

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES OF WORLD RELIGIONS: VIEWS OF NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LAND MANAGEMENT

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CHAPTER

3

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All religions have evolved in specific places, often with specific relationships to the surrounding lands. Every religion both shapes and is shaped by the culture in which it flourishes. Religious doctrines, practices, and moral philosophies have played a significant role in determining cultural attitudes and behaviors towards the natural world. Most land management practices reflect the values of the associated dominant religious traditions, either directly or indirectly. The purpose of this chapter is to explore eight major world religions and their views of nature, highlighting doctrines and teachings as they pertain to land management. It is my hope that this material can serve as a stimulus for discussion, raising awareness of cultural values in current management policies and inspiring dialogue on appropriate environmental ethics for public lands.

The eight major world religious traditions I treat include three from the west (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and five from the east (Hinduism, Jainism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism). For each, I explore principles related to land management, examining four areas:

1. the spiritual significance of nature,
2. ethical guidelines applicable to the environment,

3. land management practices recommended in the religious teachings, and
4. current activism on behalf of the environment.

These religions have been chosen for their significant contributions to world cultures—both in philosophical content and in sheer numbers of practitioners. They also are the traditions most involved in international ecoreligious dialogue or most referred to by scholars in environmental ethics. Here I sketch the broadest picture of commonly accepted beliefs, understandings, or practices held by most members of a tradition.

This overview is limited in several dimensions. First, it would not be possible to treat all world religions and all variations of any single tradition in such a study. Subgroups within traditions vary tremendously in codes of behavior, rituals, religious interpretation of texts, and institutional lines of authority. Certainly there are many differences and disagreements among sects as to text interpretation, daily life practices, religious governance, and degree of religious authority for the individual or the community. The pursuit of this level of study must be left to the interested reader.



Second, because religions evolve in geographical, historical, political-economic contexts, it may or may not be useful to apply their philosophical frameworks outside the source culture. Some religions have spread easily and been well-received on new shores as a welcome contrast to local religious practice. Others have stayed more or less in their region of origin, establishing cultural ties over thousands of years. In either case, the relationships between culture, religion, and, sometimes, the legal system are so entwined that guidelines for land management may not transfer from one culture to another. However, across the globe there is a long history of syncretism, or the influence of one religious tradition on another to create new forms and philosophies. Even now in the United States, land managers are being influenced and challenged by Native-American experiences of the land as sacred.

Third, all religions can be criticized for falling short of their own professed ideals. There have been and are continuing to be serious failures among religious practitioners who don't "walk their talk," either interpersonally or interinstitutionally. Religions in the past have frequently imposed their doctrines and ways of life on other cultures with serious impact on local and indigenous cultures. Intolerance of religious difference has escalated to militarism, war, and genocide time and time again, taking thousands of lives and destroying whole cultures. In some cases, religious zeal has been addressed directly against the land, causing major changes in habitat structure and function. Is there a religion which has not been a party to some significant loss of human, plant, or animal life on the earth? The scope of this chapter, however, precludes an in-depth review of the history of religious assault on people and ecosystems.

Finally, my sources are limited by their own points of view; they do not represent official positions of established denominations. I have looked specifically for recent revisionist articles by religious scholars and writers concerned about religious relationship with the environment. My aim is to suggest ways in which religious tradition and ethical principles are relevant to land management issues of today. Ecotheologians and those concerned with environmental revisioning of their faiths are still a very small voice in the institutional religious conversation. Here I bring them forward as creative visionaries, helping to bridge the gap between traditional

moral guidelines and modern ecological crisis. The chapter is offered to provide a stepping stone for further discussion among field staff, policymakers, and all those charged with the responsibility of serving the public in caring for the land.

Western Religious Traditions

Judaism

Judaism is the oldest of the recognized world religions after Hinduism, dating back 4000 years to the ancient Hebrews, a pastoral, nomadic, and later agricultural people. Christianity, and later Islam, share some common roots in the Jewish tradition, history, and teachings. Judaism developed in the lands of Israel as a covenant relationship between one supreme God and God's recognized people. Because this area is strategically located at the junction of Africa, Asia, and Europe, it has been invaded by many major political powers over the centuries. With each successive wave of displacement, Jews migrated to more stable countries, spreading their influence and people all around the world. In Germany during World War II almost a third of the Jewish population was deliberately exterminated in the Holocaust. Jews, though numbering less than 13 million, (just under six million in North America), still see themselves as part of a continuous lineage connected to the original homeland of Israel, now the official Jewish nation state.

Jewish tradition is a way of life as well as a religion, with strong emphasis on family/lay life and the study of religious texts. In modern Judaism, there are no monastic orders or priests; Jewish rabbis or spiritual leaders serve as members of the community and are active in education, social service, and worship. Jewish dietary laws and other social customs date back to early agricultural practices which reflect the relationship of the people to the land.

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

The Jews consider themselves the chosen people, cared for and watched over by one supreme God, Yahweh, who created the universe. Jewish appreciation for the environment is grounded in a respect for life as God's creation in all its manifestations. The goodness and abundance of the biophysical world is seen as a testimony to God's greatness. Nature is not an abstract concept but the physical realm where



humans encounter God. Plants and animals hold intrinsic value because they are part of God's creation.

The Hebrew Bible creation story in which God gives dominion over all creatures to humans as God's servants has been discussed extensively by Hebrew and Christian scholars (Katz, 1994). In the Jewish tradition, the nature of this responsibility has been interpreted consistently as benevolent stewardship (Solomon, 1992). Since Jews believe the world belongs to God stewardship means caretaking, not ownership. Thus all instructions on behalf of the land are expressed from a theocentric world-view, reinforcing the covenant relationship between Jews and God. Judaism emphasizes neither extreme of domination or preservation, but rather supports conservation and wise developmental use (Katz, 1994).

Diversity of species is enumerated and appreciated in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the story of Noah's ark, and in the *Pereq shira*, the Chapter of Song (Solomon, 1992). The Jewish scriptural world includes many references to trees, animals, birds, and the land, reflecting the people's indigenous relationship with their homeland. A person's primary relationship is with God, but relative to other organisms, humans are perceived to be at the top of a hierarchy of value and intelligence above animals, with animals above plants, and plants above inanimate elements.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

In addition to the Bible itself, there are three sources of ethical guidelines for Jewish people:

1. *halakhah*:—rules and statutes in the Mishnah and Talmud along with their commentaries;
2. *aggadah*:—nonjuristic literature of exegesis, homilies, parables, and proverbs; and
3. *tefillah*:—prayers and liturgy (Helfland, 1986).

Fundamental to Jewish community practice is a culture of self-restraint where freedom is a blessing to be harnessed for beneficial good, both for the human community and for the natural world. The fundamental laws of self-restraint are the Ten Commandments which were given through Moses (Schorsch, 1992).

Ethical relations with nature begin with blessing (*berakhah*). A traditional *Kiddush* or ceremonial blessing, is recited over bread and wine on Sabbaths

and holy days; other blessings for trees, animals, the new moon are part of Jewish culture (Rose, 1992). The desire for peaceful relations with the world is expressed in the traditional greeting, *shalom aleichem*, peace be unto you. Jews are encouraged to develop virtue through *mitzvahs* or commandments to do good deeds, including protection of trees and compassionate actions towards animals.

