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| ☬ |  | *An Overview* |
| *of World* |
| *Religions* |
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# Hinduism

The Indo-Europeans were nomadic tribes living in southwest Russia. From c. 2000 bc, they spread west (becoming the Celts, Germans, Latins, Greeks, and Slavs) and southwest (becom­ing the Hittites, the Persians/Iranians, and the Aryans). The **Aryans** (*aryan* means “noble”) invaded northwest India about 1700 bc. The syncretism of their religion with the religion of the indige­nous In­dian pop­u­lation, called **Dravidi­ans**, produced Hindu­ism. Thus Hinduism began c. 1700 bc.

Hinduism is divisible into several periods: Vedism, brahminism, Upani­shadism, bhaktism, Muslim dominance, and British dominance.

*Vedism* (c. 1700-1000 bc)

The gods of the invading Aryans were similar to the Greek and Ro­man gods (the Greeks and Romans were Indo-Europeans who invaded Greece and Italy c. 1600 bc, so the similarity is not sur­pris­ing). All Indo-Europeans seem ori­ginally to have worshiped the Sky Father and the Earth Mother (in Hinduism, **Dyaus Pitar** and **Prithivi Matar**), but by the time of the Ar­yan invasion of India, these had become more and more transcen­dent and dis­tant (the *deus otiosus* syndrome). Though there were both gods (called *devas*, “shining ones,” “ones who give”) and demons (called *asuras*), the latter played little part in Aryan religion.

Ar­yan priests classified gods into celestial (sky), atmo­spheric (air), and ter­­restrial (earth), with 11 gods in each region (33 total). **Varuna** replaced *Dyaus Pitar* as the principal cel­es­tial god; Varuna ruled by **rita** (cosmic or­der). A minor sun god (there were several) was **Vishnu** (from *vish*, “pervade”), who later became the major god of Hinduism. **Indra** was the major atmo­spheric (storm) god, a vig­orous warrior who loved do battle and to get drun­k. Another atmo­spheric god was **Rudra**; probably of Dravidian origin, he personi­fied the destructive nature of storms and later (c. ad 700) was assimi­lated to another god, **Shiva** (“auspicious”). The prin­ci­pal terrestrial gods were **Soma** (god of *soma*, an intoxicating drink made from the juice of the mushroom *aman­ita muscaria*) and **Agni** (god of the sacrifi­ce fire).

Vedism, c. 1700 to 1000 bc, was the period during which the *Vedas*—­the most important of all Hindu sacred books—were written (see “Hindu Scrip­tures” below).

*Brahminism* (c. 1000-800 bc)

A *brahmin* is a priest. The priests took over in the period of brahmin­ism, and developed elaborate, hours-long, magic rituals. The priests wrote down these rituals in the *Brahmanas*.

*Upanishadism* (c. 800-300 bc)

Idealism and Monism

During this period, a new type of religious leader devel­oped: the forest sage. These sages also developed a new type of literature: the *Aranyakas* and the *Upani­shads* (see “Hindu Scrip­tures” below). The word *upanishad* meant “to sit (*shad*) down (*ni*) near (*upa*)” a *rishi* (guru) in a forest retreat, in order to hear secret knowledge. The *Upa­ni­shads* tend toward idealism and monism.

“Idealism” means any philosophy which maintains that the ultimate nature of reality is idea. Its opposite is realism (Latin *res*, “thing”), which main­tains that the ultimate nature of reality is extramental. “Monism” is the belief that only one thing exists.

The movement toward idealism and monism ultimately resulted in the most famous saying in the *Upanishads*, “*tat tvam asi*,”—”that you are.” By “that” the *Upanishads* meant *Brahman*, and by “you” they meant *Atman*. Originally, *brahma* or *brahman* was the power in a spell or prayer to produce its effect. Although sometimes presen­ted as a personal god (*Brahma*) or as the element (earth, air, fire, or water) from which all things are made, Brahman usually refers to the impersonal and ab­stract principle which is Absolute Reality, the ground of both being and non­being. *Atman*, by contrast, originally meant “breath,” and thus also “soul”; but by the time of the *Upanishads* it had come to mean a universal soul, of which each of us is one instance. To say *Tat tvam asi* (“Brahman is Atman”), therefore, is to say that only one thing exists, since the universal Subject perceiving the universal Object is in fact itself the universal Object.

Upanishad­ism tended toward idealism, but idealism in Hinduism did not reach its climax until Shankara (Hinduism’s greatest intellec­tual, the “Aq­uinas” of India) developed *advaita Vedanta* c. the 800s ad. *Vedanta* means “end of the Ve­das,” a systematization of the teachings of the Vedas, and *a­dvaita Vedanta* means “non-dualis­tic Ve­danta.” According to *advaita Vedanta*, the phe­nom­enal world is purely illusion (*maya*); only Brahman exists.

Castes, Reincarnation, and Asceticism

Three important aspects of Hinduism—belief in reincarnation, the caste system, and asceticism (denial of natural needs)—reached mature development during the period of Upanishadism, though their roots probably go back to the original Aryan and Dravidian religions.

The belief in **samsara** (“re­incarna­tion”) may go back all the way to the Dravidians. According to the belief in *samsara*, each of us is an immortal soul (a *jiva*) which, each time it dies, is reborn into a new body—be it the body of a plant, an insect, an animal, a human, or an angel. The type of body into which one is reborn is determined by one’s **karma**. *Karma* is the principle of cause and effect applied to morals, i. e., it is the effects of moral actions; it is *rita* (cosmic order) operat­ing in the moral sphere. Release from the cease­less cycle of death and re­birth can only result when one experiences that moment of realization that *Tat tvam asi*, you are All.

