some others, are still practiced in Orthodox Jewish communities worldwide.

Coming to grips with a Talmudic text can be demanding. While it is possible to read a page of the Bible in a matter of minutes, depending on the difficulty, a page of Talmud may take an hour or considerably more to go through with understanding.

Traditionally it is studied with a partner or 'friend' in order to recreate the internal arguments and make sure that the subject in question, whether marriage, business ethics, capital punishment, property law or dietary regulations, has been examined from every conceivable angle.

Judaism centers on a way of life that recognizes the presence of God and the holiness of human life. Beyond embracing the Ten Commandments, the most obvious examples are keeping the Sabbath, observing holy days and festivals, and following dietary practices. Judaism is known for its strong moral and ethical orientation and a focus on everyday life that has led to major contributions in multiple fields that serve humanity, such as medicine and law. There is considerably less emphasis on an afterlife.

The Haggadah



The Golden Haggadah, internal pages showing Passover story

The *Haggadah*, which literally means 'telling', is the Hebrew service book used in Jewish homes on Passover eve to commemorate the Israelites' miraculous liberation from hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt. Its text is a collection of biblical passages, blessings, legends and rituals arranged into an orderly sequence. The *Haggadah* is used primarily to teach the young in families about the continuity of the Jewish people and their unflinching faith in God, as summed up in one of its verses:

> *"And thou shall tell thy son in that day, saying: it is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt". (Exodus 13. 8)*

The *Haggadah* has long inspired artists and remains one of the most frequently illustrated texts in Jewish life. Perhaps because it was mainly intended for use at home, and its purpose was educational, Jewish scribes and artists felt completely free to illustrate the Haggadah. Indeed it was traditionally the most lavishly decorated of all Jewish sacred writings, giving some well-to-do Jews of the middle ages a chance to demonstrate their wealth and good taste as well as their piety through owning elaborate, sometimes gilded versions of the Haggadah.

Passover plate with ritual elements that include a bone shank, an egg, horse radish, bitter herbs, vegetable, salt water and charoset (apple, nut, and spice mixture)

Passover commemorates one of the most important events in the story of the Jewish people. Like Christianity and Islam, Judaism traces its origins back to Abraham. He was leader of the Israelites, a group of nomadic tribes in the Middle East some 4,000 years ago. Abraham is said to have established a religion that distinguished itself from other local beliefs by having only one, all-powerful God – a God who chose the Jews to be an example to the whole world.

The Israelites became slaves in Egypt, after they came there, according to the story of Joseph, because there was famine in the land of Israel. Eventually, a prophet called Moses delivered the Jews from their captivity with the help of several miraculous events intended to intimidate the Egyptian authorities. The last of these was the sudden death of the eldest son in every family. Jewish households were spared by smearing lambs' blood above their doors – a sign telling the 'angel of death' to pass over.

Synagogue Worship and Rituals in Judaism

With some assistance from Rabbi Johnny Solomon[2], we read more about rituals and holidays within Judaism:

Individual prayer with shawl and tefillin

Prayer is a part of Jewish life. Rather than prayer being solely personal, as we find in some few prayers in the Torah, it became, after the Diaspora, primarily a communal activity; and rather than worship being spontaneous, it had become highly prescriptive. Collective prayer overtook individual ritual worship. Temple worship often involved one person or one family bringing a sacrifice for prayers. As synagogues developed, prayer turned into a primary activity, and focused on the needs of the congregation.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Ezekiel wrote:

> *"Although I have removed them far off among the nations, and although I have scattered them among the peoples, still, I have provided them with a miniature sanctuary in the countries where they have been exiled" (Ezekiel 11. 16)*

Some have understood this to be a reference to the institution of the synagogue. First, while the Jewish people were exiled in Babylon, and later, after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 CE, there was no way for the people to perform tradition rituals. So during both of these times, new activities emerged.

Since the destruction of the temple, the rabbis placed much emphasis on the value of collective worship by speaking about verbal prayer as a replacement for sacrifices (see Hosea 14. 3), by invoking biblical verses such as 'in the multitude of people is the king's glory' (Proverbs 14. 28) and by stating that while private prayer may not always be heard, communal prayer is always heard.

Various rituals in Judaism emerged. Upon waking up in the morning, a Jew recites a prayer. They then wash their hands in a ritual manner and recite a blessing; even the manner in which they get dressed can be informed by Jewish laws and values.

Beyond additional prayers recited at meal times, the home was, and is, also the place

Complete circumcision set, consisting of knife, enamel powderbox and protecting plate. Knife handle shows Judith with the head of Holophernes in one hand and a sword in the other. This circumcision-set was bought from Mrs. Goitein, widow of the late Rabbi Goitein from Karlsruhe, (Baden, Germany).

for a variety of Jewish rituals, such as the circumcision of Jewish boys that takes place – ideally – when they are eight days old. For girls, naming and dedication ceremonies developed to take place when the baby was that same age.

Beyond this, while the synagogue and the home reflected the different aspects of formal and informal, and public and private worship, a third institution played critical role in Jewish communities for the past 2,000 years – namely, the house of study. The book of Joshua relates how Torah should be studied day and night (Joshua 1. 8). In every village, town or city where Jews lived, the study house would be where Jews (although historically this refers primarily to male Jews) would gather to study sacred texts such as the *Talmud*, or listen to lectures delivered by leading rabbinical scholars exploring legal or ethical teachings.

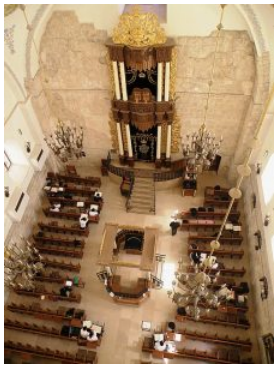
Various community holidays also emerged, as Jewish life become more formalized.

All Jewish holidays begin the evening before the date specified. This is because they believe that a day begins and ends at sunset. In reading the story of creation in Genesis 1, it says, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." From this it is

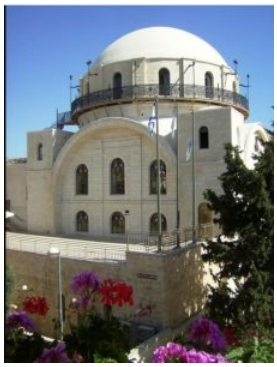
concluded that a day begins with evening, that is, at sunset. In addition, the Jewish calendar is lunar, with each month beginning on the new moon. So the dates of holidays vary, depending on the moon cycle. The most commonly celebrated holidays include:

- **Rosh Hashanah**, the Jewish New Year
- **Yom Kippur**, the Day of Atonement, asking for forgiveness and repairing relationships (see this reflection on repair: Repair)
- **Passover**, the 8 day festival in the spring, celebrating the Exodus–the rescue from Egyptian slavery, led by Moses
- **Hanukkah**, a minor holiday that commemorates the miraculous victory of the Maccabees and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. NOT the equivalent of Christmas!
- **Purim**, the carnival style celebration of foiling an attempt to kill Persian Jews

Other holidays include celebration of harvest, of the end of the year reading of the Torah, bar and bat mitzvahs (coming of age ceremonies for children) and other community activities.



Interior, Hurva Synagogue, Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem



Exterior, Hurva Synagogue, Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem

Many people have heard the term **Kosher**, but apply it more in slang terms to mean “genuine” or “legitimate”. In Jewish ritual, however, the concept of something being Kosher describes food that meets the standards of *kashrut*, which is a set of laws dealing with what foods can and cannot be eaten, and how they are to be prepared. The term Kosher is also used to describe ritual objects that are made in accordance with Jewish law and are fit for ritual use.