Jewish dietary laws (*kashruth*) spell out strict codes for acceptable and unacceptable foods and methods of food preparation. These reflect a general emphasis on caring for one's own body as God's creation, maintaining good health as one aspect of religious practice. Orthodox Jews eat only *kosher*, or allowed, foods which have been prepared in a ritual way and meats slaughtered in a humane ritual fashion.

LAND MANAGEMENT

Jews believe their prosperity as a people depends on their obedience to God's covenant which includes a caring, loving attitude toward the land with effective regulation of human use. A number of land management practices support sustainable use of marginal lands. The Hebrew Bible commands that lands be given a sabbath year rest every seventh year, paralleling the weekly sabbath rest from human activity. This means crop rotation and letting fields lie fallow to recover soil fertility.

In the Hebrew Bible, Jews are commanded not to destroy fruit trees in times of war. The phrase *bal tashchit*, no wanton destruction or despoliation, is now interpreted by some as applying broadly to trees, animals, rivers, and personal property as well. *Bal tashchit* is a moral law meant to maintain respect for God's creation (Katz, 1994). It forbids destruction of property that could be of social use to the community.

Specific regulations within the *Mishnah* place limits on grazing rights (*yishuv ha-aretz*), monitor water use, define areas for waste disposal, regulate sewage disposal, and provide open space around cities (*migrash*). Excess production of foul smells or loud noises are also prohibited to maintain environmental quality. Based as it is in a desert climate where water is scarce and trees provide precious shade, water and trees hold a special place in Jewish culture. Many prayers call for the blessed rain, the living water (*mayim chayim*). Tree planting



and protection for green belt space are central to town planning.

The yearly agricultural cycle is celebrated in the Jewish holidays which are determined by the full moons. The high holy days, Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur, are held in the harvest months of fall. On *Tu Bi Shevat*, the New Year for Trees, children and families plant trees in their communities. Other holidays are pilgrimage festivals which reflect the history and tradition of journeying to sacred land sites to reconsecrate human relationships with them as holy (Pick, 1992).

ACTIVISM

In 1902 the Zionist Movement established the Jewish National Fund to renew and redeem the land. Since Israel attained independence in 1948, the Fund has sponsored the planting of 180 million trees, with 11 million in the 9000 acres around Jerusalem. Unfortunately the Palestinian *intifada* has burned over a million of these in recent uprisings. Five percent of Israel is protected in national forests and parks managed under the Ministry of the Environment as of 1989. The Nature Reserves Authority, founded in 1964, manages 385 reserves on 450,000 acres. Since 1990 a number of Noah's sanctuaries have been established as animal shelters (Rose, 1992).

In the United States, a Jewish environmental group, Shomrei Adamah, encourages synagogues to highlight the ecological aspects of the Jewish holidays, especially *Tu Bi Shevat*. They have developed a high school environmental curriculum and a resource manual for congregations and are providing outreach and coordination around Jewish environmental activism.

In Philadelphia, a Jewish Eco-Kosher Project focuses on expanding traditional dietary guidelines to include ecological practices. They suggest ecologically acceptable foods are those which do not ruin the earth (*bal tashchit*), show respect for animals (*za'ar ba'alei chayim*), protect one's own body from harm (*sh'mirat haguf*), do not oppress workers and exploit customers (*oshek*), and share food, money, work, and time with the poor (*tzedzkah*).

Jewish rabbis have been active in international environmental discussions at the Rio Summit, the Assisi meeting, the Parliament of the World's Religions, and other global gatherings.

Christianity

Christianity was founded by followers of Jesus Christ almost 2000 years ago as an outgrowth of Judaism. The religion spread quickly through the Mediterranean countries and on to northern Europe. Missionaries and emigrants took it further to North America, South America, Asia, and Africa, establishing churches and monastic orders across five continents. The three largest groups today are the Catholic Church (900 million), Eastern Orthodox (125 million), and Protestants and Pentecostals (622 million). Ethnic, cultural, and theological differences mark hundreds of different branch groups, from Christian Scientists to Baptists, Episcopalians to Mormons, Coptic Christians to Mennonites.

The primary source of scriptural wisdom is the Bible which includes the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament teachings of Jesus and his followers. This single text is interpreted by various traditions as the literal revealed word of God, wisdom stories for moral life, or historical records of theological interpretation. Christian thought is closely associated with the philosophical tradition of western Europe as it evolved through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Age of Industrialism. Christian religious organizations, especially the Catholic Church, have played a powerful political and historical role in determining the fate of the European landscape.

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

Like Jews, Christians believe in one supreme transcendent God who rules over all the earth. God is the creator, the ultimate provider, the sole governor, and the final judge of human behavior. Teachings from the Old Testament emphasize a covenant relationship between people and God and a command to keep God's laws in caring for plants and animals. Teachings in the New Testament focus more on human relations and the rewards of living in fellowship with the body of Christ, the larger Christian community. This reflects the urban orientation of early Christians as compared to the agriculturally based Jews (Baker, 1990).

Christian attitudes toward nature show two opposite themes: transcendence and communion. The transcendent theme, well-developed in the Protestant tradition, is marked by two key ideas:



that personal salvation rests on one's own unmediated relationship with God (not the rest of creation), and that God blesses his chosen ones with material well-being (Palmer, 1992). The physical world is seen as a place of travail and turmoil, to be transcended through salvation. The experience of redemption is a release from nature and the difficulties of the ephemeral body. During the settling of North America the natural world was often seen as threatening and dangerous, feared for its wildness. Christian missionaries felt a moral call to save the souls of heathen savages (the Native Americans) and to bring civilization to wild areas through taming and settling the land. From a Christian perspective, the primary value of the natural world lay in the usefulness of its forests and rich soils.

The communion or sacramental view is represented by St. Francis, the Catholic monastic who lived close to the earth in relation with trees and birds, sun and moon. Modern Christian ecotheologians have picked up this theme, interpreting the creation as an expression of God's faithful loving kindness (Nash, 1991). All members of the creation are seen as products of God's love and recipients of ongoing love. This view endows nature with intrinsic moral significance, a contrast to other views which place moral importance solely on human beings. Christian readings of the book of Genesis, the creation story, generally interpret "dominion" as ecologically beneficial, a command against abuse of God's creation. Humans are to act in the image of God as his responsible representatives, for which they have been given particular rational, moral, and creative capacities. This role is often described as steward, caretaker, or manager—a role associated with conservation and a wise use orientation to natural systems.

Modern Christian writers such as McFague (1992), Berry (1988), and McDaniel (1990) suggest an ecological revisioning of Christian attitudes towards nature. They offer an inclusive evolutionary creation story (Swimme and Berry, 1992), an emphasis on interrelatedness and interdependence, and a role for humans as cocreators with God (McFague, 1992). Nash (1991) expands the Christian idea of sacrament to include the whole universe, with nature as locus for spiritual experience, a medium for revelation.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Though there are many interpretations of the Bible, Christians generally agree that Jesus' teachings and personal example are key to Christian ethics. Perhaps the two most important principles are love and justice. Love is the ground of all being; God is love—the process of creation is an act of love. Love is taught as service, respect, giving to self and others, mercy, compassion, and kindness; it is an expression of relationality. Dimensions of love applied to an ecological context include:

1. beneficence: loving service to the environment;
2. other-esteem: valuing and respecting the integrity of the other as a gift of God;
3. receptivity: recognizing love's dependency on relationship, both between humans as they directly and indirectly affect the land, and between humans and nonhumans;
4. humility: expressed as simplicity, frugality, and restraint from overuse of the environment; and
5. communion: the bonding power of solidarity and friendship with others (Nash, 1991).