The system of **castes** or social classes in Hinduism goes back to the Ar­yans. Like all Indo-Europe­ans, the Aryans who invaded India in 1700 bc had four castes or social classes: priests and kings, war­riors, tradesmen and peasants, and non-Aryans/slaves. These classes hardened into the Hindu castes of today: the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas*, and the *Shudras*. One who is “out-caste” is a *pariah*. When the belief in castes is coupled with the belief in reincarnation, the idea of **dharma** (“duty”) comes to the fore: each caste has its own set of duties, and the way to ascend the ladder of reincar­nations (for example: the way to be born into a higher caste next time) is to fulfill perfectly the duties of one’s caste in this life.

Another development during the *Upanishadic* period was extreme **asceti­cism**. Chief among early ascetical movements was **Jainism**, a religion founded c. 500 bc by Mahavira (“Great Souled One”). Jainism emphasized the non-taking of life. The 2 million Jains in India today are that country’s wealthiest citizens. Influenced by Jainism was **Buddhism**, the religion based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (“enlightened one”), who lived c. 563-483 bc (see “Buddhism” below).

*Bhaktism* (c. 300 bc-present)

After the Vedic period, during which Varuna, Indra, Agni, etc. were worshiped, Hinduism became increasingly devotional: one not only feared and respected the gods, one came to love one of them. This movement is known as **bhaktism**. Bhaktism developed into worship of three principal gods, Krishna, Vishnu, and Shiva. Krishna and Shiva were largely Dravidian in origin (*krishna* means “black”—Dravidians are dark-skinned—and a proto-*Shiva* appears among pre-Aryan arti­facts). Krishna is a black-skinned youth, some­times called the Indian “Heracles.” Vishnu is a god of grace, tenderness, and forgive­ness; he is closest of all Indian gods to the God of Christianity. Shiva is a potent but ascetical male; his symbol is the *lingam* (stone phallus).

There are three major sects of bhaktism: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism. **Vaishnavism**, or devotion to Vishnu, is the largest sect within Hinduism; it gained mo­men­tum c. ad 700. The god worshiped in **Shaivism** is Shiva. Before c. 200 bc, *shiva* was an adjective given to Rudra (see “Vedism” above); but in the *smriti* litera­ture, Shiva became a god who absorbed Rudra’s nature. He is a sexually potent yet ascetical god, and can be dangerously unpredictable. **Shaktism**, also called “Tantrism,” is a sect within Shaivism and the third-largest sect in Hinduism. It worships Shiva’s *shak­tis*, his female energies (Shiva transcends or incorporates both the male and female prin­ciples). The *shaktis* are pictured as Shiva’s consort Parvati, who is ordinarily a quietly beautiful young woman but who also appears as Uma (a severe as­cetic), Durga (a ten-armed demon-slayer), and Kali (a black goddess who drinks blood and eats corpses).

In one late *Upanishad* (*Maitri* 4.5, 6.5) and some­times in the *smriti* literature (i.e., after ad 300), one finds mention of the *Trimurti* (“three forms”), a “trinity” of Brahma (creator), Vishnu (pre­server), and Shiva (destroyer). The *Trimurti* was more a theological reflec­tion than an object of living worship; and Brahma, in fact, never became a popular god. Though some scholars make much of it, the *Trimurti* really is not very analogous to the Chris­­tian Trinity.

*Muslim Dominance*

The past thousand years have seen India occupied, first by the Muslims, then by the British. Islamic dominance lasted from c. ad 1175-1803, but it was especial­ly powerful during the Mughul empire, ad 1526-1858.

*British Dominance*

The British took over in 1803 (but did not remove the last Mughul emperor until 1858). British tenure lasted until 1947, when India achieved independence. With indepen­dence came the creation, in two separated territories, of an Islamic state, the Dominion of Pakistan. East Pakistan became independent of West Pakistan in 1971; the former became the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, and the latter became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

# Buddhism

the Buddha: c 560-480 bc

names

Siddhartha (“he who has achieved his goal”) Gautama (“descendant of Gotama,” brahmin clan name; not known why Shakyas, warrior tribe of Himalayan foothills, used it)

Bodhisattva (future buddha): used of the Buddha before his enlightenment

the Buddha (“the enlightened one”)

The lives of the Buddha were written 500 or more years after him (Ashvagosha’s was ad 1-100).

birth

His mother, Maya, dreamed that a white elephant penetrated her body.

The newborn strode 7 paces and said he was destined for enlightenment.

The sage prophesied he would be a buddha.

youth

His father surrounded him with sensual pleasures and an arranged marriage. He had a son, Rahula (fetter).

On chariot rides, he saw: an old man, a diseased man, a corpse, and plowing. He realized that suffering is universal.

At age 29, he left the palace and became an ascetic.

studies

His 1st teacher taught him meditative concentration.

His 2d teacher taught him attainment of neither perception nor non-perception.

He underwent severe austerities for 6 years and was joined by 5 ascetics.

He came to realize that a middle way was best. He ate, and 5 ascetics left in disgust.

enlightenment: under a bodhi tree,

he underwent temptations: Death (Mara) with demons tempts him. He touches earth to call Mother Earth to witness that the Buddha had accumulated greater merits than Death. (So in statues, his touching the earth means the drama of the enlightenment.)

the Enlightenment of the Buddha

Robinson, Richard H., and Willard L. Johnson. *The Buddhist Religion*: *An Historical Introduction*. 3rd ed. Religious Life of Man, gen. ed. Frederick J. Streng. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1982.

On the night of the full moon,

sitting under the bodhi tree,

the Buddha climbed to en­lightenment.