Although the details of *kashrut* are extensive, the laws all derive from a few fairly simple, straightforward rules[3]:

1. Animals allowed to be eaten must have cloven hooves. This includes addax, antelope, bison, cow, deer, gazelle, giraffe, goat, ibex and sheep. In addition, kosher meat and poultry require special preparation. Birds allowed, at least in the US, are duck, turkey, chicken and goose. Fish must have a specific kind of scale and skin in order to be eaten. Pork and shellfish are specifically forbidden.
2. Of the animals that may be eaten, the birds and mammals must be killed in accordance with Jewish law and using kosher equipment.
3. All blood must be drained from the meat or broiled out of it before it is eaten.
4. Certain parts of permitted animals may not be eaten, such as the back half of the cow, some internal organs where removing the blood is almost impossible, etc.

5. Meat (the flesh of birds and mammals) cannot be eaten with dairy. Fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables and grains can be eaten with either meat or dairy. According to some views, however, fish may not be eaten with meat.
6. Cooking equipment that has come into contact with meat may not be used in cooking with dairy, and vice versa. Utensils that have come into contact with non-kosher food may not be used with kosher food.
7. Grape products made by non-kosher processes may not be consumed. This include jellies, pastries, juice and wine.

Keeping a kosher lifestyle and kitchen is considered a sign of obedience, even while some believe that these were early health restrictions, eating kosher is considered a sign of faith. Not all Jews follow the dietary laws, but all Orthodox and many Conservative Jewish people do.

Basic Beliefs

The earliest nomadic Hebrews were polytheistic, believing, as many groups in the Middle East did, in various deities representing different forces of nature such as fertility, agriculture, sun, rain, and so on. Eventually, however, early Hebrew prophets began to speak of just one God as the creator of all. Early Biblical authors gave God names such as *Elohim* (gods), *Adonai* (my lord), El Shaddai, (God almighty) and the tricky YHWH, which comes from the same root as the verb “to be,” sometimes written in English as *Yahweh*. God says, “I am who I am” in Exodus, when Moses asks for a name to use. It has also been translated as “I will be who I will be” or “I will become who I choose to become”. This intangible nature of God is part of the both immanent and transcendent nature of the divine in Jewish thought.

> Example: one image of the divine

A coin from Gaza in Southern Philista, fourth century BC, the period of the Jewish subjection to the last of the Persian kings, has the only known representation of this Hebrew deity. The letters YHW are incised just above the hawk(?) which the god holds in his outstretched left hand, Fig. 23. He wears a himation, leaving the upper part of the body bare, and sits upon a winged wheel. The right arm is wrapped in his garment. At his feet is a mask. Because of the winged chariot and mask it has been suggested that Yaw had been identified with Dionysus on account of a somewhat similar drawing of the Greek deity on a vase where he rides in a chariot drawn by a satyr. The coin was certainly minted under Greek influence, and consequently others have compared Yaw on his winged chariot to Triptolemos of Syria, who is represented on a wagon drawn by two dragons. It is more likely that Yaw of Gaza really represents the Hebrew, Phoenician and Aramaic Sun-god, El, Elohim, whom the monotheistic tendencies of the Hebrews had long since identified with Yaw…Sanchounyathon…based his history upon Yerombalos, a priest of Yeuo, undoubtedly the god Yaw, who is thus proved to have been worshipped at Gebal as early as 1000 BC.

According to prophecy and stories throughout the early parts of the Bible, the God the Hebrews encountered was all-powerful and benevolent, merciful and just. Hebrew writings do not represent God in any visual way, but describe this god as a universal God, engaged in a lasting relationship with humankind and in a more specific covenant with the people of Israel. Various leaders and prophets have spoken about this relationship, and are honored–Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Leah and Rachel (the patriarchs and matriarchs) as well as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many more.

The ancient Hebrews write in Exodus about the laws that came directly from God. We see this in both the 10 Commandments, well known to the world, but also in the development of more detailed laws regulating Jewish life, ritual, and worship. According to the Hebrew people, God is not abstract or distant, but is actively involved in history through revelation and as the people do or do not live out their covenant with God. Throughout Jewish history, the common thread has been God’s relationship with humanity. It is a covenant based on centuries of tradition, belief and ritual.

There is a belief in the existence of human free will, which is what determines good and evil, and this idea leads ultimately to a belief in human freedom and dignity.

Judaism is not a missionary religion. It accepts converts, but it is up to individual congregations and their process as to how that would work.

Traditionally, the Jewish people live in expectation of the coming of a Messianic Age in which universal peace will be established on earth according to the vision of the prophets of Israel.

The Samaritan's logo: Shma Israel in Samaritan ancient letters (kind of ancient Hebrew). Shaped as flame

One is judged by one's actions–one lives the faith and tradition by deeds, not be claiming a creed of any sort. The basic statement of faith is the Shema'–"Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One". Shema means, literally, "listen, heed, hear and do".

A summary is stated well by the Harvard Pluralism Project:

> *"Jews today continue to pride themselves on the fact that the ethical monotheism of Judaism is the basic building block of Western religion. The idea of one God unites broad human communities historically, religiously, and culturally to the present day."*

Key Takeaway: One more Food for Jewish Thought

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1. Maryanne Saunders is a PhD candidate in the Theology and Religious Studies Department, King's College London. Her research interest is religious modern and contemporary art with a particular focus on gender and sexuality. ↵
2. Rabbi Johnny Solomon is a lecturer in Jewish Thought and Jewish Law and an independent Jewish education consultant to numerous Jewish schools and adult education programs. He has written numerous articles about contemporary Jewish law and trends in contemporary Orthodoxy, and he is currently completing his first book exploring the relevance of the 'Sheheheyanu' blessing. ↵
3. If you want more extensive information, this page at the Orthodox Union website will help: https://oukosher.org/the-kosher-primer/ ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Tribal Traditions- Africa, Australia and the Americas

5.1: History, Beliefs, Rituals, Legends

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5.1: History, Beliefs, Rituals, Legends

The Anishinaabe, the Inca/Quechua, the Yoruba, the Indigenous Australians

The Anishinaabe

Pow-wow dancers at Grand Portage National Monument

The Ojibwe, also known as Chippewa, refer to themselves in their original language as the *Anishinaabe*, or "the people." The term Ojibwe comes from what other tribes called the Anishinaabe people, and means "puckered", which refers to the toes of the moccasins that the Anishinaabe people made and wore. The term Chippewa is just a variation of the pronunciation of the word Ojibwe.

Numbering more than more than 170,000 in the United States and more than 160,00 in Canada, the Ojibwe people are a network of independent bands or tribes, knit together by a shared language, culture, and traditional clan system, and inhabiting the Western Great Lakes region of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ontario, and Manitoba. The Anishinaabe are culturally related to other peoples of the Northeast Woodlands and linguistically related to other peoples of the Algonkian language family.[1]

History and Belief

According to oral history, the people who eventually became known as the Anishinaabe originated on the east coast of North America, and because of a series of prophecies, they traveled by various routes to the western Great Lakes area, both north and south of the lakes. These prophecies came to be known as the Seven Fires. The Seven Fires Prophecies make for vivid and interesting listening: Seven Fires Prophecies

The religious beliefs and activities of the Anishinaabe can vary from place to place, and clan to clan, but are all based on a profound respect for life and the gifts of life.

Beliefs include:

- understanding the *manidoog* (sometimes spelled *manitous*), the spirits, or "mysteries." The *manidoog* are the sources of life and existence. All things have spirit–plants, animals, the earth, as well as people.
- gratitude to the Giche Manidoo, "Great Spirit" or "Great Mystery." The Anishinaabe are basically monotheistic, although some also refer to Mother Earth as worthy of reverence. Mother Earth is considered both the physical manifestation of all physical creation, and also of the Great Spirit Gitche Manidoo who created it.
- praying to the spirits is important, asking for health, expressing gratitude, looking for assistance in troubles, rejoicing, naming children, and much more. Prayer takes many forms, but is often accompanied by one or more of these– smoke, drums, singing and dance.
- Elders are respected for their wisdom and knowledge. The clan system revers these wise ones, and various behaviors indicating respect are part of daily life.
- Women are respected as bearers of life, and protectors of water.
- A key value includes walking in harmony with the world, connected to all parts of the land, with no separation between sacred and secular.