Grace is the experience of God's love in a personal context; "green grace" is the experience of the healing power of God's love through a connection with the natural world (McDaniel, 1993).

Christian sin or wrongdoing has generally described immoral acts between people—lying, stealing, adultery, and so forth—which break the bonds of love. From an ecological perspective, sin would result in an alienation between people and God (and God's creation), a disrespect for the interdependent relations between all creatures, and a human self-centeredness out of proportion to reality (McFague, 1992). In this sense, the Fall from paradise is perennial, manifesting in ongoing ecological transgressions (Nash, 1991). Sins persist not only in individual relations but also in cultural relations and institutions, perpetuating patterns of nonharmonious relations with the environment.

Justice is a necessary condition for love; injustice is social sin. Justice, from a Christian perspective, is the definition, negotiation, and application of moral rights. Responsibilities to others are defined by socially agreed upon rights. Nash (1991) suggests a list of environmental rights to prevent ecocide, or



thoughtless destruction of the earth. Among these are sustainable productivity, protection from pollution, and preservation of biodiversity. The Judeo-Christian rights perspective has been the basis of public law in western Europe and the United States, shaping much of the debate on endangered species, wilderness use, and animal welfare.

LAND MANAGEMENT

Most of the Christian guidelines for land management practices are suggested in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible (described under Judaism). The New Testament covers a much shorter time frame, represents fewer authors, and does not generally contain laws pertaining to secular matters. Christianity was initially conceived as a religion of individual faith for specially chosen people. It gained ground during a time of political upheaval; converts were urged to invest in their own personal salvation rather than a long-term view of sustainable ecological relations.

As institutional Christianity spread from the Mediterranean, it officially denounced local gods and goddesses associated with forests, streams, and mountains. The natural world was dedivinized to make clear the omnipotence of the one God above all others (Page, 1992). This process undermined indigenous land management practices based on respect for local deities. In many places heresy to the new ways was met with death; many atrocities were justified in the name of one God. Some modern ecotheologians suggest the need for official church reexamination of and repentance for its legacy with regard to indigenous peoples and environmental degradation (Rajotte and Breuille, 1992).

ACTIVISM

Representatives of Christian denominations have been very active in global dialogue on ecology and religion (Granberg-Michaelson, 1992). The World Council of Churches (WCC) at its 1990 convocation in Seoul, Korea, pledged its efforts towards "Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation." A further report to the WCC laid out principles for advancing this program based on a liberation theology praxis (Birch, Eakin, and McDaniel, 1990). In the United States, this work is being carried out by the North American Conference on Religion and Ecology (NACRE), the National Religious Partnership for Life (NRPL), and the Center of Respect for Life and Envi-

ronment (a subgroup of the Humane Society). Individual churches have projects of ecojustice, environmental awareness and celebration, recycling, and interfaith environmental leadership (Morton, 1993).

Christian groups have been encouraged to observe the new United Nations Environmental Sabbath Day on June 5th. At least two other sects have established additional church celebration days for the earth (June 21st is Nature Day for Swedish Lutherans, and September 1st is Conservation Feast Day for Greek Orthodox). In former East Germany and the Philippines, church leaders have taken strong initiatives to oppose local environmental despoliation, risking denominational sanctions for their strong statements.

Islam

The word Islam comes from the root Arabic letters s. l. m.—Sin, Lam, and Mim—which means to be in peace, to be integral whole. Islam is a revealed religion, established through the experience of the Prophet Muhammad (570-632 CE). As a human messenger—prophet for Allah, the Alone God—the Prophet Muhammad delivered the *Qur'an* as the speech of God. According to Islamic belief and practice, one who consciously submits to the will, law, and guidance of Allah finds peace within, with all creatures, and with the Creator (Aasi, 1993).

Islam is historically and theologically related to Judaism and Christianity which share a similar emphasis on one supreme God. It was founded in the city of Madinah in the sixth century and quickly spread to Mecca and the rest of the Arabian peninsula. Within less than a hundred years, Islam had moved into China, India, Europe, and Africa. Long before the European Renaissance, the Islamic movement made significant contributions to world culture, art, and architecture. Despite many geopolitical challenges, conquests, and displacements, Islam has continued to spread throughout the world. Muslims now number over a billion, with the largest contingent in North America being African Americans (Aasi, 1993).

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

Muslims believe that the one God, Allah, created everything, commands everything, and holds an ongoing creative role in the dynamic unfolding of the universe. Allah is sovereign over heaven and earth, with



power over all beings. The natural and human world is seen by Muslims as the Creation of God, full of signs of his power and goodness. Though the gifts of creation are given for human use they are primarily meant to evoke devotion, praise, and gratitude for the good works of Allah. As such, Muslims are expected to treat nature with care and respect (Timm, 1994).

The human role with respect to the creation is as designated vice-regent (*khalifah*) for Allah who gives this authority to people as a test of their obedience and loyalty to God (Timm, 1994). According to Muslim belief, people have been given the role of God's servant (*abd Allah*), to receive the grace flowing through him. In this relationship between Creator and human, God is clearly absolute.

Nature, in the Qur'an, is a "theophany which both veils and reveals God" (Nasr, 1992). Humans are seen as immersed in the Divine, yet unaware of it because of their own forgetfulness and negligence (*ghaflah*); this can be overcome by remembrance (*dhikr*). The Muslim sense of pattern reflects the perceived music of proportionality in plants, animals, crystals, and planetary motion. In these forms, order and harmony, interrelationship of parts, and complementarity of functions and roles are revealed (Nasr, 1993).

For Muslims, the protection of nature is a spiritual duty. To protect the environment is to preserve its value as a sign of the Creator and to respect the laws of nature made by the Creator. The Prophet Muhammad considered that humankind was not the only community of beings and that all living creatures were worthy of protection (*hurmah*) and kind treatment (Izzi Dien, 1990). The environment is God's gift to all ages and the context for all human relationships as they are established in justice (*'adl*) and equity (*jhsan*).

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Islam is understood as a way of life, *manhaj hayat*, encompassing a person's entire orientation to the world. Ethics or values are thought to reside in the soul as a state, *hay'a*, that is conditioned by upbringing and one's perception of virtue. Good ethics, *khuluq hasan*, reflect a good Muslim upbringing and strongly internalized Muslim values. The fundamental Muslim expectation is to practice good (*al-ma'ruf*) and prohibit evil (*munkar*). The community call to this imperative is handled by volunteers (*muhtasib mutatawi*) or appointed persons (*al-mutatawi*). Care

for the environment falls legally under the jurisdiction of the official *muhtasib*, as well as matters of public health, food and water practices, and proper slaughter. In practice today, however, the office is mostly concerned with making sure the daily prayers are called on time (Izzi Dien).

