

Bonism

What is Bon? Bön was the indigenous religion of Tibet before the arrival of Buddhism in the 7th century AD. Today, Bön is similar to Tibetan Buddhism. It is a matter of controversy whether Bön influenced Tibetan Buddhism or the other way around. Bön is spelled either Bön or Bon, and is sometimes called Bonism. Followers of Bön are known as Bönpo or Bon-po. Fast Facts Date founded: none (Original Bön); 16,000 BC (Yungdrung Bön, according to the Bönpo); 14th cent. AD (New Bön) Place founded: Tibet Founder: none (Original Bön); Tonpa Shenrab Miwoche (Yungdrung Bön) Adherents: unknown, perhaps around 100,000 History His Holiness Menri Trizin, the spiritual leader of Bon, conducts a ceremony at the Menri Monastery (photo © The Bon Foundation). Both scholars and the Bönpo themselves distinguish between original Bön and modern Bön. "Original Bön" refers to the indigenous religion of Tibet, which was animistic (believing that nature is pervaded by good and evil spirits) and shamanistic. The name was probably derived from the ritual recitation (Bön, meaning "invocation") of its practitioners.

1 - See more at: <http://www.religionfacts.com/a-z-religion-index/bon.htm#sthash.uxo7SnWJ.dpuf>

Animism

The animist religions or animism is comprised of a philosophical, religious or spiritual pagan belief that souls or spirits not only exist in humans but also in animals, plants, rocks, thunder, mountains, rivers or other parts of the natural environment. Animism may also attribute souls to concepts such as words, names or metaphors in mythology. Folk religions for the most part practice animism but there are elements of it in the Shinto and Hindu religions.

The three definitions of what animism is are:

Belief in non-human souls. This belief holds that non-human entities, such as animals and plants as well as objects can have souls. These entities must be offered gifts in order to gain favour. It is the worship of minor local deities rather than the polytheistic worship of major deities.

Belief in souls. If belief in souls is a definition of animism then all religions including Christianity and Islam may be considered somewhat animistic.

Shamanism

"After having personally practiced shamanism, shamanic healing, and shamanic journeying for more than half a century, I can say that there is nothing I have encountered in reports of the spiritual experiences of saints, prophets, psychedelic drug experimenters, near death survivors, avatars and other mystics that is not commonly experienced when following classic journey methods using a drum."

—*Michael Harner*

Core shamanism consists of the universal, near-universal, and common features of shamanism, together with journeys to other worlds, a distinguishing feature of shamanism. As originated, researched, and

developed by Michael Harner, the principles of core shamanism are not bound to any specific cultural group or perspective. Since the West overwhelmingly lost its shamanic knowledge centuries ago due to religious oppression, the Foundation's programs in core shamanism are particularly intended for Westerners to reacquire access to their rightful spiritual heritage through quality workshops and training courses. Training in core shamanism includes teaching students to alter their consciousness through classic shamanic non-drug techniques such as sonic driving, especially in the form of repetitive drumming, so that they can discover their own hidden spiritual resources, transform their lives, and learn how to help others. Core shamanism does not focus on ceremonies, such as those of Native American medicine men and women, persons who do both shamanism and ceremonial work.

Tantrism

A system of yoni-worship, or female-centered sex-worship, which allegedly begun thousands of years ago in India by women of a secret sect called Vratyas, the processors of the devadasis or sacred harlots. The religion was associated with later written scriptures known as Tantras, therefore, it became known as Tantrism. Its primary objective was the adoration of the *lingam-yoni*, sign of the male and female principles in conjunction (the god [Shiva](#) and the goddess [Kali](#)). Tantrism is still practiced in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet.

The basic tenet of Tantrism was that the woman possesses more spiritual energy than the man; therefore, the man could achieve realization of the divinity through sexual and emotional union with a woman. A fundamental rite was controlled sexual intercourse, *maithuna*, Latin, *coitus reservatus*; sex without male orgasm. In theory the man must store up his sexual fluid rather than expelling it by ejaculation. Through Tantric training, he learned to absorb through his penis the fluid engendered by his partner's orgasm and to prolong sexual intercourse for many hours. In this way he became similar to Shiva, the God in perpetual union with the Goddess. Theoretically, the concept was that the conserved vital fluids would be stored in the man's spinal column, working their way up through the [chakras](#) to his head, and there flower the inspiration of divine wisdom. The *Tantras* explains the purposes of the various rites and the philosophy underlying them.

