

Religion – An organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god, a group of gods or the supernatural.

Each Religion we will study from this point on will be look at in terms of these 6 dimensions:

RITUAL  
MYTHOLOGICAL  
DOCTRINAL  
ETHICAL  
SOCIAL  
EXPIRIENTIAL

With your group:

- Become and expert
- Come up with an example from a religious practice you are familiar with
- Teach the class

# Understanding Indigenous Sacred Ways

Read 33 – 36 & The Circle of right relationships (Pg 39-40)

Reflect upon reading in the following ways:

- Why do most indigenous religions around the world have similar qualities?
  - Is it a cultural value system?
  - Similar outlook?
  - Genetic?
  - Geographic?
- Why do you think things changed? Why did “god evolve” or change to the various types it is today?

# Religion vs. Spirituality

The human brain and body is created in a way that is hard wired for spiritual experiences. **We are spiritual creatures.**

The human is a SOCIAL creature. Evolved to communicate and cooperate with others to enhance survival.

Religion is A SET OF ORGANIZED BELIEFS & PRACTICES SHARED BY COMMUNITY.

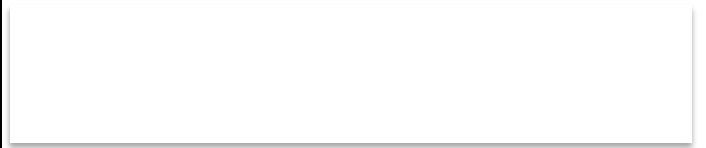
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## 1) Venus Von Willendorf



What is being  
worshipped?

Turkey,  
Neolithic Period

6000-5500 BCE

## 2) Seated Mother Goddess Flanked By Two Lionesses





Half Animal, Half Human

Dordogne, France

Paleolithic Period

c. 15300 BCE

Semi-human characters

Can you think of other examples?



