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# GLOSSARY

**acculturation** The process whereby a culture received traits from a dominant society.

**achieved status** A status that one has because of a factor other than automatic membership due to gender, age, kinship affiliation, and so forth.

**acrostic** A word that is derived from the first letter of a series of words.

**aerophone** A musical instrument in which air is blown across or into some type of passageway, such as a pipe; includes whistles and flutes.

**age grade** A series of consecutive statuses defined by age.

**age set** A social group that contains members of one sex within a specific age span.

**agnosticism** The idea that the existence of a god is unknowable, that it is as impossible to prove the nonexistence of the supernatural as it is to prove its existence.

**aleuromancy** Divination by use of flour, as in fortune cookies.

**altered states of consciousness** Any mental state that differs from a normal mental state.

**analytic definition** A definition that focuses on the way religion manifests itself or is expressed in a culture.

**ancestor** A deceased family member who has a continued existence and the potential to impact the lives of his or her living descendents.

**angel** In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, spirit beings who act as mediators between God and human beings.

**animatism** The belief in an impersonal supernatural power.

**animism** A belief in spirit beings.

**anthropology** The study of humanity.

**anthropomorphic** Nonhuman entities that have human characteristics.

**antitherapy ritual** A ritual that is performed to bring about illness, accident, or death.

**apantomancy** Divination by a chance meeting with an animal.

**apocalypse** Ultimate devastation or the end of the world.

**arbitrary** A feature of symbols, in which the symbol is not related to the thing it symbolizes.

**archaeology** The study of prehistoric people from the analysis of their physical and cultural remains.

**archetype** A main character of the collective unconscious.

**artificial divination** Refers to noninspirational divination.

**ascribed status** A status that one automatically has because of gender, age, kinship affiliation, and so forth.

**assimilation** A condition whereby a dominated culture has changed so much because of outside influences that it ceases to have its own distinct identity.

**astrology** The belief that all of the stars and planets, as well as the sun and moon, influence the destiny of people and that reading the sky can be used as a divination technique.

**athame** The ritual knife used in Wiccan rituals.

**atheism** Disbelief in or denial of the existence of God or gods.

**attribute god** A god that rules over a narrowly defined domain.

**avatar** The incarnation or embodiment of a god in human form.

**Axis Mundi** A central axis that is seen as linking the three different levels of the world, the central world containing humans and the supernatural layers above and below it.

**calendrical ritual** A ritual that is performed on a regular basis as part of a religious calendar.

**cargo cult** Religious movement occurring among small-scale societies of Melanesia in response to culture contact; the movement focuses on the attainment of trade goods.

**choice fatigue** A situation in which individuals in a culture are faced with too many options, such as when a single dominant church is replaced by numerous denominations and sects.

**chromolithograph** A type of colored printed poster.

**cicatrization** Scar formation at the site of a cut or wound.

**circumcision** A surgical procedure during which the foreskin is removed from the penis.



**cleromancy** Divination by the casting of lots such as the rolling of a die or the drawing of straws.

**clitoridectomy** A surgical procedure characterized by removal of the clitoris as well as parts or all of the labia minora.

**cognition** The processes of the human brain, including perception, attention, learning, memory, concept formation, and problem solving.

**collective conscious** A set of beliefs shared by members of a social group that functions to limit the natural selfishness of individuals and promote social cooperation.

**collective unconscious** Inborn elements of the unconscious that are manifested in dreams and myths.

**communitas** A state characterized by a sense of equality, community, and camaraderie.

**contagious magic** Magic that is based on the Law of Contagion, utilizing things that once were in physical contact with an individual.

**cordophone** A musical instrument with taut strings that can be plucked or strummed, hit, or sawed, such as a harp or violin.

**core shamanism** Michael Harner's concept of the core and nearly universal methods of shamanism without a specific cultural context.

**creator god** A god that is responsible for the creation of the physical earth and the plants and animals that live upon it.

**crisis ritual** A ritual that arises spontaneously, frequently in times of crisis.

**cross** An upright pole with a transverse piece in the middle or near the top. Used for execution by the Romans; now a symbol for the Christian religion.