As with many indigenous peoples, the immigrant Europeans tried to impose their lifestyle, beliefs, and manners on the tribes of the Americas. With the Ojibwe, this took the form of removing them from their land, forcing them into individual land ownership and farming instead of communal land ownership and hunting/gardening, and various forms of forced assimilation. For decades Ojibwe children were removed from their homes and send to "boarding schools" in order to lose their native identities, languages and

practices. Learning about these schools, and the graveyards now being discovered across Canada and the US is crucial to understanding some of the suffering still being experienced in Ojibwe culture.

> A story: Catholic Boarding School in Wisconsin
>
> One woman's story of her mother's experience in a school, and the impact on her life, the life of her children, and her legacy. The Atlantic is a subscription publication, but allows for a few free articles a month.
>
> Death by Civilization: the traumatic legacy of native boarding schools

The tribe local to the the author's home is the Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe, and is primarily located in Cloquet, Minnesota. Before white settlers arrived here, the band lived in an area in Duluth now key to commercial shipping, and with access to both the large natural harbor and to Lake Superior, called *Gichigami*. More in depth stories about the lives and history of the people who originally lived at this western end of Lake Superior can be found here: Onigamiinising Dibaajimowinan

> *The Fond du Lac Band is one of six Chippewa Indian Bands that make up the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Fond du Lac Reservation was established by the La Pointe Treaty of 1854. Archaeologists, however, maintain that ancestors of the present day Chippewa (Ojibwe) have resided in the Great Lakes area since 800 A.D. Today, our Band includes over 4,200 members. The Ojibwe name for the Fond du Lac Reservation is "Nagaajiwanaang", which means "where the water stops".*[2]

Local life of the Anishinaabe is seen in many places around the city, including at American Indian Community Housing Organization, at art galleries in the area, both at the University of Minnesota and at the AICHO Galleries, in the Lake Superior Ojibwe Gallery, and in many public parks, as increasingly the debt owed to the Anishinaabe is becoming clearer. Local colleges offer language and history courses, and local authors bring materials to local readers. Onigamiising is a set of essays on life in Duluth as an Ojibwe.

Lyz Jaakola is an Ojibwe member of the Fond du Lac Band and well known musician in the area. Hear her comments on the ongoing struggle for health in the community, and her composition for healing.

Healing Music: Lyz Jaakola

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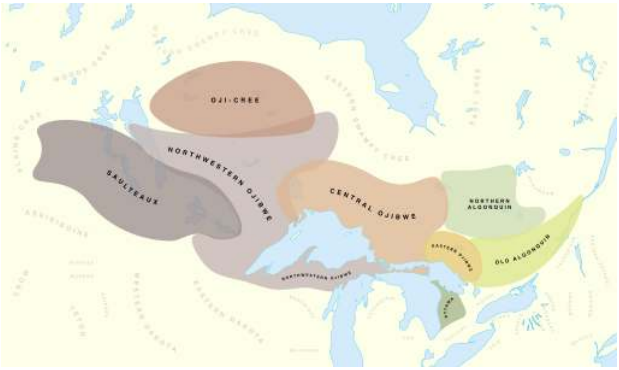
Location

Whether one accepts the oral tradition of the Seven Fires or not, both Ojibwe oral history and a number of archaeological finds indicate that these people moved from the east coast to the upper midwest over several centuries. It is well documented that by the time the French fur traders and various explorers arrived in the Great Lakes area in the early 1600s, the Ojibwe were well established as far west as Sault Ste. Marie, Madeleine Island at the northern tip of Wisconsin, and into Minnesota.

One of the larger tribes in North America, the Ojibwe live in both the United States and Canada and occupy land primarily around the western Great Lakes, tribes being located in Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ontario. The Ojibwe tribes who moved into the plains area of North Dakota and north into Canada are known as the Saulteaux.



pre-contact Anishinaabe map from Information derived from R. E. Asher and Christopher Moseley's Atlas of the World's Languages, 2nd edition, 2007

Lifestyle

The Ojibwe have historically lived in heavily forested areas, rich with lakes, rivers, and swamps. Activities in their originally semi-nomadic lives have included:

- hunting, usually for bear, deer, moose and various birds
- fishing, by spear, hook, and in all seasons, including ice fishing in the winter
- maple sugar and syrup production
- harvesting wild rice, the "food that grows on water", which was prophesied for them long before their arrival in the Great Lakes area
- gathering, but also some gardening

These activities continue in modern life, with increasing attention being paid to former treaties that guarantee that these activities may continue on tribal lands.

Example–Wild ricing in northern Minnesota

Manoominikewag

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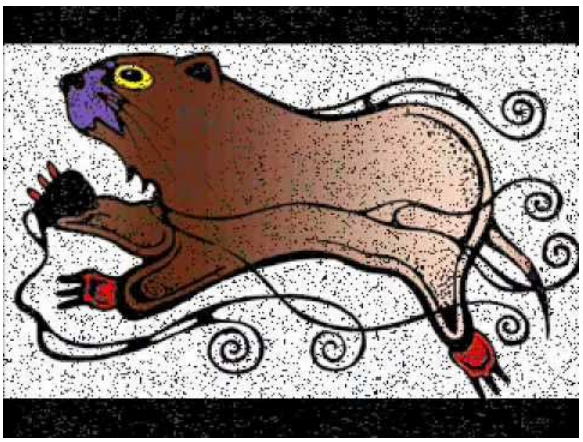
Ritual

Various rituals relating to spirituality have developed over the centuries among the Anishinaabe. These may include:

- smudging–usually using one of 4 herbs–tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass-smoke is created to surround and cover a place, a person, a thing, or a situation for purity, cleansing, hope
- sweat lodges–small constructions with heated rocks to are constructed and used by people in a way that causes deep sweats. Adding to this prayers and ritual on the interior provides healing, direction, or other ways of connecting with the spirit
- vision quests–a time of fasting and solitude arranged so that young people might find their purpose, direction
- pow-wows–held for many reasons, these times of dance, eating, and ceremony are a community event for rejoicing, naming of children, supporting sobriety, community health
- drumming circles–the drums speak through the drummers. The drummers allow the voice of the spirit to come to the people through the drums
- sacred pipes–not Peace Pipes, which is a European phrase, but a carefully held and prepared pipe is used for prayer; as the smoke rises , so do the prayers
- Midewiwin (Medicine Lodge)–composed of healers and spiritual leaders, this is a fairly guarded set of knowledge that allows those trained in this knowledge to support the community in body and soul
- gift exchanges–connecting with community through giving

> The Anishinaabe Creation story



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The Inca/ Quechua

Quechua woman spinning

The Incan empire pulled together various smaller tribes over time and truly flourished between about 1400 and 1500 CE, largely in an area which is now Peru. The Incan empire and culture was thoroughly and horribly destroyed by the Spanish under the leadership of Francisco Pizarro. In a very short period of time, the Spanish stole over 280,000 kilograms of gold from the Incas and as they conquered the people and stole this wealth, they also suppressed or destroyed all expression of their native religion and culture. Yet in spite of the harsh treatment by the various explorers and conquerors, some Incan traditions managed to survive and carry forward in the myths, beliefs and practices within Peru, Ecuador and Columbia. The heirs to the Incas are now called various names and form many tribes, but speak the language called Quechuan. Calling this group of tribes Quechua is a catch all phrase in some ways, but refers to many varied but related clan groups in the Andes mountain region.

