

# What Are Indigenous Religions? Part 1

Mon, 10/11 10:17AM 59:44

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

shinto, religion, indigenous religions, kami, indigenous, japanese, people, practices, laughs, world religions, japan, tribe, nerds, native, world, india, imperialism, culture, hear, folks

## SPEAKERS

Simpsons, If You Don't Know, Now You Know, Megan Goodwin, Bonus Ending, Dr. Jolyon Thomas, A Little Bit Leave It, Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst

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Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:18

This is Keeping It 101, a killjoy's introduction to religion podcast. For 2021-2022, our work is made possible through a Public Humanities Fellowship from the University of Vermont's Humanities Center. We're grateful to live, teach, and record on the current, ancestral and unceded lands of the Abenaki, Wabenaki, and Aucocisco peoples. As always, you can find material ways to support indigenous communities on our website.



Megan Goodwin 00:42

What's up nerds? Hi, hello, I'm Megan Goodwin, a scholar of American religions, race, and gender.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:48

Hi, hello, I'm Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, a historian of religion, Islam, race and racialization, and South Asia.



Megan Goodwin 00:54

Here we go again! The thing about world religions is that there's just... there's so much world! Am I right?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 01:02

\*giggles\* Yeah! The world is a giant, maddening place, with so much horror-- and beauty!-- And uhh... why did we decide to do such a big season again??



Megan Goodwin 01:11

Because we're ambitious motherfuckers? Like we can't-- we are a problem, is the short answer there. But also,

everybody teaches this fricken class! And non-professors usually think about religion in this like comparative or world religions way. and if everybody's thinking in a way that is so often myopic, and limited, and just like... wrong, that I couldn't just let it go! Aggghh, this is-- this is me. This is-- this is US standing in my truth, so... thanks?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 01:16

\*laughs\* \*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 01:49

Our last episode was all about African Diasporic Religions, and we've told y'all that this is a catch-all umbrella term. It's both useful to describe people's lived practices, and also it is a product of imperialism. The term. And hey, guess what? We've got more of that today! Today, we're starting a two episode dive into Indigenous religions. Between this episode and the next, we're covering how Indigenous gets talked about, who counts and who doesn't, and why that matters when we talk religion. We'll be helped out by guests across these episodes. And today, we've got Dr. Jolyon Thomas coming for your ears.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 02:27

Dr. Thomas is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and his work broadly focuses on religion and the arenas of law, education, media, and often Japan. We're assigning so much of him for homework-- you DEFINITELY want to read whatever he's writing, if I'm honest, but we'll hear from him a little bit later. Listen! We're not just doing this for the lesson plan, we're doing it for a SHIT load of lesson plan! \*music plays\* Good line read? \*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 03:04

So good. I appreciate your commitment. \*inaudible\* All right, let's keep this simple (she says, again, hilariously on page two of a sixteen page outline). \*laughs\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:17

Don't tell them that! \*laughs\*




Megan Goodwin 03:20


We're talking about Indigenous religions for two reasons. First, because like we've been telling you for 36 episodes or so, religion is imperial. It is about power. And second, because we think you can't call yourself religiously literate without actually knowing what these religions are, how they came about, how they came to be called religions, and why they matter to scholars, to regular folks, and to their practitioners.





Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:42


Uh. Megan?


 Megan Goodwin 03:44  
Yes, IRMF?


 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:45  
This uhh... sounds like the same lesson plan as our last episode...


 Megan Goodwin 03:49  
\*laughs\*


 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:52  
And since I'm writing these using my very fancy psychic abilities, it's also the same as the next episode...

 Megan Goodwin 03:59  
Oh-ho!

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:00  
And uhh-- and the one after that. What gives with this thesis? Am I just stuck in a loop? Oh my god, Megan. It's time-- Is this a time travel problem and I don't know it?? You KNOW I HATE time travel plot devices!! What the hell is happening?!

 Megan Goodwin 04:16  
Loopers!! No, no, it's not loopers. It's okay. You are not stuck in a loop. You're not being punked by an outlander. Alas, I would sign up for that. I volunteer as tribute. Uh, we're repeating lesson plans, because, well, it's that important! Sorry, the lesson plan is here, and it's here to stay!

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:36  
Well, in that case, let's go to the 101 on today-- \*clicks tongue\*-- the section where we do professor work.

 Megan Goodwin 04:42  
Mhm!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:42

All right. I know in this season, we're talking about the problem of world religion because imperialism.



Megan Goodwin 04:47

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:47

Like we've said a billion times already, we would not have this model of thinking about religion-- thinking that "everyone" has a religion, that some religions are inherently better than others, or more logical than others, that there are "correct" and "proper" ways of being religious WITHOUT EuroAmerican imperialism, with a side of white Christian supremacy just for funsies.



Megan Goodwin 05:10

Yes. All of that. Toxic funsies.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 05:12

BUT. I've thought about religion since 2009 in some capacity, I have three degrees in religion or religious studies, and I've never seen a world religion syllabus or textbook front load Indigenous religions. So I have two--



Megan Goodwin 05:26

This just tells me you never look at my syllabi, but that's fine. That's okay.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 05:29

I-I- These are Socratic dialogue pieces, Megan. I look at ALL of your syllabi.



Megan Goodwin 05:35

Alright. They're so pretty! Anyway, what are your questions?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 05:38

Why are WE starting here? And, what is this catch all phrase? What does Indigenous religions mean? Having deja vu all over again.





Megan Goodwin 05:49

Yeah, spoilers to any of my students from this semester-- literally EVERY class in my world religions course has exactly this lesson plan. Hey, why do we talk about this and why does it matter? Anyway-- I'm glad you asked, Ilyse. I'm glad you ask these Socratic questions that you know the answer to. It's really not any different than why we kicked off History of the World Religions, Part One, with African Diasporic Religions. If we're trying to work against the traditional world religions model, which, as you just said, is rooted in white Christian supremacy and imperialism (which makes me want to work against it), then to me, there are a few places as rich and as exciting to have such a chat as African Diasporic Religions (what we talked about last time) AND Indigenous religions (what we're talking about today AND next time), but also I just-- I want to underline what you've said across episodes now. The fact is SO few classes or introductory textbooks or pop culture, like, PBS/BBC style documentaries, ever start, or end, or even GET to Native peoples (or what we now think of as Native religions). Everybody makes choices about what to include and what to leave out-- and we do too!-- But it's important to both of us, I reckon, that we not fall into the same traps as everyone else.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:09

Yeah! Yeah. We started with African Diasporic Religions and Indigenous religions precisely so that our nerds have their version of world religions upended a little bit, right from the jump. It may not be anyone's fault when we say "world religions," most of us have been programmed to think some "big" ones, like Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity. It's not our fault, but it is our responsibility to push back hard on that shit.