1. the Buddha’s advance described as progress through four trance states (*dhyana*)
   1. first trance:
      1. detachment from sense objects
      2. calming pas­sions
      3. discursive thinking (gazing at mental images as they pass)
      4. (Similar trances sometimes occur spontaneously when the mind is concentrated by intellectual discovery or artistic in­spira­tion.)
   2. second trance:
      1. thinking is nondiscursive: one-pointedness of mind
      2. serene faith, zest, and ease
   3. third trance:
      1. mindful and conscious
      2. dispassionate rather than zestful
      3. a feeling of bliss in the body
   4. fourth trance:
      1. “pure awareness”
      2. free from opposites such as pleasure and pain, elation and depression
      3. the six superknow­ledges (*ab­hij­­ña*):
         1. magic powers (such as levitation and walking on water)
         2. the divine ear
         3. knowledge of others’ minds
         4. memory of one’s former lives
         5. the divine eye
         6. extinction of the *asrava* (“outflows”)
2. the Buddha’s advance described as progress through three unusual kinds of cognition
   1. first cognition (at evening): knowledge of each of his previous existences, one after ano­ther
   2. second cognition (at midnight): the divine eye
      1. divine eye as cosmic vision
         1. The whole universe appeared to him as in a mirror.
         2. The second cognition is perception of living beings ev­ery­where dying and being reborn.
      2. divine eye as clairvoyance
         1. The Buddha later used the divine eye to find out where some­one was located when he wanted him.
      3. Gautama’s vision in his second cognition, combined with the twelve precondi­tions, was systematized in later Buddhist art as the Wheel of Life.
   3. third cognition (in the wee hours): several accomplishments
      1. extinction of the *asrava* (“outflows,” bind­ing influen­ces)—namely, sensual desire, desire to exist, wrong views, and ignorance.
      2. perceiving the Four Holy Truths
      3. perceiving the principle of dependent co-arising (*pratitya-samutpada*)
         1. Dependent co-aris­ing is the cause of rebirth. To perceive the principle of dependent co-arising is to perceive *dharma*; thus it is for Bud­dhists a subject of constant meditation.
         2. Dependent co-arising, or the Buddhist law of moral cause and effect, is expressed in its twelve precondi­tions (*nidana*) leading to rebirth. For these, see the outer circle of the Wheel of Life.
         3. As a theory of causa­tion, dependent co-arising concerns the formal con­comitances among things rather than their material derivation from one another. It resem­bles a medical diagnosis.
      4. The third cognition is a philosophical theory presented not as the fruits of speculation but as a direct perception, like the first two cognitions.

Day dawned on Gautama, now the Buddha.

The earth swayed,

thunder rolled,

rain fell from a cloudless sky,

and blossoms fell from the heavens.

1. after enlightenment
   1. At first the Buddha thought humanity too addicted to attachments, so it couldn’t understand his *dharma*.
   2. But Brahma pleads, so the Buddha decides to proclaim.
   3. first sermon
      1. This was given four miles north of Benares, in Sarnath (Deer Park); to the 5 ascetics.
      2. The Buddha taught the Middle Way: feed bodily appetites sufficiently for health, but do not overfill (neither starvation nor indulgence).
      3. The Buddha taught the Four Holy Truths:

the Four Holy Truths Of Buddhism

Robinson, Richard H., and Willard L. Johnson. *The Buddhist Religion*: *An Historical Introduction*. 3rd ed. Religious Life of Man, gen. ed. Frederick J. Streng. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1982.

1. The **first** Holy Truth is the truth of suffering.
   1. *duhkha* (suffering, “transmigratory misery”)
      1. *Duhkha* is found in every aspect of existence: birth, pain, illness, death.
      2. Physical pain and psychological pain (such as anxieties) are present even during states of so-called happiness.
      3. *Duhkha* means all the unsatisfactoriness of existence in the material realm. Discomfort, dis-ease, suffer­ing, even German *Angst* are accept­able near-equiva­lents.
      4. The frequent charge that Buddhism is pessimistic because it declares life to be suffering is inaccurate. It is never denied that there is much happiness in the world. It is only asserted that sooner or later one must suffer because worldly happiness is yoked to suffering.
   2. the five *skandhas*
      1. The five *skandhas* are form, feeling, conception, dispositions, and consciousness. Each is *anātman* (devoid of self). They are impermanent and so are subject to suffer­ing.
      2. The experienced world, made up of the five *skandhas* (groups of material and mental forces), entails suffer­ing.
      3. The five *skandhas*—that is, the phenomenal world-and-person—are *duhkha*. Or: *duhkha* is the crucial attribute of the five *skandhas*.
   3. The first Holy Truth specifies *duhkha* as the object of meditation, because meditation is designed to achieve eventual mastery over the *skandhas*. Meditation on suffering is a therapeutic exercise to counteract desire (*trishnā*).
2. The **second** Holy Truth is the truth of the source of suffering. This is thirst or craving for sensual pleasure, for coming to be, and for ceasing to be.
3. The **third** Holy Truth is the truth of the cessation of suffering. When craving ceases entirely through dispassion, renunciation, and nondependence, then suffering ceases.
   1. One may ask, “Is it not better to live and suffer than to escape at the price of total annihila­tion?”
   2. To be or become means to be or become in the realm of *samsara* (the phenomenal universe). To not be means to pass out of one form (and on to another) within the phenomenal world.
   3. The term *exist* can be used in two sen­ses: (1) to occur at one time after arising and before ceasing and (2) to exist at all times without beginning or end. The second sense is impossible given the Buddhist position that no substance exists apart from its modifications. The Buddhist says that no object ever exists apart from particular forms, so the unchanging substratum is unattested and does not exist. Existence in the first sense means manifested existence, and Buddhism acknowledges that objects exist in this relative way.
   4. Cessation is transcendence rather than annihilation. Early Buddhism accepted the axiom that being cannot come from nonbeing and cannot go to nonbeing. Thus, it ruled out genuine annihilation.
   5. It is true that transcendence does not accomodate happiness in any mundane sense. This is con­gruent with the basic pattern of early Indian negation. Suffering and happiness are paired opposites of finite extension, so to achieve perfect felicity one must rise not only beyond misery but beyond ordinary bliss as well. But the arhant between enlightenment and death certainly is happy.
4. The **fourth** Holy Truth is the path leading to cessation of suffering, the **Holy Eightfold Path**.
   * 1. **right views**: knowledge of the Four Truths.
     2. **right intention**: dispassion, benevolence, and aversion to injuring others.
     3. **right speech**: abstaining from the four vocal wrong deeds . . .: lying, slander, abuse, and idle talk . . .
     4. **right action**: abstaining from the three bodily wrong deeds: taking life, taking what is not given, and sexual miscon­duct.
     5. **right livelihood**: abstention from occupations that harm living beings—for example, selling weapons, liquor, poison, slaves, or livestock; butchering, hunting, fishing; soldier­ing; fraud; soothsaying; and usury.
     6. **right effort**
        1. to avoid (i.e., to not cause bad thoughts to arise, e.g., a sexual fantasy)
        2. to overcome (suppress bad thoughts)
        3. to develop (to think of good thoughts, e.g., a corpse)
        4. to maintain (continue to think good thoughts)
     7. **right mindfulness**
        1. of body: clear consciousness of what your body is doing at the moment (which results in control of pleasure and pain, and in the preternatural gifts [divine eye, divine ear, telepathy, etc.])
        2. of feelings: clear consciousness of emotions at the moment (which results in the recognition that you are not your emotions)
        3. of mind: clear consciousness of mental states at the moment (which results in the recognition that you are not your mental states)
        4. of phenomena in general: clear consciousness of phenome­na in general.
     8. **right concentration**
   1. The Eightfold Path is equivalent to a shorter formula, **the Threefold Training**.
      1. wisdom (*prajñā*)
         1. = right views and intention
         2. It means clear understanding of the Doctrine of the kind obtained through thinking, study, and meditation.
      2. morality (*śīla*)
         1. = right speech, action, and livelihood
         2. It involves intention and the effects of one’s acts on others.
      3. concentration (*samādhi*)
         1. = right effort, mindfulness, and con­centration
         2. It is achieved through specific techniques of physical and mental control.