The most sacred [mantra](#) expressing Tantric worship was *Om mani padme hum*, the Jewel (penis) in the Lotus (vulva). The symbolic *lingam-yoni* often took the form of an altar shaped like a penis in a vulva.

The practice met with opposition as did its Christian counterparts, namely the [Ophites](#) and Montanists. Orthodox Buddhism was based on opposition to the female principle and believed in order to save their souls men must avoid sex. The vitality of the soul was retained by the conservation of semen, and the concentration (see [Meditation](#)) on the Self. Buddhist monks claim their prophet commanded them to quell all sexual desire, and to never see or speak to a woman.

Tantrism was never completely destroyed. It has been practiced in different forms or versions throughout the centuries. It was practiced by some early Christians who called it *synesaktism*, the Way of [Shakti](#), which was a form of [Goddess](#)-worship that had come from the Orient through Pythagorean and Neoplatonic mystics. Plotinus equated the mind's progress toward Ineffable to "the sight of a beautiful lady." The ascent of the mind toward the realization of divinity was divided into six steps, the first being the perception of woman's beauty to the culmination with the contemplation of Universal Beauty.

However, as with everything which incorporates natural tendencies but also denies them this form of Goddess-worship traveled a bumpy road. One big obstacle was when the Christian Church declared that the sole purpose of sex was for the propagation of children. This led to the obstacle of others being suspicious of those practicing it, thinking promiscuity was occurring among them.

Some early Christian sects such as the [Gnostic](#) Ophites practiced a form of Tantrism by adoring their Goddess symbol of Sophia. She was thought of as the Holy Spirit, the feminine soul or the Shakti of God. They called their rite a spiritual marriage which was completely misconceived by the orthodox Church which condemned it. Certain members of these sects laid naked together while copulating. Their rite was suspicious in that they say they only avoided male orgasm. As previously mentioned promiscuity was suspect.

Christians were not the only ones attacking such practices, the Islamic leaders also were attacking the Sufi cults of love. Sufi mysticism survived underground, carried on by troubadours calling themselves Lovers and adoring the feminine principle as a world-sustaining power. The Sufi worship eventually influenced the European troubadours, who founded cults of Courtly Love in the centuries following the crusades. Such troubadours were branded sinful by the Church because they loved women instead of God; and, women were equated with the devil by the theological opinion of the time. The patriarchal authority was not going to approve something that was natural as good, such an act would seem to grant the right of sexual pleasure to women.

Although Courtly Love practiced Tantric *maithuna* under the name of *drudaria*, a sort of love associated with male self-denial, it was anything but chaste. To the contrary, its poetry was highly erotic. The bardic verse indicated Tantrism origins, especially when Peredur's mystic lady-love revealed that she came from India or when Tristan told his lady-love Iseult that his name was the syllabically-reversed Tantris.

There are indications that Tantrism was present throughout the history of western nations. It was either taught through secret teaching or discovered independently. Medieval goddess-worshippers, valified as "witches" apparently knew of it. There are indications that it was taught and used as a birth-control technique. Many alleged witches were midwives whom the Church thought were teaching birth control. Also, there is no evidence of women becoming pregnant after returning from witches' sabbats.

Maithuna was heard of once more, in 1848, when John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the Oneida Creek Community, rediscovered the technique which he called "male continence" or *karezza*. Noyes' initial reason as to protect his wife from "the horrors and the fear of involuntary propagation" after she had four disastrous pregnancies. Afterwards Noyes trained members of his community in the technique and they began experimenting in what was called "complex marriage" where the various partners had no fear of unwanted pregnancies.

Some occult groups in the 19th and 20th centuries used Tantric *coitus reservatus* for various reasons. However, *maithuna* was not widely practiced by Western men because of Christian and cultural teachings. *A.G.H.*