Megan Goodwin 07:20

Huzzah! Indeed! Okay, but... um... IRMF?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:41

Uhh... yes, Goodwin?



Megan Goodwin 07:43

Can I add to your question of whyyyy we're starting here with, like, some explanations?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:49

You know it!



Megan Goodwin 07:52

Okay! Okay. So, obviously, we're talking about Indigenous religions today AND on the next episode, and I suggested we break this into two episodes: one, (today's, actually) focusing on definitions and examples beyond what's now the United States, and the next time, thinking about Indigenous religions in the Americas. And I did that because Americans and in, like, especially white settlers, often think about Indigenous religions as ONLY Native Americans

from what's now the United States. And that is incorrect and does not make sense. First, because nation-states are historically new ideas, and borders are lies we tell on maps and then defend with bombs. Wow, that's the t-shirt right there.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 08:34

Huh. I know, right? \*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 08:35

\*laughs sarcastically\* Let's do that one again, slower, because it's important. Borders are lies, we tell on maps, and then, defend with bombs. Or, as we saw this week, fucking whips. Anyway. They-- but ALSO, there are ideas, peoples, languages, cultures that are properly Indigenous to their own regions. This includes Europe too, people! Just because Europe colonized itself thoroughly before doing so elsewhere, and we want to pretend people like the Saami don't exist, that doesn't mean that's not-- that that's true. That we-- again, white Euro-Americans-- collapse all ethnic, religious, linguistic, ALL sorts of diversity, into one overarching thing is, \*blows raspberry\* well first, it's white supremacy and imperialism in action. And second, it is a fucking problem.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 09:26

Yeah. Yeah, straight out. So, this seems like a great moment, if I can, first to define some terms, right? Like the way we use capital-N Native to mean a people of a place. But we're using native in a different way, right? Lowercase-N native is a way that folks will often say like, "I'm a New York native," or "Hinduism is native to India." And I think, Goodwin, that both of those statements and both of those balances can be true. Like, this is how language works-- words have multiple meanings-- but this isn't the specificity and nuance that we're bringing, and since this is an audio medium, we're going to have to use the phrase "capital-N Native" and "capital-I Indigenous."



Megan Goodwin 10:08

Yes. Good.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 10:09

So when I say that-- capital-N Native, capital-I Indigenous, especially in this context-- we are of course referring, in some ways, the Webster's dictionary style-- which is to say intrinsic to an area, born there. But we also want to implicate really particular cultures (which are, of course, not separate from religion) and of course the impacts of political influence, power, and authority on these very particular communities and very particular cultures. That might be different than saying "I'm in New York native" when I can trace my family lineage to, say, Eastern Europe.



Megan Goodwin 10:42

Yeah. Well, and, for me, the capital-N Native, capital-I Indigenous and the relationship to place (and I know we'll do this later) but it's not just like "I am from there," it's a relationality and accountability. Like, this is my place because it takes care of me and it's my place to take care of.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:03

Yeah. From and of a place, I think. Okay. So for example, can we talk India? Because you know I'm gonna.



Megan Goodwin 11:10

\*giggles\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:11

India is a particular nation state in South Asia--



Megan Goodwin 11:14

Yes, I have heard of it.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:15

--and one that I, uh... will talk about a lot. Lots of people-- including Hindu nationalists, but that's for a later episode, stay tuned-- talk about Hinduism as "native" to India. It originates there, most of its adherents can trace ancestry there. That seems straightforward enough, right? BUT, in India, there are al-- the nation-state of India-- there are also legal categorizations and common knowledge about indigenous communities which are referred to as tribes. Legally. So, I hear you sighing protractedly even though THIS LINE says, "Before you sigh protractedly!"



Megan Goodwin 11:34

\*laughs\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:54

We can have a moment about that word in a minute, Megan, I have scripted it in--



Megan Goodwin 11:58

Fine, fine.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:58

--let me just finish this thought.



Megan Goodwin 12:00

All right, fine.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:01

I love that I know where you're going to BREATHE. It's the best.



Megan Goodwin 12:03

\*laughs\* Don't police my emotions!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:06

I'm not, I'm not. I swear.



Megan Goodwin 12:07

I have to breathe them! Okay.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:09

Okay. In India, despite claims in and outside of India that Hinduism is THE native religion of the region, and that true natives of India would therefore be Hindu, there is also legal and socio-cultural affirmation of indigenous-- and I'm putting this in quotes-- "tribal" people, whose cultures, languages, ways of life, healing practices, locations are sometimes related to Hindu mainstream cultures and sometimes not! But are nevertheless considered different from them. So in THIS context, capital-I Indigenous does not indicate, like, mainline, caste Hindus who can trace their family roots to nowhere EXCEPT India; the same folks who would say "Yeah, I'm native to India;" "Hinduism is native to India." Indigeneity here usually expresses power, presence, population: "tribes" (in quotes) in India are designated as such LEGALLY in complicated ways. And so to oversimplify, they're usually designated as such because of how remote they are from these Hindu mainstream norms.



Megan Goodwin 13:14

Okay! I actually did not know that, so I learned a thing today. It a little bit reflects how we think of tribes in what's now the United States as having specific legal relationships and distance from the government of the US. But we'll come back to all of this. I'm always trying to make it about America, I'm the worst! Okay, we're coming back to tribes. What I hear YOU saying is that Native, capital N, or Indigenous, capital I, doesn't only mean FROM a place. It specifically refers to balances of power, and influence, and access. We're also often talking about folks who have been brutally dominated by imperialist systems-- usually European, if I'm honest, but also by other dominant empires, like Han Chinese, Ottoman, Mongolian, there's--there's a whole list. Russia's got a figure in there somewhere right?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:02



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:02

Yeah, definitely! So there's--there's a whole-- Yes. Let's talk about this word tribe, though. We've--we've kicked the can a little bit, I think it's time.



Megan Goodwin 14:18

Okay, okay. Let me be clear that there are groups-- and again, Americanist, so this is what I know-- that name themselves tribes. And in what's now the United States, that's specifically about legal nationhood outside the US. Um... so much talk about there.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:37

We're gonna get there next episode, I promise.