The Four Holy Truths extinguish the *āsrava*, karmic outflows or binding influ­ences: sensual desire, desire to exist, wrong views, and igno­rance.

After the first sermon, the Buddha founded the Sangha (“Sangha, or order of wandering monks and nuns”). (Robinson and Johnson 3)

death of the Buddha: c 480 bc.

1. **later history of Buddhism**
   1. *Triratna*
      1. The “Three Jewels” which the Buddha prescribed to his followers were, “I believe in the Buddha, in Dharma (law), and in the Sangha (monas­tic order).”
   2. Asoka (died 232 bc)
      1. Asoka’s inscriptions “are conspicuously silent about the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and even about Nirvana.”
      2. Asoka sent missionaries to Hellenistic Asia, north Africa, Nepal, Ceylon, and (Buddhist chroniclers say) Europe.
   3. Kanishka (reigned c 200-100 bc)
      1. introduced Greek and Persian elements into Buddhist literature
      2. ruled when the schism between Hinayana and Mahayana occurred.
      3. convened the fourth council
      4. Promoted worship of Buddhist saints’ relics.
      5. Promoted worship of Buddha images.
      6. Monasteries taught secular subjects to temporary students.
   4. the Gupta dynasty (begins c. 320 ad)
      1. Gupta dynasty begins: Hinduism waxes, Buddhism wanes. Buddha becomes an incarnation of Vishnu.
   5. councils
      1. Three councils supposedly codified the Pali canon.
         1. 483 BC, at Rajagaha
         2. 383, at Vesali
         3. during Asoka’s reign, 274-232 BC, at Pataliputra (Patna).
            1. Asoka convened it to reform the corrupt monasteries.
         4. But little of the Pali canon goes back that far.
      2. A fourth council supposedly codified the Sanskrit canon during Kanishka’s reign (200-100 bc), at Kashmir.
2. **overview of sects**
   1. Hinayana
      1. “little vehicle” (i.e., can carry few across the ocean of rebirth to Nirvana) 105
      2. India, Thailand, Burma, Ceylon, Cambodia, Indonesia) 105
      3. A common synonym is “Southern Buddhism.” 113
   2. Mahayana
      1. “great vehicle” (i.e., can carry many across the ocean of rebirth to Nirvana) 105
      2. Tibet, Nepal, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam) 105
      3. A common synonym is “Northern Buddhism.” 113
   3. Mahayana admits a personal deity (or deities) and therefore allows for the concept of social justice and charity under obedience to a higher power. Hinayana denies or prescinds from any god outside and above man and so logically concerns itself only with self.

# Chinese Religions

According to ancient texts, the earliest dynasties in China were the Xia, the Shang, and the Zhou. For the Xia (Hsia) dynasty (2070 and 1600 BCE), we have no archeological evidence. But it was during the Shang dynasty (1400s-1000s) that the Chinese invented writing. With the Zhou (Chou) dynasty (1046-256), western tribesmen conquered. For them, the king was the “Son of Heaven.” The nobility (the *chun tzŭ*) were feudal, military, and hereditary. They ruled with the help of the ancestors (ancestor worship).

## Confucianism

Confucius (551-479 BCE) was not a noble. He worked menial jobs; he was self-taught. Wanting to help the most people possible, he decided that influencing kings directly would be too unlikely; so he decided to teach their ministers instead. In Confucius’ day, officials were apprenticed, then became mere instruments of rulers. Confucius changed that: he founded the first higher-education private school in China, to improve ministers so they could improve leaders. Students were accepted both from the nobility and the poor. (Confucius wanted universal education, so that the most talented of all classes would rise.) Confucius said to his students, “Make government serve the needs of the people.”