The five pillars of Islamic practice are *shahadah* (statement of faith), *salat* (five daily prayers), *sawm* (fasting during Ramadan period), *zakat* (sharing of wealth to purify it), and *hajj* (pilgrimage to holy sites). The *Shari'ah*, which literally means the "source of water," is the source of both legal rules and ethical principles for Muslim behavior. Types of actions fall under five categories:

1. obligatory (*wajib*) or what one is obliged to do as a Muslim;
2. devotional and ethical actions (*mandub*) or what one is encouraged to do to be a virtuous person;
3. permissible actions (*mubah*) or what one may do;
4. abominable actions (*makruh*) or those which are morally but not legally wrong; and
5. prohibited actions (*haram*) which are strictly forbidden.

Muslim sources for ethical guidelines are drawn directly from the Qur'an and its commentaries in the Hadith, derived Islamic law, and interpretation of the law. All environmental practices for Muslim cultures are thus based in religious law.

LAND MANAGEMENT

According to Islamic law, there are three types of land: developed (*amir*), undeveloped (*mawat*), and protective zones (*harim*) (Dutton, 1992). Developed lands refer to any land with human settlement or agricultural activity, whether in a large city or rural area. The root of the word *amir* means alive. Undeveloped lands (*mawat*) are those which are neither settled nor cultivated. Islamic law states that if someone brings this (dead) land to life (i.e., develops it), they own it. Development in this sense means putting a hedge or wall around the land, irrigating the land, clearing the area of trees and rocks, plowing the land, planting crops or trees, or putting up a building. This kind of development may have serious consequences in the form of ecological fragmentation of the land (Dutton, 1992).



Around all developed lands are protected zones, *harim*. These zones belong to the owner of the developed land with which the *harim* is associated. This may be an area for gathering firewood or pasturing livestock, or the area around a community well. Whereas undeveloped land is not owned by anyone (until brought to life), *harim* zones are always owned by individuals or communities. A *hima* is an area of undeveloped land set aside to remain unused, wild, or to protect pasture. In the past, large areas have been set aside by Muslim rulers to support war animals. Now most *himas* are smaller, with an estimated 3000 existing in Saudi Arabia in the mid 1960s (Dutton, 1992). Use restrictions include prohibitions on grazing, grass cutting, or tree cutting. The local village headman is responsible for "managing" these areas, adjusting the restrictions from year to year, to meet village needs. *Himas* would seem to hold the greatest potential for land conservation and biodiversity preservation.

Owners of developed land pay a regular tax or *zakat*. *Zakat* is not a tax on income or products but rather a socioreligious obligation for those with more to help those with less. The tax is collected by the community and redistributed to the poor, sick, and needy in the local area (Vadillo and Khalid, 1992).

ACTIVISM

The challenge for Muslims concerned about the environment is to highlight aspects of Islamic law and faith traditions that support an ecological perspective. Foreign laws may be legally binding, but Muslims believe that only Islamic law is morally binding. This creates some barriers for international cooperation on environmental issues, since non-Islamic law carries less weight with Muslims. However, under the continual pressures of western colonial domination many Muslim countries have discarded much of the divine law in favor of secular laws (Nasr, 1993). Some of those most concerned about this loss are actively engaged in resisting western domination in order to maintain Islamic culture. To the extent that environmental activism, even through religious organizations, is perceived as "western," it may also be resisted by Muslims as one more aspect of colonization (Nasr, 1993). Several Muslim groups have formed to increase awareness about animals and the environment. Muslims also have been present at a number of global interfaith environmental conferences.

Eastern Religious Traditions

Hinduism

Hinduism is the oldest of the recognized world religions, originating in India as far back as 3000 BCE (Before Common Era) with no one single identifiable founder. More than a religion, it is regarded as a way of life reflecting the development of Indian culture over centuries. The actual name for the religion in the scriptures is the Vedic religion, or religion of the *Vedas* (scriptures); also *Sangtama Dharma*, the perennial wisdom and righteousness, the "Eternal Religion" (Venkateswaran, 1993). The four *Vedas*—*Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama*, and *Atharva Vedas*—are the primary source for religious knowledge. These revealed texts are supplemented by the equally important *Upanishads* and other interpretive writings and works of Hindu law.

Hindus believe in one Supreme Being, but the divinity arises in many forms including many gods and goddesses. Three of these form the Hindu trinity: Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the sustainer and preserver; and Shiva, the destroyer of evils and dissolver of the universe. Of the four living subtraditions, three are dedicated to worship of each of the forms of the trinity; the fourth group worships Shakti, the Divine Mother. For Hindus, the universe goes through endless cycles of creation, preservation, and destruction. The unifying theme in all Hindu creation stories is that this cyclical process depends on the supreme will of God; God and nature (*Prakriti*) are one and the same (Venkateswaran, 1993).

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

A strong sense of place is pervasive throughout Hindu tradition, representing an unbroken lineage of knowledge of holy sites for thousands of years. Hindus regard their mountains, rivers, and forests as sacred and filled with universal consciousness (*brahman*) (Chapple, 1994). The rivers Ganga (Ganges), Yumna, Sarasvata, and Sindhu and the earth (*Prthivi*) are seen as female deities; the fire (*Agni*) and wind (*Maruts*) as male deities. Hindus regularly make pilgrimages (*parikrama*) to the sacred rivers and mountains, reconsecrating them by ritual circumambulation (Prime, 1992).

Sanctity of life is central to Hindu religion; protection of cows even in crowded city streets reflects



the belief that God may take many different life forms. Humans do not act as special servants or stewards for God, nor are different species assigned degrees of value (Dwivedi, 1990). The practice of *ahimsa*, or nonharming, is based in an understanding of reincarnation. All souls are thought to move through different forms from lifetime to lifetime, reflecting the quality of one's deeds. Animals may have been one's parent in an earlier lifetime or may become one's future child; thus it is important to treat them kindly (Dwivedi, 1990).

Plants, likewise, are regarded as having divine powers. Hindus believe that each tree has a *Vrikshadevata*, tree deity, which lives inside it. This deity is worshipped with prayers and offerings of water, flowers, and sweets; cutting of trees is considered a sinful act. Hindus see tree planting and protection as religious duty. Herbal plants have long played an important role in Indian medicinal practice. Ayurvedic medicine, one of the world's great herbal healing systems (along with Chinese medicine and the western European herbal tradition), draws on the special properties of plants to improve harmful spiritual and physical conditions (see Montes, Chapter Seven, in this volume). Ancient Hindu yoga practices also contribute to a strong respect for a healthy body which lives in spiritual harmony with the world (see for example Iyengar, 1979).

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The Hindu religion has developed an elaborate caste system which marks individuals as members of four main castes and hundreds of subcastes. Guidelines for behavior are determined by caste. The system has degenerated over time into a hierarchical and oppressive social structure, raising human rights issues especially for the lowest caste, untouchables. In some areas, cows are regarded as more holy than untouchables. It has been suggested that the ecological effect of resource partitioning according to caste has been very efficient in reducing economic competition (Dwivedi, 1990). However, under British industrial demands and job opportunities the system has broken down.