Megan Goodwin 14:39

I know! Haudenosaunee passports, though, they're so interesting. But alright. No. So, for right now-- \*clears throat\* We listen to those folks, we respect their naming practices, and honor how they came to that decision, because that's a choice that they're making now, regardless of the complicated, fraught history of the word "tribe."



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:55

Yes. Good. We believe people, we call them by the names they tell us to use, that's super simple... What's the problem, then, with this word?



Megan Goodwin 15:02

Mmm. Well, it's just that... tribe, and tribal, and tribalism, and all the other grammatical iterations we can make were not always a choice... like, at all?? Like, hello... imperialism, is it you we're looking for? Yeah. Tribe is this non-distinct word that got used anywhere Europeans and later Americans colonized. Tribe and tribal carry with it echoes of how that word was originally used, which is to say as a synonym or in tandem with words like "savage," "backward," "uncivilized," "uncultured," "heathen." And you hear that, yeah, Ilyse?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 15:44

Oh, yeah.



Megan Goodwin 15:45

You-- yeah? You hear "uncivilized" and "uncultured?" We know savage is a shitty word unless we're talking about a sick burn on a drag race reading challenge. And even that I'm trying to stay away from, obviously. That feels obvious in 2021. But "uncivilized" and "uncultured" sound EXACTLY like what we're talking about in History of the World Religions! They're words that literally describe what white European Christian colonizers imagined Native and Indigenous peoples to be. Without culture, without civilization. There's too many ethnographic books about tribes of

Africa, Asia, America, Oceania-- the "tribes" are different, but the overarching idea is the same: these backward Black and brown people the world over are more or less the same, all of these horrible, racist books are saying. And they need converting, and ruling! So unless a specific indigenous group uses tribe as part of its own name, we do not. It's too loaded to obviously part of imperialist history that we're trying to highlight, but also, just... let's just shut it the fuck down. And please, please, if you are a person who is not Native or Indigenous, please do not use the word tribe to refer to folks who think like you do. That is a gross thing that happens a lot on the internet.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:01

Yeah. Yeah, no. I'm struck-I'M struck personally by the language of "uncultured" every time because, like, you and I teach about religion, a lil bit, and we cannot divorce religion from culture, and culture is often-- quite frankly, especially in the imperial moment-- a stand-in for the word religion. So to say someone is uncultured also often means something like, without a history, because cultures are things that are passed on and down through generations, right? So a lack of history, a lack of culture, I mean, OOF. That's heavy! And part of what I think we're doing in this critique of terms, before we even get into the thing that we're doing, is letting our nerds hear how imperial assumptions work. That assumption that native folks have no culture, no history. Or that their culture and religion is generalizable, portable, nonspecific. Like, ever wonder why indigenous people everywhere were (and sometimes still are) called Indians? Cause this dumbass white man couldn't tell their ass from their elbow in the mythical quest for spices and riches. For real, for real! So everywhere they went-- "This here is India, and these people? Indians! Wrong? Oh, fuck it. This is just the West Indies. Y'all are-- you other Indians, the real Indian, uh, East Indies!" Or something.



Megan Goodwin 18:22

Not "mythical quest for spice and riches." I'm going to need to make so many t-shirts. That's so tragic.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:27

I was really, so upset when I was writing this episode. \*laughs\* Anyway--



Megan Goodwin 18:31

Yeah. Yeah. These are-- Straight up!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:31

You know what? When imperialists and supremacists reduced every single indigenous population to a conglomerate of backward tribes, who didn't have a history (like children without pasts) or a culture (like blank, child-like slates who need proper rearing, often through force), it became really easy-- and you hear this in my tone already-- We expect things like devaluation, dehumanization, and-- of indigenous folks wholesale. So, yes! Infantilization, but also genocide, ethnic cleansing, cultural, religious, historical ongoing erasure. And it's all tied up! It's all tied up. Go ahead, sorry.



Megan Goodwin 19:15

Yeah. No, it's-it's just-it's-it's a horrible Rice Krispie treat of white supremacist, imperialist violence. They're horrifying histories, and frankly, far too often, presents. I mean, just this summer we saw so much heartbreaking news come out about indigenous children stolen and taken to residential schools (which we will talk about next time). \*sighs\* But these are important histories, these are important presents, and we need to name those and start dealing with them. They're also, though, obviously not the only or even the most important thing to know about indigenous peoples or their cultures or histories. But the politics of naming is really crucial here. The word tribe, when used out of its proper, political context is trash. Don't do that. But, Western European colonizers and missionaries often imposed brand new names or mangled phonetic spellings of indigenous names. They didn't just, like, add the word "tribe" to people's title. They just-- they just made shit up! \*sighs\* We know, from historical records the world over, that many indigenous groups simply called themselves "the People," often of a specific area. In some parts of the world, the name for the languages that people were speaking was also the name for the people themselves. So language, and culture, and religion-- all of this gets encoded in how people talked about themselves. And talk about themselves! This is still happening. But regardless, as scholars, we use the name Indigenous people use to refer to themselves. If they use the name, we use the name. The end.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 20:49

We're going to call people what they want to be called here (and let's be real, in every situation). Not doing so is some bullshit! I have one other question.



Megan Goodwin 20:57

Hit it!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 20:58

Since we're still talking broadly about indigenous religions, perhaps especially as we see or understand them beyond the Americas, are there any big picture ideas that we might use to categorize them? I'm honestly, I'm hesitant to even ask this question because how are we gonna say there are commonalities across the literal whole world? But at the same time, since the world religion models names "indigenous religions" as a thing, I guess I'm asking... what the fuck does that mean?!



Megan Goodwin 21:23

Yeah, yeah, yeah-- okay, well, "What the fuck does that mean?" is ALWAYS a great question. AND, obviously one of the parts here is our refrain! It's named that way because world religions paradigm comes from imperialism! I know you love joking that the answer is always imperialism, but like... it a little bit is!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:39

I knew it. I fucking knew it.



Megan Goodwin 21:41

\*chuckles\* But also, there ARE some things we can say which make the category legible today, and sometimes,

uhhhhhh, scholars and practitioners argue about whether or not these are useful or accurate. So, okay. First and foremost, most indigenous religions have a connection to a specific place. And not like, oh, you know, like "Paris, je t'aime," or "Majorca is a bit of me." It's a deep, traditional, often sacred connection to a specific place. It can be as small or as large as we can imagine, frankly, because ideas about land might be really specific, like a particular mountain--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 22:20

Ooh! Yeah! A good example there might be Mount Kailash in Tibet, which is sacred to a HOST of religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, but also Bön, an indigenous religion of Tibet. Like that? Is that what you mean?