History and Belief

Gordon McEwan is an associate professor of anthropology at Wagner College. He has worked in Cuzco for more than twenty-five years and is the author of numerous articles and several books on the archaeology of the Wari and Inca cultures. Here is his introduction to the Incan society. The remaining people who fled at the destruction of the Incan empire are the people whose descendants remain in the mountains of the western shore of South American today.

Key History: Ted Ed lesson on the history of the Incas

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Although many of the Quechua speaking people have incorporated Roman Catholicism into their lives, some beliefs common to the Incas that still survive today in the lives of the Quechuas include:

- a belief that supernatural forces govern everyday events, such as weather, crops, health and illness
- by making offerings to the powers that control natural forces, the Quechua feel they can influence events and not merely be helpless in the face of bad weather or disease
- the conviction that the world is populated by spirits who have human attributes
- the conviction that the mountains are sacred places and are central elements of a mythical historical identity, since the founding fathers, according to Inca legend, arose directly out of the land
- belief in the Andean deities Viracocha (creator deity) and Pachamama (the Incan Mother Earth)

Location

Map of the current distribution of the Quechuan languages (solid) with the historical extent of the Inca Empire (shaded)

The Incas originally held a great deal of territory along the western coast of what is now South America. Although much of this is rugged, we can notice that a familiar place belonging to the Incas is Machu Picchu.

UNESCO Machu Picchu Website

UNESCO shows pictures of this area, a 15th-century Inca citadel, located in the Eastern Cordillera of southern Peru, on a 7,970 foot mountain ridge. “Recent research has shown that the site’s location, and the orientation of its most important structures, was strongly influenced by the location of nearby holy mountains, or ***apus***. (The Inca religion uses the term ‘apu’ to refer to a mountain with a living spirit; the body and energy of the mountain together form the spirit’s wasi (“home” or “temple”).) An arrow-shaped stone atop the peak of Huayna Picchu appears to point due south, directly through the famous Intihuatana Stone, to Mount Salcantay, one of the most revered apus in Incan cosmology. On important days of the Inca calendar, the sun can be seen to rise or set behind other significant peaks.”[3]

Lifestyle

The present-day Quechua-speaking peoples of the Andes make up between 30- 45 percent of the population of Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador. They live in close-knit, generally rural, communities and combine farming and herding to make a living. Much of the agricultural work is done cooperatively, sharing grazing space, harvests and redistributing labor and the outcome of farming when needed.

All aspects of Quechua life, including farming, marriage relationships, religion and celebrations, are done in an *ayllu*, which is an involved and clan-like kinship grouping. A basic component of ayllu communality is *ayni*, which in a fairly simple way can be described as “help rendered to others today in anticipation of that help being returned at a future date”. *Ayni* is reciprocal assistance, so that members of an *ayllu* will help a family with a large project, such as putting up fencing or construction of a home, and in turn can expect to be similarly helped later with a project of their own.

Many traditional handicrafts are an important part of Quechua culture. This includes

Ollantaytambo Peru- indigenous women weaving

a long tradition of weaving handed down from Incan times (or possibly even earlier than the 14th century) using cotton, wool (from llamas, alpacas, guanacos, vicunas) and a wide variety of natural dyes. There are numerous traditional woven patterns used (*pallay*).

The Quechua domesticated potatoes thousands of years ago and still grow many potato varieties, which are used for both food and medicine. Quinoa is another traditional crop used as a staple, and is fast becoming so expensive that unless individuals grow their own crop of quinoa, they are no longer able to afford to buy it, as the grain has become very popular in the Western cultures.

Hallpay is the Andean ritual of chewing coca leaves, which produces a mild stimulation. Growing coca for cocaine production is illegal in these countries, but personal use in the Quechua communities, who just chew the coca leaves, is accepted. An explanation is found here:

> *[The] varied procedures and social etiquette have been compared in intricacy to the Japanese tea ceremony. Each person selects a few of the best leaves and stacks them shiny side up (the stack is called a k'intu). The individual then blows on the stack lightly while reciting a short blessing to the earth and particular location (known as a phukuy). If another person is present (as is often the case), the k'intu is then passed to that person, who receives it with thanks before reciting a phukuy again. Only then are the coca leaves inserted in the mouth for chewing.*[4]

Ritual

Many rituals in Quechuan speaking communities are now a combination of Roman Catholic and native practices. Some hark back to Incan times, some are more recent in origins, but still blend with Catholicism.

- The Festival of the Sun (Inti Raymi) is based on an ancient Incan ceremony and includes elaborate pageantry and the (simulated) sacrifice of a llama.
- the Andean deities Viracocha (creator deity) and Pachamama (the Incan Mother Earth) have become associated with the Christian faith, and connect to God and to the Virgin Mary, respectively, as a syncretic approach to religion.
- Religious imagery—frequently associated with miracles, visions, and punishments—often plays an important role in the spiritual beliefs. The line between the Christian images and the Quechua images blurs.
- Ritual offerings to Pachamama (in a ceremony known as the *pago a la tierra*) continue to be performed regularly. The *pago a la tierra* ceremony traces its roots back to traditional Inca festivals of harvests and plantings.
- pilgrimages to sacred spaces, again often a combination of Catholic imagery imposed on ancient sites in the mountains, are common. They tend to be more festive in actions than somber or serious.
- The characteristic music of the central Andes is called *huayno.* The Incas used a single word– "*taqui*"– to describe dance, music and singing, though this word in the Quechuan language means "song". Theses three activities were interconnected, never separated. Most dances were related to rituals and agriculture. And all music was communally produced, as music was considered a group activity. Music uses a variety of traditional instruments, varying from percussive items to strings to flute like we hear in this example:

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Inca Creation Story

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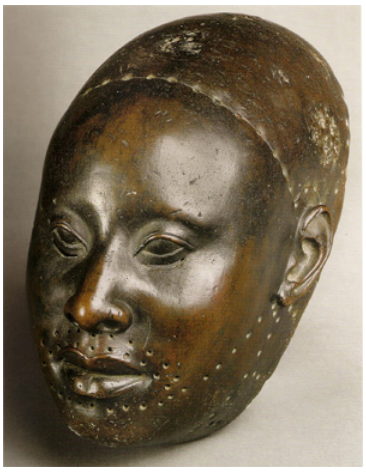
The Yoruba:



Yoruba mask for King Obalufon II; circa 1300 CE; copper; height: 29.2 cm; discovered at Ife; Ife Museum of Antiquities (Ife, Nigeria)

Africa covers around 6% of the earth's surface and has 54 countries. The approximate population on the continent numbers around 1.3 billion people. There are well over 3000 different ethnic groups in Africa, each with their own history, language and set of beliefs and practices. These frequently co-exist alongside the religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, which also have long histories in various African nations. The relationship between the Abrahamic religions and the native beliefs and practices can be difficult at times, and the more conservative of the branches of those three religions has attempted to eradicate the practices of the Yoruba.

History and Belief

With help from Janet Topp Fargion[5]:

Indigenous African beliefs frequently include the worship of various spirits, multiple gods, family and tribal ancestors, and are based on an understanding that the spiritual infuses every aspect of daily life. The concept of a supreme being is not always a part of indigenous tribal life and practice, and the gods, ancestors and spirits are not necessarily thought to be omnipresent, omniscient, or even always good.

The role of ancestors is important within these traditions, indicating a link between the dead and their living descendants. Diviners, priests or community members communicate with the dead in various ways, and this might include prayers, sacrifices, rituals, festivals and ceremonies. In most parts of West Africa, public festivals and masquerades are central to spiritual wellbeing. The masks worn at these events embody gods and spirits who dance, sing or speak in ways that identify them to the participating community.