Hindu tradition encourages three principles of moral practice: *yajna* (sacrifice), *dhana* (giving), and *tapas* (penance). Interpreted ecologically, these provide means of replenishing the earth, society, and the soul. *Yajna* means thinking of others that will follow and providing for replacement of what

one uses. *Dhana* means giving labor, time, money, or material goods to replenish social relations out of gratitude for what has been given already. *Tapas* means exercising self-restraint by fasting, meditating, or abstaining from sexual activity to replenish one's internal spiritual environment (Prime, 1992).

There are four aims of life in Hindu tradition:

1. joy in the sensual, sexual, artistic, and aesthetic forms of expression;
2. economic and social fulfillment;
3. morality as in duties to people, animals, and plants; and
4. salvation or liberation—union with God.

According to Hindu belief, one can attain liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death by one of four spiritual paths—the ways of knowledge, love and devotion, selfless action, and meditation (Venkateswaran, 1993).

LAND MANAGEMENT

Early Vedic teachers gave great weight to the importance of trees. Gurus gave spiritual instruction under trees; trees were symbols of patience and tolerance. Hindu literature is filled with references to forests and trees; the bond between Indian people and trees is strong. Forests are seen as critical to self-identity formation for Hindus. Unfortunately in modern times, forests and sacred ancient trees are suffering the impacts of increasing population pressure (Prime, 1992).

There are three types of forest in Hindu tradition: *shrivan* (source of prosperity), *tapovan* (the contemplative forest), and *mahavana* (the great natural forest where all species find shelter). A *shrivan* includes groves of fruit trees (*vanakhandi*) and dense woodland (*ghana*) for fuel collection maintained by a village committee of elders. Each village ideally has five great trees representing the five primary elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether—the totality of the universe. The *tapovan*, home of sages, was to be left natural and untended, a place apart from worldly activity for the quiet life of spiritual centers or *ashrams*. In the past it was thought that the presence of spiritual teachers protected the forest and all who dwelled within it. Now modern sanctuaries must be protected by legal regulation and guards (Prime, 1992).



Followers of Gandhian economics promote cottage industry as compatible with sustainable land conservation measures. Gandhi advocated village self-sufficiency and local rule and responsibility. He promoted genuine self-government and economic independence based on local resource availability. The root of his social teachings is based in the spiritual wisdom tradition of *ahimsa*, nonharming. His guidelines for development included maintaining the health of local forests as contexts of stability for village life (Chapple, 1994).

ACTIVISM

An offshoot of Hinduism founded by Guru Maharaj Jambaji in the late fifteenth century thrives today as the Bishnois community in the Marwar area. In his youth, Jambaji witnessed the impacts of a severe drought and reasoned that if trees were protected, the community would survive. Among his religious injunctions was a ban on cutting any green tree. About 300 years later, a nearby king sent his soldiers to harvest the abundant trees to build a new palace. The villagers protested on religious grounds, protecting the trees with their bodies. Soldiers massacred 363 people; eventually the king withdrew the operation and gave the Bishnois state protection for their beliefs (Dwivedi, 1990). Today the community continues to protect trees with fierce devotion, and has served to inspire the internationally famous Chipko movement.

The *Chipko Andolan* (movement to hug the trees) takes its name from similar actions in 1973 and since, when villagers in the town of Gopeshwar formed a human chain to prevent the local forest from being cleared for a sports equipment factory. Women, in particular, showed strong leadership in protecting trees, recognizing the presence of tree deities. Ten years later a similar movement happened in Karnataka and spread to adjoining districts. Gandhi's term *satyagraha*, or persistence in search of truth, has been adapted to these forest movements. Forest *satyagraha* means persistence in search of truth pertaining to the lives of trees (Dwivedi, 1990).

An impressive tree planting program in India was started by Balbir Mathur in the 1960s. It was his idea to distribute trees free as *prasadam* or spiritual blessing, blessed by holy sages. By 1989, Trees for Life had a large office in Delhi with a network of volunteers all over India. In one year they

planted over 700,000 trees. Perhaps the greatest blessing ritual took place at Sarnath in 1990 when His Holiness the Dalai Lama blessed over three million walnuts, apricot, papaya, and guava seeds to be given to 300,000 pilgrims during his Kalachakra teachings (Prime, 1992).

Jainism

The Jains religion originated in India over 5000 years ago and currently has over seven million followers, primarily in India, with about 100,000 in North America, Britain, Europe, Africa, and Australia. Jains practice the teachings of Mahavira XXIV and last prophet of the Jain time cycle, born in 599 BCE and alive during the time of the Buddha. He is credited with consolidating the teachings of a long lineage of prophets who consistently held to principles of peace, harmony, and renunciation. The word Jain means follower of the Jainism, those human teachers who have attained omniscience through spiritual practice of asceticism and nonviolence toward all living creatures (Jain, 1993).

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

In Jain cosmology, the universe has no beginning or end, nor a single creator. That which has no consciousness, *ajiva*, has five substances:

1. motion (*dharma*),
2. rest (*adharm*),
3. space (*akasha*),
4. matter (*pudgala*), and
5. time (*kala*).

That which has consciousness, the soul or *jiva*, takes form in a body which accumulates subtle material particles or karmic "dust" (*asravas*). All beings are thought to have *jiva*, including animals, trees, and stones. Jains consider plants to be a lower form of physical body with only the sense of touch; microorganisms and small animals have two, three, or four senses. Next highest are animals with five senses; humans and advanced animals possessing rationality and intuition (*manas*) are regarded as the highest form of soul. As a highly evolved form of life, humans hold ethical responsibility for environmental protection and harmony (Singhri, 1993).

The central Jain teachings are contained in two statements: *Ahimsa parmo dharmah* (nonviolence



is the supreme religion); and *Parasparopagraho jivanam* (all life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence). All aspects of the natural world are seen as existing in physical and metaphysical relationship with each other. The principle of nonviolence applies not only to physical acts but also to thoughts; violence is defined by the intention to harm—the absence of compassion for the other. Jain scriptures are very clear on prohibition of injury, abuse, oppression, torture, or killing of any creature or living being.

Three other important teachings help define the Jain view toward the environment. *Anekantavada*, the doctrine of manifold aspects, describes reality as multifaceted and ever changing; this doctrine recognizes the existence of an infinite number of viewpoints reflecting the time, place, and state of mind of the viewer and the view. *Samyaktva*, equanimity, promotes a live and let live attitude, avoiding dogmatic, intolerant, aggressive, harmful, and unilateral attitudes towards the natural and human world. *Jiva-daya* (compassion, empathy, and charity) means caring, tending, and protecting all living beings. Jains pray for universal friendliness, forgiveness, and fearlessness towards all living beings (Singhri, 1993).

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The Jain code of conduct is based in the five *vratas* or vows:

1. *ahimsa* (nonviolence—no killing);
2. *satya* (truthfulness—no lying);
3. *asteya* (no stealing);
4. *brahmacharya* (chastity); and
5. *aparigraha* (nonmaterialism).

Consistent with the vow of *ahimsa*, Jains practice strict vegetarianism, eating only vegetables and dairy products. Cruelty to animals is forbidden, including keeping animals in captivity, depriving them of food and drink, or overburdening them (Singhri, 1993).