Megan Goodwin 22:31

That IS what I mean, and I love it when you come up with examples! So, yeah! It can be particular like a mountain, or it can be vast and expansive, like the notion of land and place for Maori in Aotearoa (also known as New Zealand). In short, big or small, vast or rooted, many indigenous traditions have a deep connection to land-- being of it, caretaking for it, the land taking care of them, them taking care of the land, and understanding their community, their family, their relationships to and with the land. Sometimes it's also tied to or mixed up with notions of Gods, or spirits, or ancestors, not quite humans, more than humans, different than humans, who are also tied to, located with, from within that land. We also saw this a little bit in African Diasporic Religions. We saw this way back when we talked about Native religions as an example of what counts as religion--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 22:40

In episode 104, in fact.



Megan Goodwin 23:27

Still love a callback!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:29

Alright. So, land, and that can be specific, like a given tree, perhaps, or a mountain, like Kailash, or vast, like the conceptualization of ALL lands, or OUR lands, or THE water. I wonder if we might also talk about orality, story, myth, practice, as a part of what we might expect to find in this category of Native or Indigenous religions.



Megan Goodwin 23:52

Yes! So stories, and myths, and art-- all of those are ways that native people have and do encode history and culture. So when Western European folk showed up and were like, "You don't have any history, you don't have any culture because you didn't write anything down," it was just an inability to see, frankly, what was right in front of their faces.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:53





Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 23:54

So, MOST religions have those components, at least in part, but the specific contours of European religion, and especially Protestant Christianity, started emphasizing text as a requirement to be a real religion-- to get a spot in the world religions paradigm, like a seat on the world parliament of religions in 1893, and also, you know, to count as a religion to avoid being enslaved, or captured, or forcibly converted. So a lot of oral cultures-- even in Christian practices!-- get lost due to the way that Christian imperialism has developed. This wasn't a given, though, so it shouldn't surprise us that other ways of knowing and practicing flourish, like, again, storytelling, performances, dance, art. Just, ways of passing on who a people is, and what they know, and what they value, and where they've come from, and where they hope they're heading. All of that gets encoded, just not necessarily in textual ways.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:14

Or-- yeah. Like, what we would expect as text, like text equals book as opposed to text equals this narrative that people have memorized and there's like, you know, 400 oral text books, but because you memorize them, they don't count as much.



Megan Goodwin 25:28

Right. That's true! Dr. Castro talked to us about that last time with Lukumi! Yes.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:34

Exactly. Okay! So. We've got land and connections to it, we've got orality, storytelling, myth, as number two, and I think the last sort of commonality I'd like our nerds to hear about is conversion.



Megan Goodwin 25:50

Uh huh.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:50

We often think about religious being  $\hat{A}$  religious as one thing-- like, you are a Jew, you are a Muslim, and these are singular categories. So maybe you move between them, but only formally, you convert. Or, maybe you are a person being raised in an interfaith family, but there's still that understanding of two separate things combining in your house to be a third and separate thing.



Megan Goodwin 26:16

Mhm.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:17

Anyway, also, that only works sometimes because of racialization (callback all of season two).



Megan Goodwin 26:21

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:22

Here's what I want our nerds to know. For Indigenous religions, broadly speaking, there's not really this understanding of conversion, or converting. This isn't A religion claiming universality for all people in all the world. Rather, we often see its claims of universal truths for a specific people in particular ways and with real emphasis on particular relationships. Conversion's also a great place to think about the limits of "Indigenous religion" as a category because it is about what we think of as a religion, and it also isn't! I can't convert to a culture.



Megan Goodwin 26:55

Yeah, no.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:57

I can't convert to a racialized category.



Megan Goodwin 26:59

Nope.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 27:00

So you, white hippies with dreadlocks, thinking you'll find an authentic connection in a Brazilian rain forest with Native practitioners... Your appropriation is showing.



Megan Goodwin 27:08

My god, did you just come from my sister? I love it. Love it! Yeah--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 27:11

No, I didn't. I don't-- I don't know Erin, but...



Megan Goodwin 27:14

\*giggles\* She doesn't have dreadlocks... but she does have opinions about Ayahuasca. Anyway! Yeah, no, you can't convert to being born Lakota. That's not how that works. And this is a big global issue for native folks: appropriation. \*secret word of the day!\* The taking of someone's culture, religion, way of being, and using it without permission for their own good, and importantly, without any of the risk, or accountability, or acknowledgement about the way that, say, their ancestors, or like, let's make it about my ancestors-- my white European ancestors might have participated in the violent attempted destruction of the ancestors of Native people.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 27:19

Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 27:59

Another major issue, I think, is discontinuity. There's a lack of information, or often a lack of information considered to be credible, about indigenous histories all over the world. So real talk-- scholarship on indigenous religions began hundreds of years after contact (especially if we're talking about indigenous communities in the Americas, Oceania and Africa), or just hundreds of years later, because scholarship is a modern concept, full fucking stop. So for us, and sometimes for practitioners themselves, it's hard to determine if practices and beliefs predate contact with, again, like Western European colonizers, predate imperialism, or if, uhhh, practices and beliefs have changed radically over time. Often, and frankly usually, it's a mix of knowing and not knowing, but it's not as simple as the records kept about like, Jews. \*chuckles\* I mean, when did things ever get to be simple for the Jews? But, we can trace debates and heterodoxies and orthodoxies around Judaism, not because Judaism was or is consistent (because it's not, at all. I know all your people love to argue)--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 29:06

So much.



Megan Goodwin 29:07

--BUT records work differently in places where Jews lived and within Jewish communities. We can never know everything, of course, but we can see how things changed over a--a HUGE, long period of time. Through violence of all kinds-- murder, enslavement, genocide, forbidding Native languages to be spoken, learned, or read, taking of Native children-- we don't usually have that kind of privilege with indigenous religions.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 29:33

\*sighs\* Yeah, so I take this to be a place for our little catchphrase, "religion is what people do," is really, really crucial. I cannot believe I'm gonna say this, me, our historian who bugs out regularly about fiction being incorrect about history, but: focusing on how indigenous religions are practiced now, irrespective of history, I think is the ticket. We should account for things like mass conversion, historical legacies of violence, and the rest of it. That's inexcusable, and we need to think about it. But that shouldn't make the surviving, real, and current practices any less important, or primary, or "authentic," in big quotes.



