

Religion Past & Present

Encyclopedia of
Theology and Religion

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VOLUME I
A - B h u



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2007

and family devotion. The very need for the prohibition bears witness to the widespread practice of the ancestor cult and a certain competition with Yahweh's demand to be worshiped as the only God in all spheres of life.

G. Margoliouth, "Ancestor-Worship and Cult of the Dead," *ERE* 1, 1908, 444–450 (Heb.) • O. Loretz, "Vom kanaanäischen Totenkult zur jüdischen Patriarchen- und Elternverehrung," *JARG* 3, 1978, 149–204 • *idem*, "Überlegungen zum Totenkult im Alten Testament," *MTZ* 33, 1982, 308–311 • H. Hardacre, "Ancestors," *ER* 1, 1987, 263–268 • H. Rouillard & J. Tropper, "Vom kanaanäischen Ahnenkult zur Zauberei," *UF* 19, 1987, 235–254 • J. Tropper, *Nekromantie*, AOAT 223, 1989 • E. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, JSOTSup 123, 1992 • O. Loretz, "Das 'Ahnen- und Götterstatuen-Verbot' im Dekalog und die Einzigkeit Jahwes," *OBO* 139, 1994, 491–527 • J.C. de Moor, "Standing Stones and Ancestor Worship," *UF* 27, 1995, 1–20 • T. Podella, "Nekromantie," *TQ* 177, 1997, 121–133 • R. Wenning, "Bestattungen im königszeitlichen Juda," *TQ* 177, 1997, 82–93.
Thomas Podella

IV. China

In China, ritual ancestor worship is a widespread practice, attested since time immemorial. It is not tied to any specific religious tradition but is found among Buddhists as well as Confucianists and Taoists. It was primarily the Confucianists, however, who laid an ethical foundation for ancestor worship as an essential element of filial piety toward parents and forebears.

Sacrifices to ancestors are attested in written sources as early as the Shang dynasty (2nd millennium BCE). The sacrifices were offered primarily to the royal ancestors, whose influence was viewed with ambivalence. The sacrifices served both to secure the goodwill of the ancestors and to avert their wrath. This ambivalence has remained in Chinese popular religion down to the present. Ancestors' support of their living descendants presupposes that the latter fulfill their ritual obligations toward their ancestors. This also implies that ancestors can punish their descendants if they are ritually neglected. This popular notion is intimately associated with belief in the existence of departed spirits. Essentially, the spirits of the departed are considered dangerous if they are not appeased by sacrificial offerings.

→ Confucianism gave a new ethical interpretation to the observance of the ancestor cult, which was based on a popular belief in disembodied spirits. Ancestor worship is a moral obligation as an expression of filial piety, not necessarily associated with belief in the influence of ancestral spirits. The social significance of the ancestor cult grows out of its function as a ritual realization of the patrilineal kinship group. The kinship group defines itself through the cult of a common male ancestor, performed once or twice a year in a common ancestral temple led by the eldest male in the direct line of descent. In practice, the ancestor cult of the kinship group is limited to wealthy families. In addition, it is common for

individual households, as part of the domestic cult, to make regular offerings to their immediate forebears.

J.J.M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, 6 vols., 1892 • F.L.K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow*, 1948 • A. Ahern, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village*, 1973 • A.P. Wolf, "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," in: *idem*, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, 1974, 131–182.
Hubert Seiwert

V. India

Brahmanic-Sanskrit rituals performed for departed ancestors (Skt. *śrāddha*) are meant to pacify and deify the dead. During the first 10–13 days after death, an immense new body (*yātanaśarīra*) is created for the deceased (lit. "departed") in a complex ritual (*sapindaṅkaraṇa*) using balls of rice or barley (*pinḍa*), to be used for nourishment in the beyond. If the deceased did not receive this offering to accompany them, they would be hungry, thirsty, and unpacified spirits (*bhūta, piśāca*) and torment the living, since the soul after death possesses only a mouthless body no bigger than a thumb (*liṅgaśarīra*). After a year-long journey – during which many perils are encountered, including the crossing of Vaitaraṇī, the river boundary of hell – the departed reach the world of the forefathers (*pitṛloka*), where they themselves become forefathers or ancestors (*pitaraḥ*, pl. of *pitṛ*, "father"). But they keep this status for only three generations. At the death of each lineal descendant, they move a stage higher, until finally they lose their personal name and are received into a group of heavenly beings (*viśve devāḥ*, lit. "all gods"). Patrilineal succession makes the firstborn son important for the funerary ritual: it is he who saves his father from hell. "Bound together by the offering of rice cakes" (*sapinda*) is a kinship term on which the Hindu clan system (*gotra*) is based; it is particularly important in rules governing exogamy, but also in the Bengali law of inheritance, by which anyone permitted to perform the ancestral rites also enjoyed the right of inheritance. Gods and ancestors (*viśve devāḥ*) are considered deities (*devatā*); both have a heavenly body (*divyadeha*). Of course there are differences, as is clear in rites involving ancestors: when gods are venerated, the sacred cord of twice-born Hindus lies on the left shoulder, when ancestors are venerated it lies on the right shoulder; in certain rituals, gods receive grains of barley or rice, while ancestors receive sesame (cf. "open sesame"); when sacrifices are offered, gods receive an even number, ancestors an odd number; etc. Forebears and ancestors, but also departed spirits, are omnipresent. They are remembered in every domestic ritual. But ancestors can be more dangerous than gods: they are nearer home, they are dissatisfied, they are demanding. Only an ascetic who has paid his debts to gods, ancestors, and other human beings is freed from oppression by the deceased. In popular Hinduism, those who die an honorable, heroic death or commit religiously motivated suicide – includ-