The Yoruba are one of Africa's largest ethnic groups with more than twenty-five million living in Nigeria, the Republic in Benin, and Togo. Its pre-modern history is based largely on oral traditions and legends. Ile Ife is the city where the Yoruba believe their civilization began as well as the location where they say that the gods descended to earth. Oral tradition and historical reality do not completely match, but the story is longstanding. Ile Ife came to be a city in about 500 BCE. It is considered to be the origin of *all* African people by the Yoruba.

The meaning of the word "*ife*" in Yoruba is "expansion." "Ile-Ife" is therefore in reference to the myth of origin, "The Land of Expansion."

'Yoruba Ibeji figures, representing twins' . Credit: Wellcome Collection.

The creation story of the Yoruba is seen below.

Besides being central in the history of the Yoruba people, Ife is also famous for its art. From terracotta sculptures to stones and bronze sculptures that can still be found in the museum, the art of the Yoruba is becoming world famous.

The Yoruba have hundreds of deities. Yoruba deities are called *orisha*, and the high god is Olorun. Other important *orishas* include Eshu, the trickster; Shango, the god of thunder; and Ogun, the god of iron and modern technology.

The Yoruba believe that the ancestors still have real influence among the living. Annual ritual honor is paid to the family or clan ancestors, and this yearly sacrificial activity honors all deceased members of the family. *Egungun* (maskers) appear at funerals and are believed to embody the spirit of the deceased person.

Lecture: More information on Yoruba history and culture from Professor Toyin Falola [6]

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Location

Yoruba people are concentrated in the southwestern part of the country of Nigeria, in Benin and northern Togo. The Yoruba number more than 35-40 million across Africa. There is a long and rich history of the various people who became the Yoruba. They originally called themselves the Oyo.

The term **Yoruba** (or Yariba) did not come into use until the nineteenth century, and was originally confined to subjects of the Oyo Empire. The term Yoruba did not always designate an ethnicity and usually described those who spoke the Yoruba language. The first documented use of the term Yoruba as an ethnic description comes from a scholar in the sixteenth century.

The empire of Oyo arose at the end of the 15th century CE. Expansion of the kingdom of the Oyo is usually associated with the people's increased use of horses. At the end of the 18th century CE civil war took place within the Oyo empire, and the rebels against the old order turned to the Fulani for help. Instead of helping, the Fulani ended up conquering the Oyo empire in the 1830s. In the late 1880s, with the help of a British mediator, a treaty was signed. Yoruba lands were officially colonized by the British in 1901. Nigeria became an official colony in 1914. But on October 1, 1960 Nigeria was declared independent of British rule.

Lifestyle

The Yoruba were historically primarily farmers, growing cassava, maize, cotton, beans and peanuts. The Yoruba are also known for their fine crafts. Traditionally,

16th century Ivory armlet from the Yoruba peoples. Owo region in Nigeria. Now in the National Museum of African Art, Washington DC.

they worked at such trades as blacksmithing, leatherworking, weaving, glassmaking, and both ivory and wood carving.

Each town has an Oba (leader), and every Oba is considered to be a direct descendant of the founding Oba of that city even if that cannot be proved through written records. A council of chiefs usually assists the Oba.

An excellent and thorough look at Yoruba and Nigerian culture and lifestyle can be found at Yoruba Art and Culture: Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology

Ritual

Performances of an *Egungun* (representative of ancestral spirits visiting the living),

Epa (symbolic performances variously promoting valor and fertility), and

Ẹyọ, a procession of masked dancers.

> *"Art has often been inspired by spiritual beliefs. For the Yoruba, art and spirituality are often intertwined. Works of art give visual form to the divine and inspire religious devotion. In turn, they are made powerful by spiritual forces. Aesthetics play an important role in the manifestation of the sacred. As the Yoruba say, art has the power to fa ajú*

> *móra (magnetize the eyes), becoming àwòwò–tún–wò (that which compels repeated gaze).”*[7]

In Nigeria there are many gods (*òrìṣàs*) who are worshipped. Prior to the *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ́* masquerade festival, members of the community consult priests, who then communicate with the *òrìṣàs*. The priest throws sets of palm nuts and draws symbols on a board, interpreting the words of the *òrìṣàs* for the community.

The film below includes extracts from a documentary on the *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ́* masquerade, performed by the Yoruba people of Nigeria. It shows preparations for the masquerade, including people consulting the Ifá priest, who helps to communicate with the spirits and decide which songs will be sung during the ritual. The *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ́* is performed to pay tribute to the role women play in the organization and development of Yoruba society. The songs tell of the power of the Great Mother. The film was made by Peggy Harper and Frank Speed in the 1960s.”[8]

Example: preparation for a masquerade

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Some of these West African practices were transported with enslaved individuals across the Atlantic Ocean in the 16th and 17th centuries. Brazilian *candomblé*, an extension of some of the Yoruba beliefs, is testament to the strength of the practices as they continue in these settings to the present day. Caribbean *Vodou* also carries in its beliefs and practices ideas found here about the role of spirits in human lives.

In some instances leaders or community members enter a ‘trance-like’ state. Some communities interpret this as possession, believing that a spirit takes control of the person in a trance. It is often interpreted as the practitioner making contact with the spirit or an ancestor and then relaying what is said by one of these spirits or ancestors back to the community.

The Yoruba Gẹlẹdẹ from the Ketu region of the modern Republic of Benin received the honor of being recognized as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

The Yoruba Creation story

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/worldreligionsthespiritsearching/?p=110

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Indigenous Australians:

Smoking Ceremony 2 Major Sumner, a Ngarrindjeri elder, in a smoking ceremony, as part of the repatriation of Old People remains.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the Indigenous peoples of Australia. If one refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a group, it's best to say either 'Indigenous Australians' or 'Indigenous people'. They are not in fact one group of people, but rather comprise about 500 different tribes in Australia, each with their own language and territory and usually made up of a large number of separate clans. Each of these hundreds of groups have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions. And the term Aboriginal is moving out of favor as a descriptive term for the overall native people of the continent, having come from European terminology, and not that of the various tribes involved.

Archaeologists believe that the Indigenous Australian people first came to the Australian continent between 45,000-50,000 years ago. The Indigenous population in Australia is estimated to be about 745,000 individuals or 3 per cent of the total population of

24,220,200. When Europeans settlers first arrived, it is thought that perhaps close to 1.5 million people lived on the continent.

History and Beliefs

Aboriginal Rock Art, Anbangbang Rock Shelter, Kakadu

Originally the native people of Australia were hunters and gatherers. In addition to this, they had very sophisticated ways of taking care of the land. Through their work with the land they encouraged the growth of specific plants that their preferred animals would eat, using controlled burns, they set up gardens and crops, and they worked with waterways to extend the living space and the breeding of water creatures that were food for them, such as eels. As semi-nomadic people, they moved around with the seasons, returning to more permanent homes in the growing season, and cultivating their crops in season.

First Contact with the Europeans came in 1770:

> *"On 29 April 1770, HMB Endeavour sailed into Botany Bay, in the country of the Gweagal and Bidjigal peoples of the Dharawal Eora nation, as part of Lieutenant James Cook's broader exploration of the Pacific.*
>
> *Approaching the southern shore, his landing party were met by two Gweagal men with spears. Attempts to communicate failed, so Cook's party forced a landing under gunfire. After one of the men was shot and injured, the Gweagal retreated.*
>
> *Cook and his men then entered their camp. They took artefacts and left trinkets in exchange. Seven days later, after little further interaction with Gweagal people, the Endeavour's crew sailed away."*[9]

[From the Journal of James Cook, At Anchor, Botany Bay, New South Wales.]