Megan Goodwin 30:12

Yes. Exactly. Now-- a thing that I appreciate about you is that you keep trying to explain linear time to me, even though it is a lie, and also a concept my brain cannot make any sense of-- is this where I get to talk about 10 indigenous religions from every corner of the globe so we can highlight commonalities, but also fiercely talk through how unique every SINGLE set of these cultures, and traditions, and often linguistic histories are? Is that-- is that time?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 30:39

No, it's not, Megan.



Megan Goodwin 30:42

I want to do it, so there is time for it!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 30:45

I've been telling you since we conceived this season, we get one argument and one example. And then we get loooooong homework sections so our nerds can do more learning. You are... God, you're serious, right? You think that there's time? To do all of it?



Megan Goodwin 30:58

If I want to do it, there's time to do it. Yes. I have so many things to say! And also, YOU have many things to say and--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:06

Alright, alright, alright. Can you just pick one? One example that helps us highlight how indigenous religions works (and doesn't) as a category?



Megan Goodwin 31:14


Fine, fine, but time is a lie! But also, I know you'll murder me if we waste too much of it. Soooo, that also seems like a fake concept, but FINE, fine. Okay. Let's dive into a set of practices that is often thought of as indigenous-- but also doesn't entirely fit that model-- which I basically point out this season. I pick Shinto! Let's talk about that.





Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:36


Thank you for believing women, or at least this woman, when I say that time is both good construct and real. Either way, Shinto it is, way to pick it.





 Megan Goodwin 31:44  
Huzzah!

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:44  
Good choice, though there are so many others, this will be absolutely great. Let's do our thing. Megan, let's start basic. What is Shinto?


 Megan Goodwin 31:52  
That's a big question from a little lady.

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:53  
\*laughs\*

 Megan Goodwin 31:55  
But yeah, okay, let's define! Shinto-- \*secret word of the day\*-- is often understood as an indigenous Japanese set of traditions-- but the word, and you're going to love this, IRMF, because I know you love a thing about naming a language-- comes from the Chinese shen dao, or "way of the gods." It's also known as kami no michi, which is Japanese for "way of the kami." And kami-- \*secret word of the day\*-- K-A-M-I, are spirits or natural forces, and I definitely want to talk about them more in a minute. They have a lot of really good stories. But-- let's start with the Shinto name, or the calling it Shinto, which emerges in the sixth century CE, as a way to distinguish between indigenous practices and beliefs, uhhh, and Mahayana Buddhism, which is becoming popular in Japan at the time. There are a number of other terms for Shinto, but this term becomes popular, uhhh, IRMF, do you want to guess when?

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 32:53  
Alright, I actually do really want to guess. I'm gonna guess--

 Megan Goodwin 32:55  
\*laughs\*

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 32:55  
I'm gonna have to guess that it deals with two kinds of imperialism-- Japanese internal imperial politics and global European imperial politics? So maybeeee, during both construction of the world religions paradigm AND consolidation of Japanese ethnonational identities and power, I'mma guess 18th century?



Megan Goodwin 33:14

Oh damn! I know you love the 19th century, but you're right! Yes!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:20

\*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 33:20

Love a history guessing game. So most historians see Shinto starting-- Shinto being named as Shinto, starting early as the 15th century, but it really IS the 18th century. Ding, ding, ding, ding!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:33

Yay! \*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 33:35

So we don't have space for the really important historical bits here, but the short version-- Shinto is a Japanese religious system. It's named as Shinto to distinguish it from Buddhism for complicated reasons that more or less boil down to Japanese ethnonational identities. A big piece of this is trying to formally divorce Shinto from Buddhism, keeping the Japanese indigenusness central. In other words, imagining Shinto as STRICTLY Japanese and Buddhism as strictly not, which is a political argument. Surprise! Religion is political, and politics are religion yet again.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 34:17

Who woulda thunk?



Megan Goodwin 34:18

I know! \*chuckles\* Religion was the politics we made along the way. But in practice, it's hard to separate these allegedly (and sometimes actually) distinct religions, and as lots of scholars have argued, that's maybe not the most productive question we can ask about it. So.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 34:35

Alright, well, so let's expand on that then. Shinto is, like you said before, a set of practices that rests on relationships with the kami, who are natural spirits and forces, and claims to indigenusness are both political and, for lack of a better phrase, kind of obvious.



Megan Goodwin 34:40

M

Megan Goodwin 34:49

Yeah, yeah. Definitely. But, do you know what? As we're thinking about how Shinto was practiced, how "Japanese" it is (Japanese in quotation marks because there's a lot of conversation about, again, an ethnonationalism and its relationship to Shinto), and how all of this fits into indigenous religions. I think that this is a great moment to hear from our guest expert, Dr. Jolyon Thomas, who has written so much about Japanese religion, what counts, and how we think about Shinto specifically.