**cult** Historical meaning is a particular form or system of religious worship. Most commonly used to describe a small, recently created, and spiritually innovative group, often with a single charismatic leader. Connotations of the term include that the leader is evil, is in total control of his followers, and believes that the end of the world is imminent.

**cultural anthropology** The anthropological study of contemporary human societies and their cultures.

**cultural relativism** Attempting to analyze and understand cultures other than one's own without judging them in terms of one's own culture.

**culture** Human beliefs and behaviors of a society that are learned, transmitted from one generation to the next, and shared by a group of people.

**culture area** A geographical area in which societies share many cultural traits.

**cursing ritual** An antitherapy ritual that involves reciting a curse to bring about illness and death.

**deliberate divination** Divination that someone sets out to do.

**demon** A spirit being, usually evil.

**denomination** A religious group that differs on just a few points from the mainstream religion.

**diaspora** Movement of a population out of their homeland.

**diffusion** The apparent movement of cultural traits from one society to another.

**discovery** New awareness of something that exists in the environment.

**displacement** The ability to use symbols to refer to things and activities that are remote from the user.

**divination** Supernatural techniques for obtaining information about things unknown, including events that will occur in the future.

**divination ritual** A ritual that is used for the purpose of divination.

**diviner** A religious specialist who specializes in divination.

**doctrine of signatures** Belief that physical structures found in nature, such as the shape of a plant, are indicative (or signatures) of their potential use in healing.

**dowsing** Method of divination whereby water and other underground resources are located by use of a forked stick.

**emic perspective** The study of a society through the eyes of the people being studied.

**emotive divination** Inspirational divination.

**empirical** Perceived through our senses.

**endocannibalistic anthropophagers** The term *endocannibalism* refers to the eating of one's own people, and the term *anthropophagers* refers to the eating of human bodies.

**entoptic phenomena** Visual effects that have their origin in physical changes within the eye.

**essentialist definition** A definition that looks at the essential nature of religion.

**ethnobotany** The anthropological study of the use of plant material, especially in healing.



**ethnocentrism** Using one's own culture as the basis for interpreting and judging other cultures.

**ethnographer** A person who produces an ethnography.

**ethnographic present** Speaking or writing about cultures in the present tense although what is described might no longer exist.

**ethnography** The descriptive study of human societies.

**etic perspective** The study of a society using concepts that were developed outside of the culture.

**Eucharist** A Christian sacrament that commemorates Jesus Christ's last supper by consecrating bread and wine.

**evolutionary approach** An approach that focuses on the questions of when and how religion began and how it developed through time.

**fasting** The act of abstaining from eating food and drinking water over a period of time.

**folktale** A traditional story that is part of the tradition of a society; not considered to be true.

**foraging bands** Small communities that subsist by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plant foods.

**fortuitous divination** Divination that simply occurs without any conscious effort.

**functional approach** An approach that is based on the function or role that religion plays in a society.

**functional definition** A definition that is based on the role that religion plays in a society.

**fundamentalism** A religious movement characterized by a return to fundamental principles, usually including a resistance to modernization and an emphasis on certainty through a literal interpretation of scriptures.

**geomancy** Originally a form of divination in which patterns of markings made on the ground or by thrown dirt are read. Today it refers primarily to feng shui, a method of determining the location and orientation of buildings, tombs, and other objects on the land.

**ghost** A soul of an individual after death that remains in the vicinity of the community.

**god** An individual supernatural being, with a distinctive name, personality, and control or influence of a major aspect of nature (such as rain or fertility), that encompasses the life of an entire community or a major segment of the community.

**graphology** Divination through handwriting analysis.

**haruspication** Divination by the examination of entrails of sacrificed animals.

**healer** A religious specialist who concentrates on healing.

**hedonism** Pursuit of or devotion to pleasure as a matter of principle.

**herbalist** A specialist in the use of plant and other material in curing.

**heresy** Crimes against God.

**hero myth** A common theme found in myths worldwide centered around the hero's journey or monomyth.

**high demand religion** A religious group in which much is demanded of members in terms of strict adherence to rules for thought and behavior.

**holism** The study of human societies as systematic sums of their parts, as integrated wholes.

**homeopathic magic** Magic that is based on the Law of Similarity.

**horticulture** The use of cultivated domesticated plants without the use of fertilizers, plows, irrigation, and other agricultural technologies.