In ethics, Confucius redefined the *chun tzŭ* (nobility): the noble are not so by birth but by character; ability and education are what count. He also taught that everyone seeks happiness and that everyone is a social being. So he taught the “principle of reciprocity,” aka the “silver rule,” the negative form of the golden rule: “do not do to others what one does not wish them to do to one’s self.” True virtue, he said, is “to find in the wishes of one’s own heart the principle for conduct toward others . . .” But most people opt for a lesser, immediate pleasure.

Confucius also taught the principle of *li*. Originally “*li*” meant to sacrifice; then ritual; then any ceremony; then court courtesy. So it can be understood as etiquette, or rules of propriety. Even early Confucian classics told how to place each finger in picking up a ritual object. For Confucius, *li* is all social and conventional behavior. But he gave *li* a moral connotation: it is obligations of morality and etiquette. (Rather like our “it is done.”) Officials treat each other with courtesy; why not the common people? We should treat all as if receiving an important guest. It is just as wrong to withdraw (be a hermit) as it is to follow the crowd. We change immoral conventions, but be practical (don’t try to change too much).

Concerning religion, Confucius did not discuss gods; he concentrated on the practical. He was not a mystic; in fact, he said that “Meditation alone does not lead to wisdom.” Instead, he advised, hear much; set aside what’s doubtful; speak cautiously of the remainder.

But Confucius was not an atheist. He taught that *ti* (Heaven) is most important deity. Though *ti* is like a king, and the “son of Heaven,” he is not to understood anthropomorphically. To Confucius, *ti* is a vague moral force (like “The Force be with you”). He also mentioned the *tao*. The word originally meant “road” or “path,” and by Confucius’ day it had come to mean a way of conduct (good or bad). For Confucius, the *tao*’s goal is happiness, in this life, here and now, for all mankind. The *tao* includes a government-promoted ethical code. (The Taoists’ [post-Confucian] concept of the *tao* as the primal stuff of universe or as the totality of all things does not appear in Confucius.)

About life after death, Chinese religion in Confucius’ day said little about it. It was not used as a moral sanction (“Do this or you’ll go to hell”). Confucius refused to discuss it. But he was very concerned about sacrifices. For most Chinese at the time, sacrifices were barter, to obtain quid pro quo from the gods. Confucius condemned the barter attitude. But we really don’t know whether or not Confucius believed in the supernatural efficacy of sacrifices. He recommended doing sacrifices courteously, because they are “the right thing to do.” He said that rituals have value because they socialize the individual. Also, human sacrifices, which were common before Confucius, were condemned by him. He tried to stop them; but they lingered for centuries.

Confucius, then, chose to focus on this life, not the next. And that meant he was intensely interested in politics. Good government makes people happy. Punishment may deter temporarily, but one should lead with virtue (by example and precept). Let *li* maintain order: the people will internalize moral obligation. To his students (future ministers who would advise kings), he advised, don’t overthrow the nobility (or they will suppress you). Persuade them to “reign but not rule,” to give control to you ministers.

Because of their willingness to guide and even criticize rulers on behalf of the common people, many Confucians through the centuries became martyrs. They “have given their lives in defense of the Way. Some of them have died as revolu­tionaries, who had taken up arms against the tyranny . . . Others have died at the hand of the ex­e­cu­tion­er, for daring to obey Confucius’ injunction to criticize an erring ruler fearlessly . . .”

Confucius wanted to direct government, not teach. So his disciples, without telling Confucius, persuaded Chi K’ang Tzŭ, ruler of the state of Lu, to take on Confucius as an advisor. Fortunately, Chi admired Confucius’ courage in criticizing him. He also appointed Confucius’ disciples as his ministers, because it is good to have moral underlings, and because the disciples were effective ministers. When Confucius discovered that his disciples had secured the position with Chi, however, he quit in disgust. He died at age 72.

**after Confucius**

Most disciples were teachers.

Some disciples specialized in ritual, lived off big funerals (3 yrs mourning became custom).

*imitators*: after Confucius, many emulated him, traveled from state to state selling philosophies.

Philosophies were so various in the 300s, they’re called “the hundred schools.”

Mo Tzŭ (c 480-390)

Confucius taught men how to think, was cautious on answers.

Mo Tzŭ’s generation of Confucians wanted to set up rules for living.

The book *Mo Tzŭ*: 53 chs, most written later.

Mo Tzŭ was Confucian but disagreed: he founded his own school and attacked Confucians.

“When virtuous officers are numerous in a state, it is well governed; when they are few, it is governed badly.”

“the virtuous must be enriched, given rank, [and] respected.”

*argument from antiquity*

Traditional Chinese history says a long line of early emperors reigned before the first dynasty (so 2000s bc).

Confucius mentions them, seems to think they were hereditary.

But the *Mo Tzŭ* says: “When the sage-kings of old governed the world, those whom they enriched and ennobled were not necessarily their relatives, or the rich and noble, or the good-looking. Thus Shun had been a farmer . . . Yao discovered him [and] made him emperor.”

*war*

Mo Tzŭ attacked war:

It’s unprofitable (once 10,000 states, now 4).

Conquered territories are often laid waste.

Mo Tzŭ taught defensive warfare.

*familial piety vs*. *universal love*

Confucians empha­sized love of one’s parents and relatives: by analogy one should love all men, in lesser degree. Putting the family first has always been character­istic of Chinese culture (source of strength *and* weakness, e.g. nepotism).

Mo Tzŭ condemned family loyalty utterly: “if everyone prac­ticed univer­sal love, so that everyone loved every other person as much as he loves himself, would anyone be lacking in filial devotion?”