Central to the Jain way of life is the ethic of moderation and self-restraint. Waste and pollution are seen as acts of violence, preventable by reducing one's needs and wants. Desires for excessive use of natural resources should be curbed to keep consumption levels reasonable. Those that accumulate wealth are advised to distribute the surplus to reduce material attachment. Giving time and chari-

table donations are considered part of a Jain's social obligations. Thus the Jains have founded and maintained many schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics, orphanages, and relief camps (Singhri, 1993).

LAND MANAGEMENT/ACTIVISM

Jain environmental concerns have focused primarily on animals. They have traditionally maintained hospitals and homes for sick and old animals. A group of Jains is actively promoting a wildlife sanctuary on the outskirts of London. Two groups of Jain ascetic monks have special practices for avoiding killing of small animals. Shvetambara and Digambara monks carry a whisk broom to sweep in front of them as they walk to prevent stepping on insects. Terapanthis monks also wear a cloth over their mouths to prevent swallowing insects (Chapple, 1994).

Some of the Jain development projects in rural communities include work in tree planting and solar energy. Recently, the Jains declared March 28th as "Ahimsa Day" to be celebrated as a new religious holiday related to environmental concerns. Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual leadership based on nonviolence was strongly influenced by Jain philosophy (Chapple, 1994).

Taoism

The philosophy of Taoism was developed and popularized in the sixth century BCE by Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, contemporaries of Confucius. The name derives from the primary text by Lao Tzu, the *Tao Te Ching*, a small book of verse describing the way of harmony with nature. This time in China during the Chou dynasty was a period of great intellectual creativity, sometimes called the age of the one hundred philosophers (Tucker, 1994). Today Taoism is known more as a philosophy than an organized religion, though there are some temples in the west as well as the east. A wide range of people, including naturalists, environmentalists, vegetarians, alternative health practitioners, and new paradigm physicists are influenced by it.

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

Taoists believe the Tao to be the self-existent source of all things. It is the cosmic, the mysterious, the nameless, the all-pervasive, the eternal, the ultimate reality of nature (Ip, 1986). It is neither a god



nor personified creator. The Tao is called "the way" by Lao Tzu, referring to the path of return to the original principle. The *Tao Te Ching* emphasizes unmediated intimacy with the natural world, particularly through the flowing and yielding qualities of water. Other important metaphors for the Tao are the valley, womb, vessel—all images of receptivity and productivity (Tucker, 1994).

Nature is described as dynamic and ever changing, reflecting the interplay of two primary forces, *yin* and *yang*. These represent all opposites, for example: male/female, increase/decrease, light/dark, initiating/yielding. In the Chinese system, these opposites are not exclusionary but rather complementary. In any given situation, *yin* and *yang* forces govern the sense of energy and direction shaping the outcome. These can be studied by observing the natural world closely for weather and seasonal patterns, river meanders, bird flight, earth movement, and other indicators of energy dynamics. According to Taoist beliefs, the environment is a primary determining condition for one's own actualization or enlightenment. The actions of humans are not separate from those of nature; the enlightened sage is one who acts in accordance with the movements of the Tao (Chung, 1993b).

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Te, the broad category of virtue in the Taoist tradition, is defined as moral power reflecting the fundamental truth in nature (Ames, 1989). It is the potency, the vitality and power sustaining and transforming all beings. *Te* appears in humans through *wu-wei*, nonego-centric action, or action which harmonizes with the flow of the Tao. *Yu-wei*, in contrast, is willful, intentional, or unnatural activity which goes against the flow of nature.

Taoists value simplicity and spontaneity which allow one to respond to the subtle and dynamic changes in any interaction. Peaceful coexistence with nature is fundamental to Taoist activity. Lao Tzu sees little need for human superstructure (institutions, governments), believing this creates artificial separation between people and the natural world. He urges a return to the most basic intimacy, basing one's lived truth in the experience of the Tao (Ip, 1986).

LAND MANAGEMENT/ACTIVISM

The way of the Taoist sage provides a model for minimal impact on the environment. Invisible, enfolded, unobtrusive yet fully aware, the sage moves easily through the natural world, disrupting nothing in the landscape. He or she practices Lao Tzu's three methods of life enhancement: to keep to the original "oneness," maintain one's vital energy, and persist in the practices for longevity (Chung, 1993b).

The sage uses methods of transformation to help situations move from conflicting mode, the destructive or waning cycle of the Five Elements, to creative mode, the nourishing or increasing cycle. In the destructive mode, metal harms wood (axes, chain saws), wood harms earth (through buildings stuck in the ground), earth harms water (dams), water harms fire (squelching of spirit and beauty of life), and fire harms metal (industrial pollution). In the creative mode, the cycle is turned at any point where it is harmful. Then metal nourishes water (purification of aquifers), water nourishes wood (growth of forests), wood nourishes fire (creating stability of spirit), fire nourishes earth (creating ashes to feed the earth), and earth nourishes metal (slowly forming in the undisturbed depths). The path of return to the Tao is based in the process of transformation; the sage cultivates methods for meeting conflict and turning it to creativity (Chung, 1993b).

Confucianism

Confucianism as a philosophy, religion, and way of life is an important element in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese traditions. It is named after Confucius (551-479 BCE), the philosopher, educator, statesman, and visionary whose thoughts have influenced Asian culture and political relations for two millennia. Important texts include the *Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. The Confucian system offers a model of human conduct that promotes the ideal harmonious society based in cosmological relations (Tucker, 1994).

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

Central to the Chinese world-view is the sense of the universe as constantly changing, unfolding, filled with *ch'i* or vital force or power. This view is neither cyclic nor spiral but rather transformational, with emphasis on the continuity of being (Wei-ming,



1989). There is no single creation story or personification of good and evil. Creativity is seen not as the creation of something out of nothing, but as a transformation of what already exists into another form. All life forms are part of the continuous flow of *ch'i*; human life is thus organically connected to stones, trees, animals. The movement of *ch'i* is influenced by the dynamic tension between *yin* and *yang* forces which are complementary and interdependent.

Confucians describe human beings as filial sons and daughters of the universe. The ideal just society is one that functions in harmony with nature with human activity adapted to the rhythms of the natural world (Tucker, 1994). A moral ruler will respect the laws of nature in the creation of a benevolent government. Confucians use the image of concentric circles to describe their relationship with the cosmos: at the center is the individual self, encircled by family, teachers, friends, government, and finally the universe. Harmonious relations at each level are thought to promote harmonious relations throughout the ordered universe.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

In the Confucian world order people are seen as basically good. This inherent goodness is brought out through education and taking personal responsibility for one's life. Confucianism emphasizes relational ethics based in a view of nature as an interdependent network of wholes and parts. In choosing to act, one considers the balance of yin and yang forces, timing, the mean position or the Golden Path (the most strategic position from which to deal with change), and the status (role, position, duties) of the people in the situation (Chung, 1993a).

One's humanity is achieved only with and through others in society. Concern for social harmony tends to hold priority over concern for environmental harmony. Through self-discipline and self-improvement, the individual becomes a better member of his or her family and of society (Chung, 1993a).