Sunday, April 29th, 1770.
"In the P.M. wind Southerly and Clear weather, with which we stood into the bay and Anchored under the South shore about 2 miles within the Entrance in 5 fathoms, the South point bearing South-East and the North point East. Saw, as we came in, on both points of the bay, several of the Natives and a few hutts; Men, Women, and Children on the South Shore abreast of the Ship, to which place I went in the Boats in hopes of speaking with them, accompanied by Mr. Banks, Dr. Solander, and Tupia. As we approached the Shore they all made off, except 2 Men, who seem'd resolved to oppose our landing. As soon as I saw this I order'd the boats to lay upon their Oars, in order to speak to them; but this was to little purpose, for neither us nor Tupia could understand one word they said. We then threw them some nails, beads, etc., a shore, which they took up, and seem'd not ill pleased with, in so much that I thought that they beckon'd to us to come ashore; but in this we were mistaken, for as soon as we put the boat in they again came to oppose us, upon which I fir'd a musquet between the 2, which had no other Effect than to make them retire back, where bundles of their darts lay, and one of them took up a stone and threw at us, which caused my firing a Second Musquet, load with small Shott; and altho' some of the shott struck the man, yet it had no other effect than making him lay hold on a Target. Immediately after this we landed, which we had no sooner done than they throw'd 2 darts at us; this obliged me to fire a third shott, soon after which they both made off, but not in such haste but what we might have taken one; but Mr. Banks being of Opinion that the darts were poisoned, made me cautious how I advanced into the Woods. We found here a few small hutts made of the Bark of Trees, in one of which were 4 or 5 Small Children, with whom we left some strings of beads, etc. A quantity of Darts lay about the Hutts; these we took away with us. 3 Canoes lay upon the beach, the worst I think I ever saw; they were about 12 or 14 feet long, made of one piece of the Bark of a Tree, drawn or tied up at each end, and the middle keept open by means of pieces of Stick by way of Thwarts. After searching for fresh water without success, except a little in a Small hole dug in the Sand, we embarqued, and went over to the North point of the bay, where in coming in we saw several people; but when we landed now there were nobody to be seen. We found here some fresh Water, which came trinkling down and stood in pools among the rocks; but as this was

troublesome to come at I sent a party of men ashore in the morning to the place where we first landed to dig holes in the sand, by which means and a Small stream they found fresh Water sufficient to Water the Ship. The String of Beads, etc., we had left with the Children last night were found laying in the Hutts this morning; probably the Natives were afraid to take them away. After breakfast we sent some Empty Casks a shore and a party of Men to cut wood, and I went myself in the Pinnace to sound and explore the Bay, in the doing of which I saw some of the Natives; but they all fled at my Approach. I landed in 2 places, one of which the people had but just left, as there were small fires and fresh Muscles broiling upon them; here likewise lay Vast heaps of the largest Oyster Shells I ever saw.

Monday, April 30, 1770

As Soon as the Wooders and Waterers were come on board to Dinner 10 or 12 of the Natives came to the watering place, and took away their Canoes that lay there, but did not offer to touch any one of our Casks that had been left ashore; and in the afternoon 16 or 18 of them came boldly up to within 100 yards of our people at the watering place, and there made a stand. Mr. Hicks, who was the Officer ashore, did all in his power to intice them to him by offering them presents; but it was to no purpose, all they seem'd to want was for us to be gone. After staying a Short time they went away. They were all Arm'd with Darts and wooden Swords; the darts have each 4 prongs, and pointed with fish bones. Those we have seen seem to be intended more for striking fish than offensive Weapons; neither are they poisoned, as we at first thought. "

Key Information: Timeline connecting to European arrival in Australia

You will find various links and information to more detailed history of the native and immigrant contacts in this timeline from the Australian National Museum: Education Timeline

As happened in many places around the world, the immigrant Europeans wanted the Indigenous people to conform to the European ideas of community, culture, religion and work. To make this happen, children were taken from their families and introduced into schools, set as farm workers, or adopted out to European families in order to remove the youngest generation from the influence of their tribe, families and clans. This removal of children from their homes took place between 1910-1970. It is thought that something like one in 3 children, especially those with lighter skin color, were taken from their own families and moved into assimilation situations.

After 1970 legislation and policy began to change how Indigenous people were treated. The stories of The Stolen Generation tell us a history of racism and attempted destruction of native cultures, which happened in most continents where colonialism was common.

> Example of the story of a person taken from her family: Faye Clayton

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> The Apology: The National Apology to the Stolen Generations of Indigenous people who were taken from their homes and away from tribes, family and clans.

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The expression of spirituality differs between Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. Aboriginal spirituality mainly derives from the stories of the Dreaming, while Torres Strait Islander spirituality draws upon the stories of the Tagai.

Dreaming:

The mainland native Australian people are storytellers, passing on their culture through a tradition called songlines. Since a songline can span the lands of more than a single language group, different parts of the song are said to be sung in different languages, according to what is happening in the songline. Different languages are not a barrier to the listener, however, because the melodic contour of the song describes the land over which the song passes. A songline has been called a "dreaming track", as it marks a route across the land or through the sky that is followed by one of the creator-beings or ancestors in the Dreaming.

> *"The Dreaming has different meanings for different native people. It is a complex network of knowledge, faith and practices that derive from stories of creation, and it dominates all spiritual and physical aspects of life. The Dreaming sets out the structures of society, the rules for social behavior and the ceremonies performed in order to maintain the life of the land.*
>
> *It governed the way people lived and how they should behave. Those who did not follow the rules were punished.*
>
> *The Dreaming or Dreamtime is often used to describe the time when the earth and humans and animals were created. The Dreaming is also used by individuals to refer to their own dreaming or their community's dreaming. In essence, the Dreaming comes from the land. In native society, people did not own the land– it was part of them and it was part of their duty to respect and look after mother earth."*[10]

The Tagai:

> *"The people throughout the Torres Strait are united by their connection to the Tagai. The Tagai consists of stories which are the cornerstone of Torres Strait Islanders' spiritual beliefs. These stories focus on the stars and identify Torres Strait Islanders as sea people who share a common way of life. The instructions of the Tagai provide order in the world, ensuring that everything has a place.*
>
> *One Tagai story depicts the Tagai as a man standing in a canoe. In his left hand, he holds a fishing spear, representing the Southern Cross. In his right hand, he holds a sorbi (a red*

> *fruit). In this story, the Tagai and his crew of 12 are preparing for a journey. But before the journey begins, the crew consume all the food and drink they planned to take. So the Tagai strung the crew together in two groups of six and cast them into the sea, where their images became star patterns in the sky. These patterns can be seen in the star constellations of Pleiades and Orion."*[11]

Some substantial assistance in understanding the Tagai comes from this article by Duance Hamacher[12], published through CC licensing from the publication The Conversation:

A Shark in the Stars: Astronomy and Culture in the Torres Straight

Location

The continent of Australia was occupied by people arriving from southeast Asia by boat about 50,000 years ago. These people are considered some of the earliest people to leave Africa for other places.

First contact with the Europeans on James Cook's ship occurred at Botany Bay, which is a harbor that is now a part of Sydney. The tribes in Australia were thriving at that time, with vibrant communal lifestyles. European settling in Australia started in about 1788, and, as with many colonial situations, brought a mixture of problematic and helpful consequences with their arrival. Because England used the continent as a type of jail for some of its worst criminal offenders, this reality brought additional issues as the British encountered the land and had to find a way to relate to the native inhabitants.

In 1901, however, fewer than 100,000 of the native people remained. It is suggested that three major reasons exist for this societal destruction: disease, losing their resources, and direct killing. European diseases that exposed the population lacking immunological defenses to destruction included smallpox, venereal disease (e.g., gonorrhea), influenza, measles, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. The English settlers and their descendants took over native land and removed the indigenous people by cutting them off from their food resources. There are also clear records of intentional genocidal massacres of native people. There was substantial resistance by the native people, once they realized that the English had decided that the entire continent should belong to them. This resistance was considered barbarous behavior on the part of the Indigenous people, and considered ill considered resistance to the civilizing influence of the English.