But universal love is purely a thing of the mind: all emotions must be abol­ished.

*utilitarianism*

Nothing not useful is to be tolerated.

“Joy and anger, pleasure and sorrow, love [and hate] are to got rid of.”

Houses should have no useless decoration. He particu­lar­ly opposed music.

*politics*

He advocated a rigidly disciplined organization of the state, cemented by what he called the principle of “identification with the superior.”

His school had a rigidly disci­plined hierarchy. Leaders after his death ruled for life, could impose death penalty.

*religion*

Heaven and the spirits intervene in human affairs to punish wrongdo­ing: “The Confu­cians consider Heaven to be without intelligence and the spirits of the dead to be without consciousness. This displeases Heaven and the spirits, and is enough to ruin the world.”

For every bad act there is certain retribution.

Mencius (orthodox Confucian, c 372-289 bc)

“Here we have to do with a philosophy that is presented as a package, labeled “the ways of antiquity,” to be accepted or rejected in a piece. Unlike Confucius, Confu­cian orthodoxy has had these shortcomings.”

many forgeries, some found a place in the sacred canon of the classics.

*wang tao*, “the way of a true king”: Mencius groups all (forged) precedents as prac­tices of good past kings, to be taken as a model.

The book *Mencius*: put together by disciples, few authenticity problems.

struggle for influence and power that was going on between the scholars and the aristocrats

The teacher is a position of great respect in China. Men­cius says a ruler’s tutor is like his father. (He was of noble birth.)

Mencius was noted for “the audacious courage with which he accused them [the rulers of his day] of crimes and declared them deserving of punishment. “Is there any difference,” he asked the king of Liang, “between killing a man . . . with a blade and with one’s manner of govern­ing?” “No,” the king said. Then Men­cius told him, since his manner of governing was causing some of his people to starve to death, the king was in fact a murderer.

square of land was to be divided, like a checker­board, into nine equal plots.

*human nature is good*

man suddenly sees a little child about to fall into a well

emotional nature . . . is *not* to be repressed. Reason should rule emotions.

all men are equally good, at birth, why do some become evil? Like Jesus: one sows identical grains in different places.

*incipient Taoism*

Mencius says, “he who completely knows his own nature, knows Heaven.”

Confucius branded meditation as inadequate and urged upon his students the importance of wide observation and critical examination.

## Taoism

Hermits before Taoism: the *Book of Changes* we find mention of “one who does not serve either a king or a feudal lord, but in a lofty spirit values his own affairs.”

Yang Chu (c 380 bc)

Mencius tells only this: “Yang takes the position of selfishness. Though he might benefit the whole world by merely plucking out one of his hairs, he would refuse to do it.”

The *Lieh Tzŭ* is a centuries-later forgery. But it quotes Yang Chu:

“No man lives more than a hundred years, and not one in a thou­sand that long. And even that one spends half his life as a helpless child or a dim-witted oldster. And of the time that remains, half is spent in sleep . . .” [And even then,] We waste ourselves . . . scheming to contrive that somehow some rem­nant of reputa­tion shall outlast our lives.”

the *Lao Tzŭ* (*Tao Tê Ching*)

“The Canon of the Way and of Virtue”

small book, terse style, often seems deliber­ately obscure

ideas from c 500-100s, some contradictory

the *Chuang Tzŭ* (died c 300 bc)

the Tao

Early Taoists shared Yang Chu’s disillusion, but they have discov­ered **nature**.

*Chuang Tzŭ*: “The universe is the unity of all things. If one once recognizes his identity with this unity, then the parts of his body mean no more to him than so much dirt, and death and life, end and beginning, disturb his tran­quility no more than the succession of day and night.”

*Lao Tzŭ*: “though one dies, he is not lost” from the universe.

*Chuang Tzŭ*: “To accept with tranquili­ty all things that happen in the fullness of their time, and to abide in peace with the natural se­quence of events, is to be beyond the disturb­ing reach of either sorrow or joy.”

Taoism is nature mysticism. The Christian mystic seeks communion with God. The Taoist seeks oneness with Nature, which he calls the *Tao*.

the totality of all things, *or* the basic stuff out of which all things were made.

simple, formless, desireless, without striving, supremely content

The farther man gets away from this primal state, the less good, and the less happy, he is.

*tê*

*tê* is the natural, instinc­tive, primitive quali­ties or virtues, as opposed to those enjoined by social sanction and education.

*Chuang Tzŭ*: “an archer who is shooting for . . . an earthen­ware dish will noncha­lantly display his best skill. . . . Offer a prize of gold, and he will become tense, and his skill will desert him entire­ly”

*wu wei*

*Wu wei* means “do nothing”: not idleness, but do nothing not natural or sponta­ne­ous.

Speak as little as possible.

*Chuang Tzŭ*: “The Spirit of the Clouds, traveling to the east on a gentle breeze, happened to meet with Chaos . . . Chaos said, “I drift here and there, with no idea of what I seek; moved only by the impulse of the moment, I have no idea where I am going. I wander aimless­ly, regarding all things without prejudice or guile . . .” [108] said the Spirit of the Clouds, “so what shall I do?” “Alas,” Chaos said, “this idea of ‘doing’ is what makes the trouble. Desist! . . . Nourish your mind. Rest in the position of doing nothing, and things will take care of them­selves. Relax your body, spit out your intelli­gence, forget about principles and things. Cast yourself into the ocean of exis­tence, unshackle your mind, free your spirit, make yourself as quiet as an inanimate thing. . . . Because they [inanimate things] lack knowl­edge, they never leave the state of primal simplicity. But let them once become con­scious, and it is gone! Never ask the names of things, do not seek to spy out the workings of their natures, and all things will flourish of them­selves.”

politics

*Lao Tzŭ*: “the sage, in govern­ing, empties the people’s minds and fills their bellies, weakens their wills and strengthens their bones. He constantly keeps the people without knowledge and without desire.”

the *Tao*, which is his model, is above emo­tion, including compassion.

despotic Chinese emperors were intoxi­cated by this ideal.