LAND MANAGEMENT/ACTIVISM

Chinese and other north Asian landscapes have been actively managed for thousands of years with agriculture as the primary use. Sustainable agricultural practices have been essential for maintaining high human population levels. Most of this is highly regulated through the state to achieve pragmatically an

adequate distribution of food. Under Chairman Mao, millions of trees were planted, although some of these projects were ultimately unsuccessful. While Confucian philosophy encourages harmonious relations between people and the natural world, in practice these have been stretched by the pressure on the landscape of increasing population. In many places China's landscape is scarred and deforested, reflecting years of intensive use. As China heads toward a period of rising materialism, it seems likely that Confucian influence will protect the interests of the state more than the environment.

Buddhism

The word Buddha means the "awakened one"; the practice of Buddhism is based in waking up to or becoming enlightened by the interdependent nature of reality. Sakyamuni Buddha taught in the Ganges River basin of northeastern India around 500 BCE. Buddhism flourished in India until the thirteenth century when it disappeared from there as a result of several waves of foreign invasion under Islam rule. By then, however, it had spread to southeastern Asia (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Siam, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam), to central and east Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Tibet), and the Himalayas (Bhutan, Ladak, Nepal, and Sikkim). Today there are over 250 million Buddhists, with approximately five million in the United States. Most of these are of Asian descent, but the number of Euro-American Buddhists is increasing as Buddhism becomes established in the latest wave of adoption in North America (Sopa and Jones, 1993).

Central to the Buddha's teaching is the path of the Middle Way. This means avoiding the sensory extremes of asceticism and hedonism and the philosophical extremes of eternalism and nihilism (Sopa and Jones, 1993). The Buddha explained causation through multiple causes, asserting that nothing arises independently but rather depends on specific conditions. Buddhists do not believe in a creator god or an ultimate cause. All existence is seen as impermanent and empty of an independent self. The Buddha exhorted his students to investigate the teachings for themselves and find their own liberation from suffering through personal insight and compassion. According to the Mahayana path, one cultivates *Bodhicitta* mind and aspires to enlightenment in order to serve others (Sopa and Jones, 1993).



SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE

The central teaching of interdependence (*pratitya samutpada*) has been symbolized in the Hua-Yen school of Buddhism by the metaphor of the Jewel Net of Indra (Cook, 1989). This net stretches in all directions to infinity; at each eye or knot of the net lies a jewel of an infinite number of facets. Each jewel reflects all the other jewels in the net, representing both mutual causality and mutual identity. According to Buddhist understanding, one who wakes up to this ungraspable complexity gains a perspective of the self as completely dependent on other beings for its existence. This insight is congruent with the modern ecological view of natural systems. In this view, nature is both context or matrix for all relationships and a significant influence on human consciousness.

According to Tenzin Gyatsu His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1992), the sanctity of nature inspires the practitioner to understand the Buddhist teachings. Direct study and experience of the natural world is of high value in Buddhist practice, especially Zen. One goal of meditation is to reduce distractions and false conceptions in order to become more intimate with the processes of nature (Shaner, 1989). Buddhist rituals are aimed at regenerating the vitality of the earth. The Buddhist law of *karma*, or cause and effect, states that today's thoughts, words, and deeds shape the experiences of the future; likewise, the environmental crisis of today has been shaped by thoughts, words, and deeds of the past.

In Japanese Buddhism, nature aesthetics have played an influential role in cultural activities such as tea ceremony, flower arranging, and poetry. Five spiritual qualities of nature are particularly valued:

1. *aware* (a poignant appreciation of the passing nature of beauty);
2. *yugen* (the mysterious depths of complexity in nature);
3. *wabi* (the beauty of simplicity and poverty);
4. *sabi* (the beauty of solitude and tranquillity in nature); and
5. *yojo* (sensitivity to the relational and dynamic quality of nature) (Odin, 1991).

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The early Buddhist texts tell many stories admonishing disrespectful behavior toward the environment. Some of the precepts or rules for monks prohibit cutting down trees, polluting or wasting water, eating meat, and harming animals (Kabilsingh, 1990). These are all reflections of the first precept, no killing. Each of the five precepts (no killing, no stealing, no lying, no use or offering of intoxicants, and no misuse of sex) has important environmental ramifications for patterns of consumption and land use (Nhat Hanh, 1993).

Buddhist ethics are based in three practices: *sila* (morality), *dhyana* (meditation), and *prajña* (wisdom) (Macy, 1990). These support an ethic of self-restraint in which the practitioner resists the temptations of the three poisons—greed, anger, and delusion. Excess greed causes overuse of ecosystems, expansionism for profit making, and possessiveness of privately owned property. Excess anger causes a destructive attitude towards the natural world. Excess delusion causes inappropriate use or despoliation of ecosystems through ignorance of consequences (De Silva, 1990).

Buddhists take refuge in the Triple Gem—the *Buddha*, *dharma*, and *Sangha*. One vows to develop oneself to become enlightened (*Buddha*), to understand the teachings or truth (*dharma*) of interdependent nature, and to seek and help build a Buddhist ideal society (*Sangha*) (Sivaraksa, 1990). In the Mahayana tradition, one aspires to the *Bodhisattva* ideal, one who has attained enlightenment but returns to serve others. The Bodhisattva practices two kinds of love: *karuna* or compassion for all beings and their suffering, and *metta* or loving kindness, prayers for the health and equanimity of all beings (Kaza, 1993). Buddhists understand all beings to include not only humans, but also plants, animals, rivers, and mountains.

LAND MANAGEMENT

Because Buddhism developed in a tropical forest setting, trees have always been highly regarded. The Buddha was born under a tree and gained enlightenment at the foot of the bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Big trees are thought to be inhabited by spirits and should therefore be protected. Over the centuries, it has been debated whether plants have Buddha nature or not; the Tendai school in China supported the



full awakening of plants (LaFleur, 1990). More pro-civilization interpretations make plants the exception to the no killing precept for practical agricultural reasons (Schmithausen, 1991). Killing plants directly as in tree cutting is seen as more harmful than indirect harm caused by pesticide use. According to Buddhist thought, the intention to harm causes almost greater injury than the act of harming itself.

Buddhist principles as they apply to land development, especially in southern countries, would include spiritual development at the foundation. In contrast to the usual sense of development as increasing desire for and production of material goods, a Buddhist approach would reduce needs and desires and increase spiritual satisfaction (Sivaraksa, 1993). Increased spiritual awareness is seen as a critical factor in restructuring the collective consciousness of society towards the environment. This could include greater emphasis on local sense of place as part of the *Sangha* or religious community (Devall, 1990).

ACTIVISM

There are two opposing views in Buddhism towards activism: one regards it as a distraction from achieving inner awareness and enlightenment, the other sees engaged social work as a path to enlightenment. Those who see activism as a distraction are unlikely to be supportive of religious response to environmental crisis unless it directly affects monastic retreat centers. The Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka, in contrast, demonstrates socially engaged Buddhism on behalf of community development and ecological sustainability. Villagers join in *shramadana* projects (shared labor), giving of their time and effort to create a well, a school, or an orchard for the community. Over 400 villages have participated in self-organized trainings to bring a Buddhist focus to local development activities (Macy, 1983, 1990).