**human universals** Characteristics that are found in all human societies.

**hunting and gathering rites of intensification** A ritual whose purpose is to influence nature in the quest for food.

**hypothesis** In science, a tentative statement based upon experimental and observational data that is subject to further study.

**ideological ritual** A ritual that delineates codes of proper behavior, promotes community solidarity, articulates the community's worldview, and assists the community in managing crises.

**idiophone** A musical instrument that is struck, shaken, or rubbed, such as a rattle or bell.

**image magic** A form of homeopathic magic in which an image represents a living person or animal, which can be killed or injured through doing things to the image.

**imitative magic** Magic that is based on the Law of Similarity.

**incorporation** The final stage of a rite of passage in which the individual is reintroduced to the community in his or her new status.



**increase rite** A type of ritual whose purpose is to aid the survival and reproduction of a totemic plant or animal.

**incubi** Male demons who have sex with human women while they sleep, resulting in the birth of demons, witches, and deformed children.

**infibulation** Form of female genital cutting including excision of the clitoris, labia minora, and most of the labia majora.

**Inquisition** A unit of the Roman Catholic Church that convened to judge cases of heresy.

**inspirational divination** A type of divination that involves a spiritual experience, such as a direct contact with a supernatural being through an altered state of consciousness

**interpretive approach** Idea that cultural systems are understood by studying meaning; religion is a cluster of symbols that provides a charter for a culture's ideas, values, and way of life.

**invention** Coming up with a solution to a problem using the technology at hand.

**jinn** In the Islamic religion, a spirit being created of fire.

**karma** The effect of a person's behavior during the series of phases of the person's existence. Karma is seen as determining the person's destiny.

**kiva** A ceremonial chamber, often built underground, that is found among Native American societies in the American Southwest.

**Law of Contagion** Things that were once in contact continue to be in contact after the physical connection is severed.

**Law of Similarity** Things that are alike are the same.

**Law of Sympathy** Magic that depends on the apparent association or agreement between things.

**legend** A traditional story about past events that is considered to be true; usually contains an element of reality—a known character, event, or place.

**liminality** The state of ambiguous marginality that characterizes the transition phase of a rite of passage.

**linguistic anthropology** The anthropological study of language.

**magic** Ways in which a person can compel the supernatural to behave in certain ways.

**mana** An impersonal supernatural force.

**Marxist approach** Idea that religion is a construction of those in power, designed to divert people's attention from the miseries of their lives; a way of getting people to go along with capitalist culture.

**medium** A practitioner who intentionally communicates with the supernatural to find information.

**membranophone** A musical instrument that incorporates a taut membrane or skin such as a drum.

**menarche** A young woman's first menstruation.

**messianic movement** A type of revitalization movement that is based on the appearance of a divine savior in human form who will bring about the solution to the problems that exist within the society.

**millenarian movements** A type of revitalization movement that envisions a change through an apocalyptic transformation.

**modernity** A philosophical movement based on ideas of rationality, objectivity, reason, and science as the means of gaining knowledge, truth, and progress.

**monomyth** A theme common to many myths that tells of the adventures of a culture hero.

**monotheism** A belief in one god.

**mummification** A technique of preserving a dead body involving drying and preservatives.

**mystery religion** A religion whose beliefs, practices, and true nature are known only to those who have been initiated into the religion.

**myth** A sacred story that provides the basis for religious beliefs and practices.

**nativistic movement** A type of revitalization movement that develops in traditional societies that are threatened by the activities of more technologically advanced societies.

**natural divination** Inspirational divination.

**necromancy** Divination through contact with ancestors or the dead.

**neo-paganism** A revival of pre-Christian religious practice.

**neoshamanism** A modern spiritual practice that draws on some concepts and practices of traditional shamanism, but is usually used as a method for improving an individual's life.

**new religious movement** A historically recent religious movement, often involving new leaders and new scriptures or new interpretations of older religious traditions.



**noninspirational divination** Forms of divination that are performed without the direct involvement of supernatural beings.