England sent over 162,000 convicts in 806 ships between 1788 and 1850 to colonize the Australian continent. Australia as a nation emerged in 1901 as a federation of the six English colonies.

Lifestyle

Indigenous Australians have a rich and complex system of family roles which are at the core of their various cultures. These complex ways of functioning define each person's place within the community and act as a structure for how people within extended families are bound to one another. Extended family roles define the obligations for each person in the raising and nurturing of the young people. Tradition defines how each individual is meant to support the kinship system. Elders are especially honored, and become a link to the past by passing on their understanding of history, the necessary cultural skills, and oral materials, stories and music to the younger members of the community.

Paintings and carvings on rock, carvings on body ornaments, abstract symbols, including spiral designs, and naturalistic styles are found in centuries of Indigenous art in Australia. Human figures and animals, such as fish, turtles and kangaroos, connected with the hunt or with spiritual beliefs, are common. Modern Indigenous art takes advantage of ancient symbols, including dot painting, animals and figures, and symbols with protected meanings that are shared privately within family structures.

These 8 Australian Indigenous ways of learning are based on work by Tyson Yungaporta. Yunkaporta, T. (2009) Aboriginal pedagogies at the culturthal interface

There is a rich oral tradition of myth, relating the ancestral time, 'The Dreaming', to the present. A wealth of native symbols are used to present their messages, stories and tradition, and both the ancient and the modern artwork that use the symbols become a way to pass these rich stories on from generation to generation.

> *"Tribal totem ancestors of Australian Aborigines include the eagle-hawk, kangaroo, and snake. About 40% still follow the traditional hunter-gatherer way of life and live mostly in the remote desert areas of Northern Territory, the north of Western Australia, and in northern Queensland. About 12% of Australia is owned by Aborigines and many live on reserves as well as among the general population; (65% of Aborigines live in cities or towns). Others work on cattle stations, and a few have entered the professions and government service."*[13]

Ritual

There are many reasons for ceremonies in Australian Indigenous society. All have a place in the spiritual beliefs and cultural practices of their communities. These might include transmission of culture and stories, men's and women's roles in spiritual practices, and the care of sacred sites.

> Example

There are detailed and fascinating descriptions of this use of ceremony in a pdf published by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority: Aboriginal Ceremonies

Indigenous people today continue to meet socially, sharing songs and dances to celebrate daily activities and significant events in their communities.

Participation in ceremonies may be dependent on the age and gender of the people. Children may be involved in some ceremonies while others are restricted to teens and adults. Women's ceremonies have been protected over time much more than those for men, and photos and images are considered inappropriate for recording these activities.

Cropped image from photograph taken at the premiere of Corroboree, a ballet written by composer John Antill and based on the real-life ceremony, at the Empire Theatre, Sydney, in about 1950.

A Corroboree is a ceremonial meeting of Australian Aboriginals, a dance ceremony which may take the form of a sacred ritual or may be more of an informal gathering. The word comes from Dharuk *garaabara*, denoting a style of dancing.[14]

Another description is "a gathering of Aboriginal Australians interacting with the Dreaming through song and dance", which may be a sacred ceremony or ritual, or different types of meetings or celebrations.[15]

Looking through various pieces of art, clothing, one can get a feeling for the ritual and drama that is a part of any Corroboree, whether formal ritual or informal gathering.

> Creation Story of the Australian Aboriginal people

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1. with help from The Pluralism Project: Harvard University https://pluralism.org/anishinaabe-ojibwe-ways ↵
2. https://www.fdlrez.com/ ↵
3. National Geographic, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/t...rticle/secrets ↵

4. Quechua Cultural Orientation *Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center* ↵
5. Dr Janet Topp Fargion is Head of Sound and Vision at the British Library. Her general research interest is the discipline of Ethnomusicology, with a focus on the music of Africa, particularly of South Africa and the Swahili Coast in East Africa. Her research currently centers on ethnographic sound recordings as sources for ethnomusicological investigation. Janet is an active member of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology and the Archiving Committee of the Society for Ethnomusicology and is chair of the Research Archive Section of the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives. In 2015, she co-curated the British Library major exhibition West Africa: Word, Symbol, Song. ↵
6. Professor — Ph.D., 1981, History, University of Ife Professor; Jacob & Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities; University Distinguished Teaching Prof. ↵
7. From Newark Museum's archived Embodying the Sacred in Yoruba Art ↵
8. From African Belief at the Discovering Sacred Texts site of the British Library https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/artic...belief-systems ↵
9. https://www.nma.gov.au/learn/encount...ies/botany-bay ↵
10. Australian Museum: Aboriginal Spirituality https://web.archive.org/web/20150906...a-spirituality ↵
11. The Australian Museum: Aboriginal Spirituality https://web.archive.org/web/20150906...a-spirituality ↵
12. Associate Professor Duane Hamacher is a cultural astronomer in the ASTRO-3D Centre of Excellence and the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne. His research focuses on astronomy in a cultural, social, historical, and heritage context, as well as the preservation of astronomical heritage through dark sky studies. Born in the United States, Duane earned a degree in physics at the University of Missouri before moving to Australia to complete a Masters degree (by research) in astrophysics at UNSW, followed by a PhD in Cultural Astronomy at Macquarie University. He is a member of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), serves in the IAU Working Group on Star Names, Chairs of the IAU Working Group on Ethnoastronomy & Intangible Heritage, is Secretary of the International Society of Archaeoastronomy and Astronomy in Culture, and an associate editor of the Journal of Astronomical History & Heritage. ↵
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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: European Origins- Paganism, Nordic, Wicca

6.1: Nature as the Sacred Text

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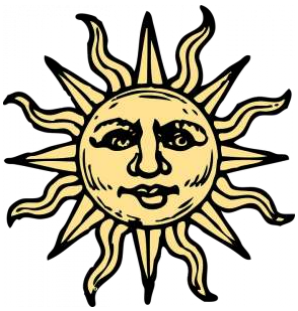
6.1: Nature as the Sacred Text



With assistance from Denise Cush[1] Paganism is growing in popularity, and Pagan themes and motifs are frequently found in contemporary culture, reaching far beyond those who would consciously label themselves as Pagan. Not focused on a sacred text, contemporary Paganism is mostly a recent creation, and is indicative of a wider trend within the changing religious landscape. The sociologists Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead have referred to this movement as a 'spiritual revolution'.

> Example: Ross Douthat–is there going to be a post Christian United States?

The Return of Paganism

The pentacle and the five elements of the cosmos: water, fire, earth, air, and spirit. In some Wiccan esoteric rituals, the wachtowers, the guardian spirits of the four elements, are invoked to catalyze the energy of the goddess.

The two most influential forms of Paganism today are Wicca and Druidry, both of which have various subgroups, and, although drawing upon some elements of older traditions, they are substantially creations of the 20th century. Wicca can claim to be the one religion which originated in Britain (traced back to Gerald Gardner in the 1950s), and Druidry also places much emphasis on British land and heritage. Developing at the same time and among similar circles, Wicca and Druidry (as well as other forms such as Goddess spirituality) have much in common, and it does make some sense to talk of a generic 'Paganism' while also acknowledging that these two manifestations of Paganism are the most commonly practiced at this time. Other forms of Paganism might include believers following ancient Egyptian, Roman, Greek, or Celtic deities and rituals. In all Pagan religions, it is up to the believer to decide what the concept of "divine" means, who or what Deity is right for them and how they choose to maintain or express any relationship with their chosen Deity.