In Thailand, forest monks are taking leadership in protecting village forests from clear-cutting for state contracts. Wearing orange robes of ordination as protectors of the forest these monks perform religious ceremonies with large trees. Similar ceremonies have been carried out in the United States in connection with Earth Day and Arbor Day celebrations at Zen temples (Batchelor and Brown, 1992). Eco-Tibet, a support group in the United States, has drawn attention to environmental devastation since the Chinese invasion in the 1950s. Forests have

been denuded, lakes dammed, and uranium waste dumped as China has displaced and destroyed the Tibetan population. His Holiness the Dali Lama has proposed that Tibet be declared a zone of *ahimsa*, the entire country an ecological and human rights preserve (Batchelor and Brown, 1992).

Implications for Public Land Management

Each of the world's major religions has something to offer in the discussion of emerging ethics and principles for caretaking of public lands. Certainly none of these religions will be adopted as official guides for policymaking on U.S. lands (see Friesen, Chapter Twenty-Two, in this volume). It is also true that pieces of religions cannot be lifted out of cultural context and adopted in piecemeal fashion elsewhere. While U.S. land managing agencies are prohibited from adopting a religious orientation in setting policy, they can consider the merits of world religious metaphysical views as they might inform agency choices. This may help illuminate the Judeo-Christian philosophical relationship with U.S. regulatory law and suggest alternative interpretations more in keeping with current religious ecological revisioning (Engel, 1990).

Examination of the ethical basis of land management policies can only benefit from broad ranging dialogue on many important religious concepts. Ideas from other traditions may be reframed in a different context and incorporated where appropriate. It may be that careful consideration of different religious values will help in resolving land management conflicts, especially those arising out of cultural difference. The land manager who develops a sensitivity and vocabulary around values issues will be able to be more articulate and helpful in mediating conflicts that threaten deeply rooted religious practices.

In the spirit of interfaith dialogue and investigation, I offer some possible starting points for consideration. From each of the eight traditions, I highlight one central concept or practice, looking briefly at the implications for management practices on public lands. I suggest that such experiential dialogue encourages flexible and creative thinking that may be helpful in the context of emerging ecocentric values.



Western Traditions of Land Management

From the *Jewish* tradition, one might bring attention to the concept of the *Sabbath*, letting the land rest. Though this originally applied to a desert agricultural environment where soils were poor, it easily translates to lands under pressure from over-harvesting, excess recreation use, trail erosion, and diversion of waters. Policies that allow the land and waters to rest would limit tourist traffic, closing areas off for recovery every five to ten years as needed. Forest product harvesting such as food collecting would be monitored and periods of rest included following poor years. Clear-cutting would be regulated with the overall health of the landscape in mind to reduce stress of runoff, soil loss, and loss of wildlife habitat in impacted areas.

From the *Christian* tradition, one might consider the ramifications of *love*. Land management employees who love the lands they care for will make more responsible decisions than those who are detached or removed from the area. To deeply love a place provides a powerful motivation for on-the-ground knowledge of one's region. Love promotes intimacy of observation, and this makes good natural history. Good natural history promotes ecological understanding which can support management strategies based directly on what the land can sustain. To love and respect the land as sacred is to protect the opportunity for people to experience the land as source of spiritual inspiration.

From the *Islamic* tradition, I suggest an ecological application of the practice of *remembrance*. Calls to wake up and remember the powerful presence of the land and all the plants and animals who depend on it can increase attention and awareness of the divine spirit. The public servant caring for federal or state lands can take on the role of one who calls for remembrance. This might be through education, representation at public hearings, conflict negotiation, or user group training sessions. To call for remembrance is to call for strong attention to what is at hand, to remember the human place in the divine cosmos. The public employee responsible for land stewardship can use this call to evoke high standards of public behavior.

Eastern Traditions of Land Management

From the *Hindu* tradition, one might reflect on *karma*, the law of cause and effect. Analysis of environmental problems from the perspective of multiple causes helps expose points of view, historical patterns, power relations, and political/economic forces at play. Acknowledging these, one can see the choices and policies which have determined the present condition of the landscape. One can also consider the implications of present actions in creating the future. The decision-maker observing the law of karma would take into serious account the impacts of public lands policies on future generations. Likewise, managers in North America would consider impacts of U.S. land agency policies on international negotiations for resource use.

From the *Jains*, I highlight the practice of *ahimsa*, nonharming. This means restraint from both the thought of harming and the act of harming. Public land managers could serve as examples to visitors and user groups, encouraging an attitude of minimum disturbance to life and maximum promotion of the well-being of species. This might be a broadened application of the minimum impact philosophy suggested for backpacking in wilderness areas. By setting standards for users, land managers educate and increase awareness of the value of life in public lands.

From the teachings of *Taoism*, one could consider the possibilities for *wu-wei*, nonegocentric action or action that is in harmony with nature. This might provide guidance for ecological restoration of creek channels, estuaries, and forests. Native plant regeneration from a local seed source would harmonize with watershed genetics. Leaving downed wood or snags for woodpecker homes and grubs would replenish the soil fertility. Keeping the flow of creeks, rivers, and estuaries free and active would allow aquatic ecosystems to flourish. The Taoist approach would do less instead of more where a small action was enough to turn an ecosystem from degeneration towards health.

From *Confucianism*, I suggest the concept of *ch'i*, or energy flow. Land managers might try to understand forest regions in terms of vital energy flow through the watersheds, the food chain, or the decomposition cycle. This fits well with ecological



modeling, and it also includes the ch'i that moves through the people working with the land to sustain healthy movement of energy. Students of ch'i would learn to recognize it in diverse forms from slow and stable (bristlecone pines) to swift and ephemeral (hatch of mayflies). Likewise, ch'i flows in different ways through long-established indigenous populations versus new settlers to an area.

From *Buddhism*, one might consider the ecological concept of *interdependence*, the interconnected, interrelational nature of existence. This concept lends itself easily to a systems perspective, with a management focus on bioregion, watershed, or landscape. With this understanding, a manager might seek ways to protect wildlife corridors, reconnect stream channels, remove road barriers, or connect trail systems. One might also engage in public hearings that encourage community participation in decision making and shared responsibility.

Conclusion

Perhaps this chapter can serve as a starting point in stimulating conversation about the concepts behind public service commitments on behalf of parks and protected areas. In most public land management agencies, religion is a de facto forbidden topic. This is due not only to legal requirements of separation of church and state in policy making, but also to collegial respect for personal beliefs. However, religious traditions have much to offer the discussion on land management values. In the act of reviewing the meaning of different ethical codes, one becomes more aware of the implicit codes underlying all decisions affecting the land. Everyone carries a set of values assumptions shaped by personal experience, upbringing, education, and cultural conditioning. A land manager is no exception to this. Discussions about religious values can help clarify one's own personal values and how they affect one's management choices at every institutional level.

I offer this work in the spirit of tolerance for diverse perspectives and willingness to learn about the many attitudes and cultural ties with the natural world. The world's religious traditions represent thousands of years of careful thinking, consideration, testing, and winnowing to essentials. What has lasted over the centuries is what holds meaning. As more and more people turn to public lands for spiritual experience, land managers will

need to recognize the role of religious values and be willing to include them in policy considerations. It is my hope that this material can help raise awareness of cultural values in current management policies while inspiring dialogue reflecting on our rich and vital relationships with the public lands.



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