**occasional ritual** A ritual that is performed when a particular need arises.

**offerings** Economic exchanges designed to influence the supernatural.

**omen** A fortuitous happening or condition that provides information.

**omnibenevolent** State of being absolutely good.

**omnipotent** State of being all-powerful.

**omniscient** State of being all-knowing.

**oneiromancy** Divination by the interpretation of dreams.

**openness** A feature of symbols; the ability to create new symbols.

**operant definition** A definition in which we define our terms so that they are observable and measurable and therefore can be studied.

**oracle** A specific device that is used for divination.

**ordeal** A trial by divination that is performed on the body of the accused person to determine guilt or innocence.

**orientation association structure** The part of the brain that enables us to distinguish ourselves from the world around us and to orient ourselves in space.

**ornithomancy** Divination from reading the path and form of a flight of birds.

**otiose god** A god who is too remote and too uninterested in human activities to participate in the activities and fate of humans.

**palmistry** Divination through the reading of the lines of the palm of the hand.

**pan-Indian** Refers to activities that draw from many different Native American traditions.

**pantheon** All gods and goddesses in a polytheistic system.

**participant observation** A research method whereby the anthropologist lives in a community and participates in the lives of the people under study while at the same time making objective observations.

**pastoral nomads** Societies that subsist primarily by herding domesticated animals.

**pentacle** A five-pointed star.

**pentagram** A five-sided figure.

**periodic ritual** A ritual that is performed on a regular basis as part of a religious calendar.

**peyotism** The ritual use of peyote, a hallucinogenic cactus.

**Pharaonic infibulation** A surgical procedure performed on women that involves the complete removal of the clitoris and the labia minora and majora, the two sides of the wound then being stitched together, leaving a small opening.

**phrenology** Divination through the study of the shape and structure of the head.

**physical anthropology** The study of human biology and evolution.

**pidgin language** A simplified language that forms from the fusion of two languages.

**pilgrimage** A journey to a sacred place or a sequence of sacred spaces at which rituals are performed.

**polytheism** A belief in many gods.

**possession** An altered state of consciousness that is interpreted as a deity taking control of a person's body.

**postmodernism** An emphasis on subjectivity over objectivity and a tendency toward reflexivity, or self-consciousness; all knowledge is seen as being a human construction that scholars must seek to deconstruct.

**prescriptive ritual** A ritual that a deity or religious authority requires to be performed.

**presentiment** A feeling in a person that something is about to occur.

**priest** A full-time religious specialist who is associated with formalized religious institutions.

**prophecy** Divination through the communication of a prophet.

**prophet** Someone who communicates the words and will of the gods to his or her community, acting as an intermediary between the people and the gods.

**protective ritual** A ritual that is performed at the start of, or during, a dangerous activity to protect the participants or to protect the community against disaster.

**psychoduct** A pipe or tube that connects a tomb to a temple through which the spirit of the deceased may travel into the temple.

**psychosocial approach** An approach to the study of religion that is concerned with the relationship between culture and psychology and between society and individual.



**Purgatory** A place for souls who die with lesser faults for which there has been no repentance or for which the penalty is not wholly paid during the lifetime.

**rank** The relative placement of a status in the society.

**reincarnation** A belief in an immortal, eternal soul that is born again and again in different bodies.

**relic** An object of religious veneration, especially a piece of the body or a personal item of a religiously important person, such as an ancestor or saint.

**religion** The realm of culture that concerns the sacred supernatural.

**religious ritual** A ritual that involves the manipulation of religious symbols.

**revitalization movement** A movement that forms in an attempt to deliberately bring about change in a society.

**revitalization ritual** A ritual that is associated with a revitalization movement.

**revivalistic movement** A type of revitalization movement that attempts to revive what is often perceived as a past golden age.

**rites of passage** A ritual that occurs when an individual changes status, serving to legitimize the new status and to imprint it on the community's collective memory.

**ritual** A patterned, recurring sequence of behaviors.

**sacred** An attitude wherein the subject or object is set apart from the normal, everyday world and is entitled to reverence and respect.

**sacrifice** A gift designed to influence the supernatural in which an animal is killed.

**salvation ritual** Ritual in which an individual is changed in some way, temporarily or permanently.

**scapulamancy** A divination technique in which a dried scapula, or shoulder blade, is placed in a fire and the pattern of cracks and burns are interpreted.