18,000-10,000 BCE

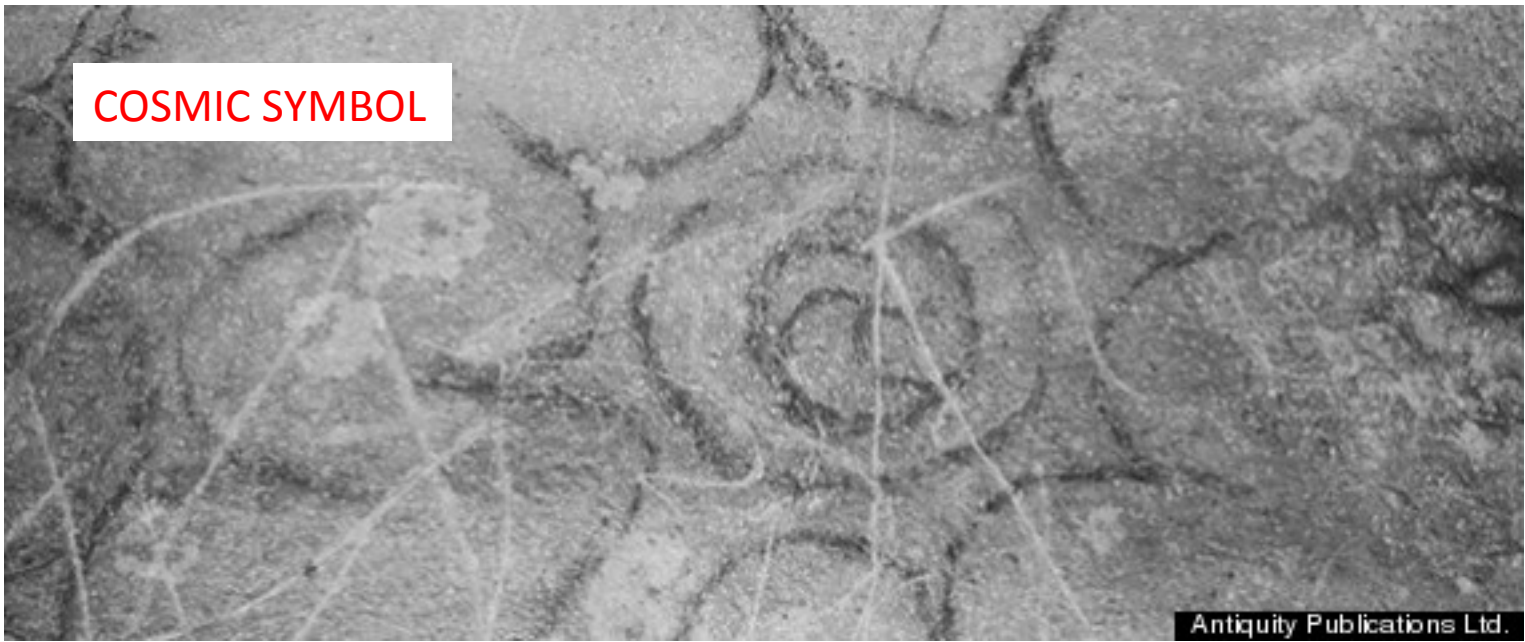


Dordogne Cave Paintings

Why paint these things?



COSMIC SYMBOL



Antiquity Publications Ltd.

EARLY Native American Cave Art

6000 BC – 18<sup>th</sup> Century CE

What are the IMPLICATIONS?



Humans & Serpernts



Mud Painting - Bird



## Animism:

Common features of Basic Religion.

Animism- belief that soul/spirit exist in every object

-primitive people believed spirit/soul caused life in human - seen as vapors- passed between human beings into plants, animals, inanimate objects (leads to naturism = nature worship).



THE LIFEWAY: No worshipping, No propitiation to gods, entire life is a ritual.

Example

Walkabouts- at puberty- young men are sent out alone into outback with nothing. Have to find their way back. If they make it, they become part of the tribe- an adult example of rite of passage



## **Totemism:** extension of animism.

Recognition of a relationship between a certain type of animal (the totem) and a group of people.

Native Americans:

-carved from cedar trees (NW pacific coast), raised to represent a family-clan emblem honor a deceased elder, records genealogy of families

-Thunderbird usually at top of totem pole- lord of sky realm (some tribes used figures of witch men.) Other figures: bear, whale, copper woman, raven, beaver, wolf, frog, mosquito.

Religious aspect of totem- clan was descended from totemic animal. Totem protect clan from evil/cure disease. Cannot hunt totemic animal.

Bears: power, healing- a cave bear returning to womb of mother earth. Strong feminine aspect: protection of cubs.

# of poles increased after contact with whites- population decreased, tribes wanted records for posterity.



## MAGIC:

trying to coerce  
nature through  
rites/ceremonies



Examples:

- 1) Cave paintings of Cro-Magnon- good hunt
- 2) Eskimos shamans- manipulate male dolls to hope females have children
- 3) Using Magic rites to hurry seasonal change (spring) or delay it (fall)
- 4) India- shooting arrows into clay dolls to make someone fall in love- sound familiar?
- 5) Native American- Ghost dances
- 6) Fetish- object used to control nature in a magical way.

Modern examples?

good luck charm, sticks, stones, bones, feathers, rabbit foot, lucky number

**Divination:** predict future through various magical means:

- interpretation of dreams by priest
- necromancy- evoking spirits of dead
- augury- foretell events by: observation of numbers, species, flight of birds, eating of birds, weather signs/unusual phenomena: ex.?
- inspect entrails of sacrificed animals
- Oracle of Delphi, oracles bones in ancient China

**Taboo**- dangerous, unclean, forbidden

- Various actions are considered taboo (forbidden) due to the alteration of future events. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY?





