

Religion as Culture & Social Convention

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this tutorial, you will see a few of the ways in which religion works as an essential element of culture and how it forms the basis of many of society's conventions. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. [Holidays and Festivals](#)
2. [Societal Customs](#)

1. Holidays and Festivals

One of the most important celebrations in Judaism is **Passover**, a remembrance of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt. The practical and spiritual significance of this historical event is commemorated every year at the same time. It, therefore, has relevance for Jews today. It has become a **social convention**. It is deeply rooted in religious tradition and history.

In Christianity, **Easter** is a celebration commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is very closely linked with Passover in both the timing of the celebration and its spiritual significance. Easter has become a social custom that generally commemorates the event of the Last Supper—the preparation for Christ's sacrificial death—and the Resurrection, three days later.

In this sense, Christ is the pasha of the Passover lamb. Interestingly, the etymology of the words for both Easter and Passover are closely linked. They are Pesach in Hebrew and Pascha in Greek and Latin.

In Islam, there's the holy month of **Ramadan**, in which Muslims commemorate the reception of the Qur'an by the Prophet Muhammad. This religious social custom is marked by fasting, prayer, and a variety of forms of giving and generosity.

All of these religions have holidays and customs that have become intertwined with the societies in which these religions are practiced. On the practical level, they are marked on calendars, and businesses close because of these events. This is in addition to the metaphorical and symbolic importance of these traditions.

In Buddhism, the Buddha's birthday is a big event that is celebrated in all Buddhist societies. In Hinduism, thousands of holidays commemorate different events in the lives of the gods.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** The birthday of Lord Krishna, for example, usually takes place in July or August.



TERMS TO KNOW

Passover

The Jewish celebration and commemoration of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt and, more specifically, of God's having "passed over" and spared the firstborn children of Israel while slaying the firstborn children of Egypt.

Social Convention

A societal or group custom, belief, or tradition that is widely accepted and/or practiced.

Easter

The Christian celebration and commemoration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Ramadan

The Muslim observance of fasting during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, considered one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

2. Societal Customs

In addition to festivals and commemorative events, religion also has an impact on cultural and societal customs. This can be seen in the rules for how the genders are to interact.

Islam often has very clear boundaries of acceptable interaction between men and women. Judaism has mechitza, the physical barrier that separates the genders during certain services.

Korea has historically been greatly influenced by Confucianism. This has had an impact on the roles of men and women in contemporary Korean culture as well. The interactions between unmarried men and women were very strictly regulated. Visiting each other in their homes without supervision was generally frowned upon and not socially acceptable.



SUMMARY

Religion has impacted society in terms of conventions and traditions that reach back through history. Many religions have **holidays and festivals** that have become part of the larger society in which a religion is practiced. **Societal customs** are also influenced by religious values, such as a society's values with regards to the interaction of men and women.

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