D

Dr. Jolyon Thomas 35:21

My name is Jolyon Thomas, and I'm an expert on how religion intersects with media, law, politics, education, and the economy. I care that students, and scholars, and policymakers, and my mom know about what I study because I think the distinctions we intuitively draw between religion and other aspects of social life often determine what gets taken seriously and what doesn't. that can have life and death effects. Japanese people generally adopt nonexclusive in situational approaches to religious practice, and may therefore engage with multiple religious institutions, or even use various virtual services without ever thinking of themselves as religious. In fact, if you ask 10 people on the street in Japan, if their religious, only about 2 in 10 would say yes. But according to official government statistics, the total number of religious adherence in Japan equals about 1.4 times the entire population of the country. Japan is therefore both minimally and maximally religious, depending on who you're listening to, and how you're counting. Okay, if we go by official government statistics, there are approximately 182,000 distinct religions in Japan. In a nation of approximately 126 million people, that amounts to roughly one religion for every 700 people. Now, most of these discreet organizations happen to be associated with larger denominational or sectarian institutions, like Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. But in addition to those, there are also a number of Christian denominations, and there are miscellaneous other movements with eclectic doctrines and ritual practices. So there's a tradition called hot Sumo day, in which people visit Shinto shrines on the first day of the year to petition the deities for good fortune. Some of the biggest shrines in Japan, like Meiji Jingu in Tokyo, will see upwards of 3 million distinct visitors in the first few days of the New Year. Now, although these New Year's visits appear to derive from ancient Japanese practices, in fact, they emerge out of promotional campaigns conducted by rail companies that aim to boost ticket sales in the early 20th century. So this very traditional practice actually emerged from corporate ad campaigns. Dictionaries and encyclopedias often describe Shinto as "the indigenous religion of Japan." On the one hand, this makes sense because the veneration of deities known as kami seems to be an exclusively Japanese practice. But on the other hand, scholars have shown that many of the deities associated with Shinto are actually of non-Japanese origin, and most of the ideas about Shinto's indigeneity have been created in the context of Japanese people trying to assert Japanese uniqueness or superiority, vis a vis other nations and cultures. Another crucial point about indigeneity and Japanese religion is that the classic texts of the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki, the texts that are typically seen as the primary sources for Shinto mythology, are actually settler colonial texts that both literally and metaphorically depict one powerful clan subduing other clans in eradicating the indigenous inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago. The conventional wisdom is that Japan had an indigenous, quote unquote "ethnic" religion called Shinto that predated the arrival of the universal, quote unquote, "world" religion known as Buddhism. But the earliest texts associated with Shinto postdate the arrival of Buddhism on the archipelago. And for most of Japanese history, Buddhism, not Shinto, form the dominant way of understanding things like cosmology, time, political rule, and personal salvation. Scholars like myself therefore distinguish between kami worship, and ancient practice of venerating powerful ancestors and natural forces that predated Buddhism, and Shinto, a post-Buddhism concept of a discreet ritual protocol that really only emerged in the 15th century when shrine priests were trying to distinguish themselves from Buddhists. This question of world religions came up in my research on the allied occupation of Japan, which was a military occupation and democratization project that marked the end of World War II. Briefly, the Americans that were in charge of setting occupation policy thought that religion was specifically to blame for Japan's imperialist expansion and military aggression. They thought that the, quote unquote, "ethnic" religion of Shinto drove Japanese militarism, and they also assume that the positive influence from a, quote unquote, "universal" religion, like Christianity, or Buddhism, would naturally contribute to more democratic governance. These presuppositions were clearly indebted to the world religions paradigm, including a version of that model that was

avored by local Japanese religious studies scholars. So along with recent work like Mike Graziano's great new book on religion in the CIA, my research has shown that when policymakers imagine causal relationships between religion in geography, and race and ethnicity, they make decisions that oversimplify very complex phenomena. So in the case of the occupation, the Americans made United States religion and politics appear normal and natural, while rendering Japanese religion and politics as weird. That's a pattern that the US has repeated time and again since, with really devastating effects for lots of different populations, both domestically and abroad.



Megan Goodwin 40:28

What I hear Dr. Thomas saying, is thinking about Shinto as indigenous is limited. It's not the whole story. What I hear him saying, A.) is that the textbook that I assigned a million years ago and have been using ever since, is uh... wrong. \*laughs\* And that we want to take seriously the imperial contours of how Shinto gets read as indigenous in the first place. What are the stakes in claiming indigeneity for Shinto, and why we should care! And if we're thinking about big picture issues, like how does world religions even work, then Shinto seems like a place that we see claims of indigeneity tied up with nationalism and ethnocentrism, and yes, quote unquote, "worl--" "real world religions" like Buddhism.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:12

Yeah, all of that. I think that Dr. Thomas is pushing us to hear that this stuff is complicated, and the stakes aren't as cute as labeling. This isn't just, "What list might this go on?" It's, "Here's how we're making claims about belonging, identity, nationalism, empire." So this is anything but, like, simplistic list making.



Megan Goodwin 41:32

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:33

And I'm really appreciative of that intervention for us, Goodwin. I think that I want to talk to our listeners more about the what of Shinto so that when they put their laundry away, they can say, "Huh! Indigenous religions is more complicated than we thought!" And two, "Here's a thing I learned about Shinto," which I'm assuming most of our nerds have not thought about critically before.



Megan Goodwin 41:52

Yes! I love when we learn things, especially when we're putting away laundry.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:57

That's what I do when I listen to podcasts, so I just assume that's what everyone does when they listen to podcasts. Dishes and laundry.







Megan Goodwin 42:04

I don't ever actually put laundry away. I don't think that's real either. But it's a neat fantasy, and I love it when we learn things.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 42:11

Alright, well, let's learn some things about Shinto.



Megan Goodwin 42:13

Okay!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 42:14

In Shinto, there are shrines in public spaces, like out in the world, and private spaces, like homes. So, everywhere! Most practitioners, particularly in Japan, engage in some Shinto practices, in part because they've become so entwined with mainline Buddhist practices and in part because these are expressly and perhaps uniquely Japanese ways of engaging with the world and yet, interestingly, very few Shinto practitioners would call themselves religious.



Megan Goodwin 42:46

Yeah, very true. So like, lots of Japanese people keep a kamidana-- a, like, God shelf, as it's been translated in their houses-- but they will--they will say to you, it's like something like 90 plus percent of Japanese people will say, like, "I'm not religious, but yeah, I interact with the kami in this way, I make petitions for things to go well, I mark seasons, I connect with my ancestors and the spirits of this place in these ways." But that's not religion, because religion, as you know, is not a native term. So it's a moment where "religion" and "religious" doesn't really capture what folks are actually doing. And when folks do Shinto, often they are doing it without texts or formal institutions, and without calling themselves like, Shintoists or something-- god, that's terrible. Doing Shinto looks like having a relationship with a kami, which can be casual, can be intense. Dr. Thomas talks about it as like a just in case, wink, wink, nudge, nudge, sort of relationship, Like, it can't hurt. It doesn't matter for our purposes here, honestly. This is how it gets done, so that's what we're talking about!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 43:50

Okay, so I have another question.



Megan Goodwin 43:51

Okay!




Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 43:52

What are-- what are kami? I know Dr. Thomas made mention of these already, we've kind of glossed it, and I feel like this is directly in your alley and you won't let me take this part. So why don't YOU take it?

this is directly up your alley and you won't let me take this part, so why don't YOU take it.

 Megan Goodwin 44:03


This is-- it's-- the stories are so good, and they're so interesting. I am so glad that you asked me. \*secret word of the day\* The kami are powerful, natural and spiritual forces. And they truly are almost countless. There's so many. Most are connected to like special places (like forests, or mountains, or waterfalls) but some are connected to like natural phenomena (like wind, or thunder, or lightning). And just to complicate things, some kami are associated with like ordinary places (like a kitchen, or like specific roads, or like a given school). Some kami are especially influential or successful living people. Like, famously, until fairly recently, the Japanese emperor was a kami. And some are mischievous elements (like fox spirits, tree spirits, tanuki, about whom I shall talk more later). And I assume our listeners are feeling utterly bewildered so I'm going to lay more on, make it worse, eh, before we make it better!