## Sumerian Civilization

c. 4000 BCE

Aggressive, competitive, Warrior  
Gods – (Gilgamesh)



3 Faced Central Figure

Male Figure with a horned headdress and in traditional yoga pose

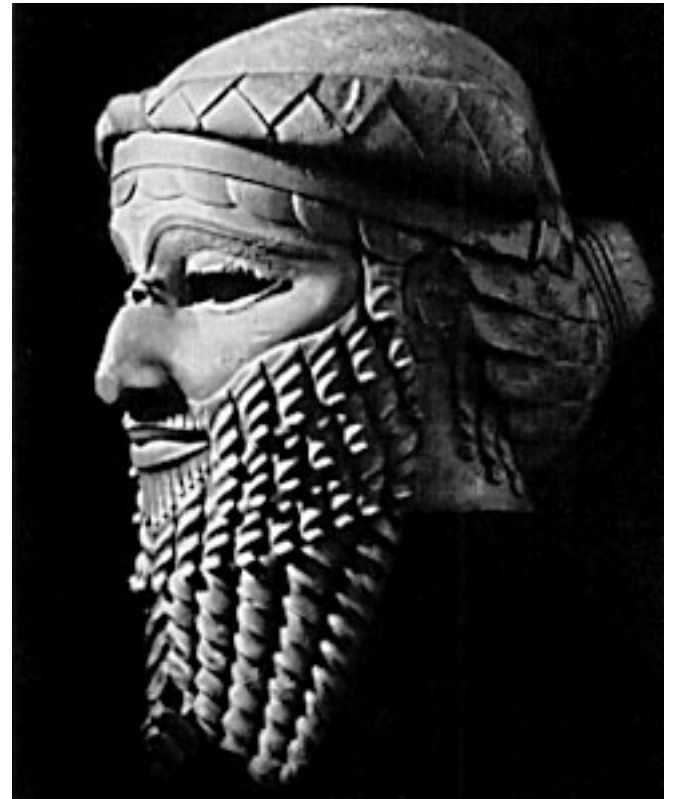
Animal Figures in profile

Mohenjo-Daro – Indus River Valley (Pakistan), 2699-1900



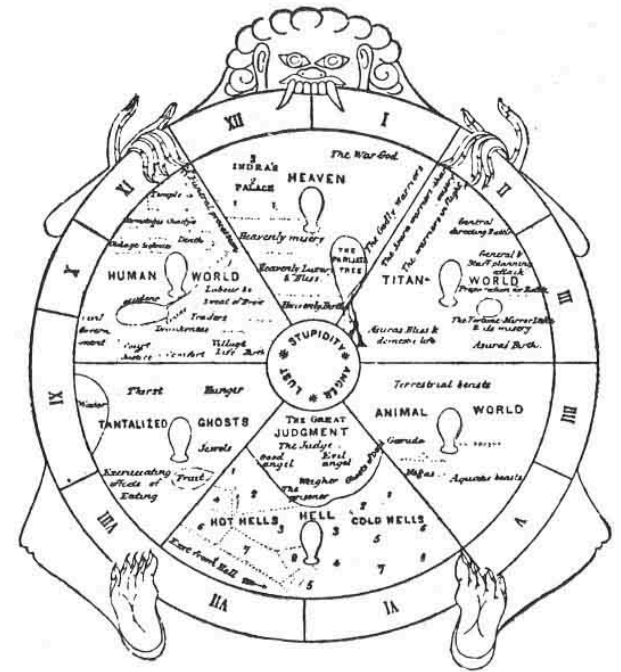
2150 – 1400 BCE

What is being worshipped?





Buddhist



Sumerian

Cycles of Life/Death  
 Symbolism of the sphere/disk

What do you find interesting here?



## **HISTORY OF GOD:**

What do you notice about the civilizations of Native American's Culture & Geography and their "gods"?

What do you notice about the Sumerians culture & geography and their gods?

What is our cultures value system? Why are we culturally "loosing our religion"?