Taoists condemned the Confucians.

Confucians were the chief exponents of a carefully ordered system of government.

Taoists said C converted to Taoism.

Taoist alchemy: elixir of life

Taoist monasticism

Taoist polytheism

legends of the Eight Immortals: developed during Song (Sung) dynasty (ad 960-1279);

reached official form by Yuan dynasty (ad 1271-1368).

*Immortal Symbol Patron*

Lu Tung Pin sword and fly swatter barbers

Han Chung Li fan immortality and good fortune

Lan Ts’ai Ho basket of flowers florists

Han Hsiang Tzu jade flute musicians

Ti Kuai Li iron crutch pharmacists

Ho Hsien Ku lotus flower management of the house

Chang Kuo Lau bamboo tube drum male offspring and children

Ts’ao Kuo Chiu castanets/imperial tablet theatrical profession

# Judaism

1. major beliefs of Judaism
   1. monotheism
   2. creation
   3. covenant
   4. election
   5. revelation
   6. redemption
   7. Nehemiah 9 has a prayer-psalm which summarizes much of this:
      1. God is Creator (v. 6)
      2. God selected Abraham and entered into a covenant with him (vv. 7-8)
      3. God redeemed Israel from Egypt miraculously (vv. 9-12)
      4. God’s revelation at Sinai was mediated by Moses (vv. 13-14)
      5. God ordained the Sabbath (v. 14)
      6. God’s attributes are grace, compassion, love, and patience (vv. 27-33).
2. Important in this profile of Judaism is the confession that Israel’s suffering is retribution for Israel’s rebellion, that Israel had either killed or ignored God’s chosen prophets whom God had sent to exhort them to repentance, and that God’s loving grace will be extended to the undeserving.”
3. the Mosaic Law
   1. Examples: ten commandments, sabbath, circumcision, marriage, divorce, festivals, prayer, dietary practices, sacrifices
   2. chronological divisions
      1. religion of Israel: c. 1850 bc to 587 bc
         1. 1850 Abraham
         2. 1250 Moses
         3. 1220 Joshua
         4. 1000 David
      2. Judaism: c. 587 bc to the present
         1. 587 Babylonian exile
         2. 332 Greek domination (Alexander the Great)
         3. 63 Roman domination
4. Jewish leaders
   1. in the religion of Israel
      1. priest
      2. prophet
      3. sage
   2. in Judaism in Jesus’ day
      1. Sadducees
      2. Pharisees (= rabbis)
      3. Essenes
      4. “people of the land”
5. modern Jewish denominations
   1. Hasidism
   2. Orthodox
   3. Conservative
   4. Reformed

# Islam

Introduction

“Islam” is from *salaam*, “peace.” (Ahmed 17) It primarily means “to submit.”

Islam is the *shariah*, the “path” = the *Quran* + the *sunna* (traditions about Muhammad)

“Islamic crescent”: N Africa, through the Middle East, across Central Asia and northern India (S Asia), and through SE Asia (Malay­sia, Indonesia, etc.).

800 million; 40% live in S Asia (Pak­is­tan, Bangladesh, and India).

Life of Muhammad

c. ad 570 born, in the Quraysh tribe (aristocrats among the Arabs). “Muhammad” means “praiseworthy” (“Ahmed” is variant), from *hamd*, “praise.”

c. 600: exclusive tribal codes, animistic practices, female infanticide, worship of some 360 com­pet­ing idols

c. 595 marries Khadijah, wealthy widow 15 years older, of Umayyad clan within Qur­aysh tribe.

only wife till her death in 620

Muhammad eventually married 15 wo­men, at least one per year after Khadija’s death (so Anis A. Shor­rosh, *Islam Revealed* 56)

c. 610 Muhammad’s call. In cave c. age 40, sees angel that comman­ds, “Read!” (*iqra*, whence *Quran*).

first converts: Khadijah (wife), Ali (cou­sin, aged 10), Abu Bakr (best friend; 620, father-in-law)

Quraysh persecute Muslims because Muhammad’s teach­ings hurt business (teach­ings that all Muslims are equal and that in­fan­ti­cide, promiscuity, and alco­hol are wrong).

Some Muslims flee to Ethiopia.

622 Medina (a city to the N) invites Muhammad to come and ar­bit­rate dispute between rival clans; he and remaining Muslims go. Trip = the *hijra*, “migration,” first event in the Muslim cal­en­dar.

Muhammad becomes Medina’s ruler and pro­mul­gates its charter

Soon his religious position in Madina became also that of a political leader: the genesis of a theocracy

The Jews of Madina refused to see him as a 2d Moses. “This was a severe blow to Muhammad. It threatened to overthrow a conception that had hitherto guided him in his religious career. But he took fresh courage by assuming that the Jews had forsaken their original religion, which had been that of Abraham; and Abraham is from this time onward called in the Kuran the originator of Islam, the builder of the sanctuary at Makka and the inaugurator of the rites of pilgrimage. Instead of Jerusalem, Makka became the palladium of Islam.” (Wensinck 18)

The Jews of Medina were banished or done away with in the course of a few years.

“It is no longer the story of how earlier Prophets and Apostles had suf­fered at the hands of their contemporaries that forms the subject of the Madina revelations. We now find questions of law, military expeditions and booty, relations with the pagan tribes and regulations of religious rites taking the most prominent place; and the dominating point of view in the later portions of the Kuran is: obedience to Allah and His [18] Apostle, just as it is in the diplomatic documents addressed to the Arab tribes. . . . obedience of the peoples of the Eastern world at the point of the sword was justified by the tradition: “I am ordered to make war on people, till they say: There is no God but Allah.”” (Wensinck 18-19)

624 Battle of Badr: 313 Muslims defeat 900 Quraysh from Mecca

630 Muhammad and 90,000 Muslims from Medina are warmly received by 124,000 Muslims in Mecca. Muhammad smashes the idols in the Kaaba.