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 45:01

That checks out. Keep going.

 Megan Goodwin 45:02

\*cackles\* Shinto is so tied to relationships with the kami-- again, like, it's in the name; Shinto is the way of the kami. Kami themselves, however they appear, are usually pretty chill, especially if you stay in good relationship with them. But like, some are tricksters (it will not surprise you to hear that these are my faves).

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 45:20

No, not at all.

 Megan Goodwin 45:22

And the concept here is that the world and people are basically good, as indigenous religions across the board tend to be world affirming. And Shinto does share that characteristic. But some folks (and sometimes some kami themselves) can be led astray by, like, evil spirits. So humans-- that's us-- we need the kamis' goodwill for success-- whatever that might be (so like, financial, personal, agricultural, etc, etc.).

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 45:48

Alright, so walk me through what this might look like from a practitioner standpoint, if you can? If, like you said, there's not like, A prayerbook, there's not SOME singular, holy text telling me which kami is THE best that I need to prioritize above all others. If I need something, like, wha-- what do I do?

 Megan Goodwin 46:04

Okay! Well, so kami are specialists. They respond to individual concerns and requests and like as individual spirits, their power and their knowledge is limited. There's not like a Bible equivalent. But there are stories-- like myths and legends, and fables, and anecdotes from various rituals, some of which have systems about how the rituals are

moral tales, and tabies and anecaotes (your granama might have a story about how she interacted with tanuki one time, which is guaranteed to be a good story), again, gonna come back to it-- all of those traditional sets of knowledge help inform how individuals do ritual, which is a major way folks engage with the kami. Like, doing things ritually is how folks maintain a good relationship, and good relationships is what you need to be successful! So in other words, if you, a practitioner, are doing ritual and find yourself in harmony with a kami, that's the same thing as a good moral practice.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 46:51

Hmm.



Megan Goodwin 46:52

But, this relationship isn't like, popping into a shrine and saying like, "Hey, yo, kami! What's good? I'm good. Cool, talk to you soon," and then going about your day. It requires work, especially the work of maintaining purity. So you want to eat and drink correctly, demonstrate honesty and courtesy and consideration. Usually, when I'm talking about this in class, I talk to my students about the weekend that I spent in Tokyo and how I learned to apologize like six different ways, because very concerned about not giving offense to other people (and also, I'm just very, very large in Japan).



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 47:27

\*laughs\* You're huge in Japan.



Megan Goodwin 47:32

I'm huge in Japan!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 47:33

Keep going. \*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 47:35

Like Tom Waits said, I'm big in Japan. Uh, you see this continuing even in a secularizing, contemporary Japan, where some folks do Shinto as like a "just in case, wink, wink, nudge, nudge" religion. It's not that they're super devout, or super pious, or even big believers! It's like an insurance policy! Like, it can't hurt. Many households, as I said, keep a kamidana, or kami shelf, and if you watch Japanese TV or movies, you will definitely see a lot of Shinto, particularly the torii, that arch thing. The red arch. There's even a-- what do you call it? Like, an emoticon for it now.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 48:01

Yeah! Yeah, we watch a lot of Studio Ghibli with our kids so it's a whole thing, really. Alright, Megan, I think we've been prattling on long enough.



Megan Goodwin 48:18

How dare you. \*giggles\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 48:19

Do you care to sum up?



Megan Goodwin 48:21

Sure, I guess. Enough. What does that even look like? Alright, so the category of Native or Indigenous religions is both problematic-- because look at all the people the world over we're lumping in here-- but the category of Indigenous or Native is also helpful as we think about all the people in the world who, without it, get left out entirely! In short, this category is wildly imperfect, and its imperfection shows us how complicated "religion" and "world" religion is.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 48:50

Check.



Megan Goodwin 48:51

Alright. Shinto is one of those, "is it or isn't it" labels. We're putting in here as part of our indigenous religion set of episodes. Dr. Thomas encouraged us to think more critically about who uses this term to describe traditions. These labels are (shocking nary a listener) political.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 49:12

Check!



Megan Goodwin 49:14

Third and finally, Shinto is a group of practices that we might want to see people know more about-- it's old! It's in pop culture, it's identity marking, it's tied to Empire (because of course it is), it's political! It's practical, it is... all the things.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 49:29

Well, I love that. Which brings us to... A Little Bit, Leave It.



A Little Bit Leave It 49:37

\*Little Bit Leave It\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 49:41

In A Little Bit, Leave It, we're letting you know what WE think is the most important, most interesting, or most challenging part of the topic is-- it's a little bit to leave you with!



Megan Goodwin 49:50

In this segment, we are telling you why you care about world religions and, this time, Indigenous religions-- as content, as ideas, or as evidence as to why the "world religions" model just falls short. For my part, second verse, same as the first. If your understanding of religion doesn't include or center Indigenous religions, it is incomplete and incorrect. Thank you, next. I just... all the things that we've been saying, far too many textbooks, far too many classes, far too many syllabi don't include Indigenous religions in their consideration of what religion is, and that is a way of continuing imperialist violence. So, please stop that!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 50:31

Yeah. Excellent. I don't know how to follow that but I'mma try? My little bit leave it's kind of simple? Indigenous religions are not just North American, nerds who are mostly based in North America, and they don't need to be "pure," in quotes, or "without influence" in order to be legit. Religion is what people do. And I think that that's really important to hear both the legacies of, say, British imperialism, in, say, India's treatment-- ongoing, contemporary treatment-- of "tribals," in quotes (it's a legal category again), or Adivasis, as well as the ongoing internal pseudo-imperialism, definite-bias, horrific violence, against Adivasis from mainline, caste Hindu. Both of those matter: the British imperialism and the ongoing, mainline caste Hindu abuse of tribal communities in India. They both tell us something about the ability to practice distinctive, local cultures as well as those cultures relationships to power, whether that's imperial power or, for local communities, indigenous communities, Native communities, to cultivate and wield power (as is some movements, like among the Naga of northeastern India or northwestern Myanmar). So I'm just trying to globalize us some more, confuse our nerds in the last minute, because that seems important. It's not as simple as even we've tried to make it in like, what, an hour? Jesus.



Megan Goodwin 51:54

\*laughs\* Again, I keep telling you, time is fake.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 51:58

Well, if you don't know, now you know--



If You Don't Know, Now You Know 52:00

\*If You Don't Know, Now You Know\*





Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 52:02

-- this is the segment where we get one factoid. Favorite fun fact we couldn't squeeze in about indigenous religions in the whole world, Goodwin. It's your turn-- take it away.