**scripturalism** The practice of justifying beliefs and actions by reference to the religious text.

**secondary burial** Some time after the initial burial the bones are removed and reburied.

**sect** A new branch of a main stream religion, usually involving new revelations, new scriptures, and a new leader.

**separation** The first phase of a rite of passage in which an individual is removed from his or her former status.

**shaman** A part-time religious specialist who receives his or her power directly from the spirit world and acquires status and the ability to do things through personal communication with the supernatural.

**shrine** An object or building that contains sacred objects or is associated with a venerated person or deity.

**situational ritual** A ritual that arises as needed, frequently in times of crisis.

**small-scale** Describes relatively small communities that practice foraging, herding, or technologically simple horticulture.

**social charter** A story that establishes the proper organization and rules of behavior of a society.

**social rite of intensification** A type of ideological ritual that functions to reinforce the belief system and the values of the society.

**sorcerer** A magician who specializes in antisocial, evil magic.

**sorcery** Compelling the supernatural to behave in certain ways, usually with evil intent.

**soul** The noncorporeal, spiritual component of an individual.

**spell** The words that are spoken in a magic ritual.

**spirit** A supernatural being that is less powerful than a god and is usually more localized; often one of a collection of nonindividualized supernatural beings that are not given specific names and identities.

**spirit possession** An altered state of consciousness that is interpreted as a spirit taking over control of a human body and is either deliberately induced by a ritual performance or the consequence of an illness caused by a spirit taking control.

**status** A social position that is defined in terms of appropriate behavior, rights and obligations, and its relationship to other statuses.

**stigmata** Bodily wounds or pain considered by Christians to be visible signs of participation in the sufferings of Christ.

**stimulus diffusion** What occurs when an idea moves from one culture to another and stimulates the invention of a new trait.

**subincision** Form of genital cutting where the underside of the penis is cut and the urethra slit open.

**succubae** Female demons who have sex with human men while they sleep, resulting in damnation of the men's souls.



**supernatural** Entities and actions that transcend the natural world of cause and effect.

**supreme god** A god who resides at the top of a pantheon.

**swastika** A symbol formed by two lines crossing at right angles with their ends bent at right angles in a clockwise or counterclockwise position.

**symbol** A shared understanding about the meaning of certain words, attributes, or objects; something that stands for something else.

**sympathetic system** The arousal system of the brain.

**syncretism** A fusing of traits from two cultures to form something new and yet permitting the retention of the old by subsuming the old into a new form.

**tabu** Objects and persons that are supernaturally prohibited. May also refer to certain behaviors that would bring about negative consequences through supernatural means.

**tasseography** Divination through the reading of tea leaves.

**technological ritual** A ritual that attempts to influence or control nature, especially in those situations that affect human activities and well-being.

**tensegrity** A technique of body movements that aims to increase awareness of the body's energy fields; developed by Carlos Castaneda.

**testable** The ability to develop new experiments and observations that will test the validity of a conclusion.

**theory** In science, a framework for understanding that is supported by a large amount of consistent scientific data.

**theory of mind** The idea that people know, or think they know, what is going on in other people's minds.

**therapy ritual** A ritual whose function is to cure.

**therianthropes** Creatures that are part human and part animal.

**totalism** The belief that religion is relevant to, and should be a part of, all parts of a society.

**totem** A symbol or emblem that stands for a social unit.

**totemism** A religious system that assigns different plant and animal species to specific social groups and postulates a relationship between the group and the species formed during the period of creation.

**traditioning** The idea that religious texts are relevant to life today.

**transition** The second phase of a rite of passage during which a person is in a liminal state and is moved from one status to another.

**transmigration** A situation in which a soul passes from one body to another—human, animal, or even an inanimate object.

**trickster** A god who gave humans important things or skills, often by accident or through trickery.

**trickster story** A story involving a trickster deity.

**unitary state** An altered state of consciousness in which an individual experiences a feeling of becoming one with the supernatural.

**urban legend** Contemporary story about people and events that never occurred, but are presented as real.

**vampire** A person who has died before his or her time and who brings about the death of friends and relatives until his or her corpse is "killed."

**witchcraft** The ability of a person to cause harm by means of a personal power that resides within the body of the witch.

**worldview** The way in which a society perceives and interprets its reality.

**zombie** A corpse that has been raised from the grave and animated.



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