632 Death of Muhammad. The tomb of Muhammad in Medina “pos­ses­ses an almost mythical, magical quality.”

basic teachings

**two most basic beliefs: monotheism and Muhammad**

“There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.” This is recited in each of the 5 daily prayers.

Muhammad is the last of a series of 124,000 prophets; these prophets included Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

**sources of authority in Islam**

Disputes are decided first of all by the *Quran*.

If that does not settle it, then the *sunna* are consulted.

If that does not settle it, then con­sul­ta­tion, reason, and consensus decide it.

**the *Quran***

God communicated the *Quran* to the angel Gabriel, who dictated it to Muhammad, word for word.

It consists of 114 *Surahs* (chapters), roughly in the order of longest to shortest (i.e., they are not chronological). About 300 pages.

The *Quran* contains 99 names for Allah. Most describe him as com­pas­sion­ate; only 5 emphasize anger and retribution.

**the *sunna***

Muhammad’s words and deeds (called *hadith*, “traditions”) are the basis of the *sunna*, “customs.” (Ahmed 3) Imam Bukhari selected 7,300 from 600,000 *hadith* (some say a million existed). (Ahmed 24)

Muslims try to imitate Muhammad in everything. “The *sunna* includes . . . abstaining from alcohol and pig’s meat, colouring a man’s beard with henna, using green for clothes and flags, enjoying honey, talk­ing softly, eating moderately and sleep­ing little.” (Ahmed 24)

Muhammad was gentle, humble, and af­fec­tionate to­ward the poor and women. E.g.: when the mother of Muawiyah ate the liver of Mu­ham­mad’s uncle raw, Muhammad forgave her, and she con­ver­ted. (Ahmed 23)

**the five pillars of Islam**

monotheism (*tauhid*)

5 daily prayers (*salat*): sunrise, noon (most important), c. 3 p.m., sunset, and in the evening (Alicia Ahuja, private conversation)

Ramadan fast (*sawm*)

annual redistribution of wealth (*zakat*)

once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca (*haj*).

**The *ummah* (community of all Muslims)**

There are to be no distinctions of dignity based on race or class.

**war**

“. . . regarding war, the Prophet’s sayings include: . . . ‘He has forbidden looting and mutilation” and ‘He has forbidden the killing of women and children’.”

*Jihad* normally means a “holy war,” one fought for the principles of Islam. But it had a deeper meaning: “Islam is a *jihad*—struggle, fight—to improve the world . . .”

First Four Caliphs

**632: caliph 1: Abu Bakr**

Elders and Muhammad’s companions chose Muhammad’s friend and father-in-law as *Kha­li­fa*, “successor” (to Muhammad), i.e., rightful ruler of Is­lam.

**634: caliph 2: Umar**

“Umar owned one shirt and one mantle . . . his order to scourge his son to death for immorality best illustrates Umar’s character.” (Ahmed 35)

635 Iran

636 Syria

637 Iraq

638 Palestine

642 Egypt

**644-656: caliph 3: Uthman**

**656: caliph 4: Ali**

First civil war: Ali vs. Muawiyah (governor of Syria): Muslims vs. Muslims for the first time. (Ahmed 35)

661: the Kharijis (a “return-to-the-Golden-Age” sect) assassinate Ali. Muawiyah becomes caliph 5, first ruler of the Umayyad dynasty. (Ahmed 36)

Dynasties

Umayyad Dynasty 661-750 Arab Sunni cap. Damascus

Abbasid Dynasty 750-1258 Persian Shi’ite cap. Baghdad

Ottoman Empire 1300-1922 Turk Sunni cap. Istanbul

Saffavid Empire 1501-1736 Persian Shi’ite

Mughal Empire 1526-1857 N India Sunni cap. Delhi

Sufism

“Sufism is universalist and humanist Islam striving for spiritual pur­ity.”

The name comes from Muhammad’s clothes of wool (*suf*).

Abu Yazid of Bistam, a Persian, “claimed to have met and conversed with God, indeed to have been absorbed into God.”

“Al Junaid of Baghdad, an Arab, worked out with Quranic texts and dicta of the Prophet a doctrine of spiritual union.”

Al Junaid’s disciple, Al Hallaj, after terrible asceticisms, declared, *ana-al-Haq*, “I am God.” “This sentence . . . has become the most famous of all Sufi claims, inspiring Sufis throughout the ages.” Al Hallaj went to the gallows singing.

“Al Hallaj became a symbol in the Mevlevi Sufi order, the ‘whirling dervishes’, whose patron saint was Rumi,” author of the *Mathnawi*.”

Shi`ism

Shi`ites are about 10% of present-day Muslims.

They are mostly in Iran and South Asia (20% of Pakistanis).

*Shia* means “party,” in this case, “of Ali”: “one who loves and follows Ali and his descendants.”

They see themselves as an “elect” among Muslims. (Ahmed 56)

Their core theological beliefs are not substantially different from those of Sunni Muslims.

Shi`ites say that Muhammad designated Ali (married to Muhammad’s daughter Fatimah) to be the first caliph (“successor”). Instead, the first four caliphs were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and then Ali; but the first three were usur­pers.

680: Ali’s son Hussain and 70 followers were massacred by thousands at the battle of Karbala.

The Safavid dynasty in Persia (1501-1736) converts Persians to Shi`ism. Persians adopted Shi’ism to assert their separateness.