Megan Goodwin 52:12

Tanuki!! I love them so much. So, they are raccoon... dogs? Slash, uh, kind of badger... type... things? The reason I'm bringing them up is because Tanuki are also sometimes manifestation of trickster kami spirits? And the reason that I love them is 1.) because you know I love a trickster, but 2.) they're hilarious and they have giant balls.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 52:40

I-I'm sorry, what?! \*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 52:41

They have giant testicles.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 52:43

\*laughs\*



Megan Goodwin 52:45

So if you go to Shinto shrines where Tanuki are being, uh... acknowledged, and-and built relationships with, the statues are raccoon dogs with giant balls, and I think that's funny.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 53:01

\*laughs\* Okay.



Megan Goodwin 53:01

Yeah.



If You Don't Know, Now You Know 53:03

\*If You Don't Know, Now You Know\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 53:05

Don't pack up yet, nerds. It's time for homework! \*laughs\*

S

Simpsons 53:07

\*What Homework??\*



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 53:11

As always, you've got citations, references and other goodies, and transcripts stashed at [keepingit101.com](http://keepingit101.com) for every single episode, so check it out. Listen, I said last time, I'm going to say it again-- the homeworks for these episodes are going to be robust. So, if you-- I'm not the boss of your fast forward button, but even if you're fast forwarding through, I really do urge you to go check out what we've got stashed-- but not yet. Don't fast forward yet. Megan's got a good list. Go ahead.

M

Megan Goodwin 53:37

I do have a good list! I have the honor of telling y'all what Dr. Jolyon Thomas has suggested that we read! So we're just gonna honestly just link to his website. He has talks, and podcasts, and articles, and we just adore him and his work, and he's super smart. He was also a 2021 Public Scholarship Fellow with Sacred Writes, but here are the major pieces of writing we think you need in your brains. So, "Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan," "Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan," which was Dr. Thomas's book, which I believe won an AR Book Award--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 54:13

Sure did. It's a great book.

M

Megan Goodwin 54:15

It's so good. Um, "Why Scholars of Religion Must Investigate the Corporate Form," which was co-authored with Levi McLaughlin, Aike-- I don't know how to say her name-- P. Rots, and Chika Watanabe, which was in the JAR (highly recommended, really, really smart); and then "The Buddhist Virtues of Raging Lust and Crass Materialism in Contemporary Japan." I mean, that's-that's a great title. And that's in Material Religion, we'll link you to that as well. And then on Shinto specifically, "What is Shinto?" This is a great, short, public-facing piece that I use in my class. And, "Big Questions in the Study of Shinto," which is on H-Net Reviews. Very good for teachers to just kind of get a sense of the state of the field. I will add only two-- I'm only allowed to have two, it says on the script-- that you should check out the work of Kaitlyn Ugoretz, who is a grad student at UCSB and was also a 2021 Sacred Write public scholarship fellow. She did a whole series of videos about Shinto for Religion for Breakfast, which is a fun YouTube series about religion basics. And she also has her own YouTube channel called Eat Pray enemy which you should ALSO check out. The end!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 55:24

Fabulous. This is a long ass episode, y'all, so I'm gonna keep it short. I'm going to focus on India because, hello?? That's actually where I know things about--



Megan Goodwin 55:33

Yeah. You're gons to talk about India.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 55:34

Yeeeeeah. Okay. So, there's a Pew study of religion in India that's okay, it came out pretty recently. It's worth looking at if you want some data on things that I talked about, like scheduled castes and tribes, and I'm going to link it in the show notes, of course. I will absolutely name out loud that you want to read Kanato Chophy's "Constructing the Divine: Religion and World View of a Naga Tribe in North-East India," which was recently out. Namrata Goswami, "The Naga ethic--" sorry, "The Naga Ethnic Movement for a Separate Homeland: Stories from the Field," which was just out last year. Super great, lots of really intense ethnographic work. And finally, um, I guess I'll point you to an independent journalist outlet called scroll.in, it's Scroll India. They have a series on "tribal rights," in quotes. They're following abuses of Adavasis and uncasted, or Dalit, communities. And so, under that like tag, there's quite a lot to read about. Some of it has to do with issues of religion and issues of being included in mainline Hinduism, but I want to give you all a trigger warning before I just put that on the internet: quite a lot of these news items contain sexual violence, sexual violence against minors, and murder-- since many of these attacks that make the headlines are-are just, are brutal in nature. So I want to highlight that because it's independent journalism from India and usually by Indians, and they've got more than you could possibly want for really contemporary, like current event stuff. Oh! And last thing, I swear, our family favorite things about Shinto are oldies but goodies but if you missed this cultural moment and have HBO Max, do check out Studio Ghibli's hub and especially "Spirited Away," (2001) film-- it's a Miyazaki classic that draws heavily on Shinto imagery. Many of you teach that when you teach about Asian religions. And my four year old would legit freak out if I didn't mention the ever popular and his personal favorite, "My Neighbor Totoro" for the same reason. So cute. They're just-- He loves it.



Megan Goodwin 56:24

They're just nice movies. Yeah. Big thanks to those of you writing reviews on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon and Google-- it really helps! So our Nerds of the Week-- those few we want to shout out and send some love just directly to-- are: BabaKristian (hey, I know him!), Nik5579-- truly an unreadable string of emojis we're just gonna put on the interwebs; it's like, star eyes, blue face \*gasps\* face, okay sign, heart smile-- AND, The Fandom Menace. And I love that one best of all because it's both reviewing us and trolling Ilyse because she hates Star Wars.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 58:17

Thanks, nerds! Join us next time for more HISTORY OF THE WORLD RELIGIONS, PART I, when we chat more about Indigenous religions, and are helped out to do so by our rad guest, Dr. Abel Gomez.



Megan Goodwin 58:28

Yay! I love him! Shoutout to our research assistant, Alex Castellano, whose transcription work makes this pod accessible, and therefore, awesome! Need more religion nerderie? You know where to find us! Twitter. The answer is Twitter.





Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 58:40

You can find Megan on Twitter @mpgPhD, and me @ProfIRMF, or the show @KeepingIt\_101. Find the website at [keepingit101.com](http://keepingit101.com). Peep the Insta, if you feel like it, drop us a rating or review in your podcatcher of choice and be a Nerd of the Week! You know, maybe! And with that-- peace out, nerds.



Megan Goodwin 59:02

Do your homework! It's on the syllabus.



Bonus Ending 59:42

\*Totoro theme song\*