One Story: National Geographic

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Nature as the sacred text

Perhaps the central and distinctive feature of Paganism is the sacredness of the natural world, making it particularly appropriate for a society facing a human-created climate emergency which could lead to the extinction of many species, including ourselves. It could be said that the sacred text of Paganism is not a holy book but the natural world itself. Pagans may be pantheists, polytheists, animists or even atheists but they are united in finding the divine within nature, rather than beyond it. For many followers of Goddess spirituality, the Goddess IS nature, an immanent rather than transcendent deity, not a female version of the God of Abrahamic traditions. Pagans stress the interconnectedness of all life and seek to live in harmony with nature, viewing the current environmental crisis as a result of humans considering themselves separate from and superior to the rest of life. Pagan rituals often take place outside among trees, on hilltops, near ancient stone circles, by streams or waterfalls. Humans are a part of an interconnected community of all life, including all other-than-human beings, whether these are animals, spirits or deities, and actions and lifestyles should reflect this.

Sociologists such as Max Weber spoke of the 'disenchantment' of the world brought about by modernity, science and industrialization. Paganism seeks to 're-enchant' the world and restore the sense of awe, wonder and magic. This may sound romantic (and much Paganism is definitely influenced by Romanticism), but this deep emotional connection with nature is a resource for environmental activism, and Pagans have been at the forefront of many protests and campaigns. Many Pagans are vegetarian or vegan to avoid harming animals or exploiting them in any way, whereas others think eating meat is natural but that we should be fully aware of and thankful for the life that has been sacrificed to give us nourishment.

> Example: More about Wicca
>
> From The Conversation: What is Wicca?
>
> Halloween isn't about candy and costumes for modern-day pagans – witches mark Halloween with reflections on death as well as magic

Other Pagan beliefs

Paganism does not focus much on beliefs or metaphysical truth claims and there is no creed or list of doctrines to which one must assent. Generally, it is up to the individual, and there is a positive welcoming of diversity and pluralism. However, there are a number of shared themes, and these may be spelt out in more detail at the level of particular groups.

Some Pagans are polytheist, with a pantheon of deities; Wiccans talk of the Goddess and the male God; others are more pantheist and talk of the divine energy within all things. Often, as in Goddess spirituality, polytheism and pantheism are reconciled – the many goddesses are, at a deeper level, aspects of the one Goddess. What tends to be rejected is the idea of a deity beyond and separate from the natural world.

> Example: About Asatru

From the National Museum of Denmark: The Old Nordic Religion Asatro

From the Iceland Magazine: 11 Things to Know about Asatru

There is a spectrum of views as to how far deities are 'real' or a form of colorful poetic or metaphorical language used to express spiritual experience. It is thus possible to be a Pagan atheist, accepting religion as a useful human creation. Experience, both everyday life and the more numinous/mystical/magical is central. While the idea of 'revelation' as found in Abrahamic traditions (communication between a transcendent deity and a prophet or messenger, often eventually written down as a sacred text) is not really found in Paganism, there is talk of 'inspiration' and insights gained from interaction with animals, plants, spirits and deities or what Druids call '*awen*', the creative force flowing through all nature.

Pagans have various views of life after death, such as reincarnation, or the otherworld of the spirits, or the Summerland, or union with the divine life-energy. Other Pagans believe that there is no life after death and that we should concentrate on living this life on earth.

Some Pagan practices

Members of the Ásatrú religion, belief in the old Norse gods, gather at Thingvellir National Park in Iceland.

Ritual is very important in most Pagan practice, and can be simple and spontaneous or a scripted performance. Some practices in some traditions are only for the initiated, but many others are open to all. They may all be described as magic(k), which can be defined as the use of symbolic action to bring about change or transformation. This transformation can be understood either as in external reality, or in our own consciousness, or in both, as for example in healing.

Many Wiccan rituals involve casting a circle, establishing the four directions and the elements of fire, water, earth and air, and inviting the presence of deities or positive energies. Many rituals are designed by participants or adapted from existing sources to suit the particular occasion. There are lifecycle rituals for events such as welcoming new babies, funerals and weddings ('handfasting'), the latter becoming popular even with people who don't identify as Pagan. The cycle of eight festivals, found in Wicca, Druidry and Goddess spirituality is well known beyond Pagan circles: Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, Spring Equinox, Beltane, Summer Solstice, Lughnasadh and Autumn Equinox. Symbols include the pentagram/pentacle and the Druid 'awen'. Stories and mythology are very important for Pagans and may be used in rituals, whether taken from traditional texts such as the Welsh *Mabinogion*, 19th-/20th-century literature, or more recent sources. Some local folk customs (often not as ancient as is sometimes believed) have gained a more Pagan feel in recent years. An interesting example of the use of Pagan ritual beyond Pagan circles is that words from a ceremony composed by Druids Philip Shallcrass and Emma Restall Orr for an inter-faith gathering at Avebury in 1993 were used for the closing ceremony of the Paralympics in London in 2012; the slightly adapted version being:

> *The circle is unbroken,*
> *The ancestors awoken.*
> *May the songs of the Earth*
> *and of her people ring true.*
> *Hail to the Festival of the flame*
> *of root and branch, tooth and claw,*
> *fur and feather, of earth and sea and sky.*

Pagan values

Generally, there is a life-affirming attitude, celebrating nature, the human body, sexuality and freedom. The approach to ethics is summed up by the Wiccan Rede – but living without fixed rules can be quite challenging as it involves making constant

judgements about what is the least harmful course of action in each context. Important ethical issues for Pagans include environmental concerns, equality and diversity and social justice, and Pagan theologians and philosophers are starting to explore Pagan ethics in more detail.

A concern: What to do? Can people corrupt your religion?

This is an article from The Atlantic, a very fine journal. You can only get a few free articles a month from them, but they are well worth reading. Try this one:

What To Do When Racists Try To Hijack Your Religion

Key Takeaway: Values found in most Pagan traditions

Pantheos is a website with some very useful materials, in a general way. It is wise to check the credentials of each author, but many authors on the site are qualified and thoughtful in what they write. [2]

Paganism for Beginners: Values

Pagan identity

Identifying as Pagan is becoming more acceptable than it was in the middle of the previous century, and there are Pagan schoolteachers and members of the police force. The Pagan Federation joined the Religious Education Council in 2011 and the Inter-Faith Network in 2015. However, there is still something of a 'countercultural' feel about Pagan identity, stemming in part from its association with witchcraft (illegal until 1951), the 'hippies' of the 1960s and various anti-war and environmental protests. Women find the stress on Goddess(es) and the roles of witch or priestess empowering compared to the patriarchal attitudes of many older religions, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender generally feel welcome among Pagans. Young people identifying as witches or Pagans interviewed by the author found in Pagan identity a source of self-esteem and a vocabulary with which to interpret their experience. They also found that Pagan rituals gave them a sense of control and thus reduced anxiety. Many Pagans talk about 'coming home', finding a name and a community that shares the views and feelings they already had. As a relatively new tradition, many first identified as Pagans as teenagers or adults, but as children are increasingly born into Pagan families, it will be interesting to see how the Pagan community (or rather communities plural) develops in the future.

> Learning about living as a Wiccan: Don Frew

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1. Denise Cush is Emeritus Professor of Religion and Education, Bath Spa University. Her interests include Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and alternative spiritualities such as Paganism, as well as religious education. She taught religious studies at school and university levels, and religious education in both primary and secondary teacher education. Books include Buddhism, a textbook for A level, co-editing the Routledge Encyclopedia of Hinduism, and editing Celebrating Planet Earth, a Pagan/Christian Conversation as well as many other publications on religious education and religious studies. In 2016 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Uppsala, Sweden. ↵
2. Yvonne Arburrow has been a Pagan since 1987 and a Wiccan since 1991. She has an MA in Contemporary Religions and Spiritualities from Bath Spa University and lives and works in Oxford, UK. She has written four books on the mythology and folklore of trees, birds and animals. ↵

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