



CANNABIS HISTORICAL ROLE IN SPIRITUALITY

- **Cannabis is an “entheogen”** is a consciousness altering chemical substance used in a religious, shamanic, or spiritual context that may synthesize or obtained from a natural species. Other known entheogens are peyote, psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca, iboga, and salvia divinorum. There are many more.
- **Taoism**-Taoist shamans mixed cannabis with ginseng as a means to reveal truths about the future as a means of casting your spirit forward in time. Cannabis is excluded in ancient text and was reserved for religious officials and not shared with common folks. As Confucianism gained popularity cannabis was no longer widely used in spiritual practice, Taoism eventually fell.
- **Hinduism**-Just as cannabis spiritual practice ceased in China, it rose in India in 200 CE. In Hinduism it is said “the gods sent hemp out of compassion for the human race so that they may attain delight, lose fear, and increase sexual desires.” Other popular Hindu stories are as follows:
 - Cannabis originated from a spot of nectar dropped from Heaven.
 - Gods and Demons churned the milk ocean in search of *amrita*, Sanskrit for immortality, and received cannabis as a result.
 - The deity Shiva, most favorite plant was cannabis. Due to this widely known fact bhang, a cannabis infused celebratory drink is used throughout India from ancient to modern times.
 - Sadu’s a Shiva-worshipping sect refuse work and are kept alive through donation. They smoke cannabis to honor Shiva and an endless supply is available. They are known for their ceremonial chillum smoke pipes.
- **Buddism**-It is widely known that Buddha subsisted on one hemp seed per day for six years to aid in his enlightenment. Buddha is sometimes depicted holding a bowl of cannabis leaves. Buddhist practitioners would often use cannabis to heighten awareness or facilitate meditation. Despite Buddhism forbidding intoxicants, for many Buddhists cannabis is a part of spiritual practice.

- **Christianity**- traditions used the plant as well. In 1936, Polish etymologist Sula Benet proposed a radical new interpretation of Old Testament Hebrew text: according to her, a mistranslation that occurred in the original Greek version of the Old Testament mistook the Hebrew word for cannabis, kaneh bosm, as calamus, a plant traditionally used to make fragrances. If her translation is correct, this would fundamentally change our understanding of the Old Testament. References to kaneh bosm are made in the Bible.
 - Christian denomination Rastafari are known for their cannabis in spiritual practice. In Rastafari cannabis is used in practice to heighten spiritual states for “Reasoning sessions”. Rastafarians do not call the plant marijuana, they call it “wisdom weed” or the “holy herb”.
 - Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church was an incorporated church in the 1970’s which was featured on **60 Minutes in 1979** for being a sect of Rastafarianism which used a religion as a means to import and exporting cannabis from Jamaica to Miami Florida.
- **Islam**-Mohamed did not prohibit cannabis but did prohibit alcohol. Many orthodox groups do consider cannabis forbidden. Many historical Muslim groups consider hemp a holy plant, hemp was used as a sacred medicine, and in 800CE Persia hashish was used to appreciate the nature of Allah and in order to stimulate mystical consciousness.

900 BC

Assyrians used cannabis as an incense to ward off evil spirits. Used widely in funerals to ward off spirits and burned in the rooms of children to keep them safe.

500 BC

The first known use of cannabis as an intoxicant was by the Scythians. The Greek “Father of History” Herodotus is credited for documenting the Scythians religious cannabis ceremonies which included tent-like structures where they burned cannabis plants in censers on wooden tripods. Participants communally inhaled smoke vapors for ritualistic and euphoric purposes.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jan/06/science.religion#>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/rastafari/customs/customs_1.shtml

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHIyjfXVWnc>

<http://sparcsf.org/spiritual-use-of-cannabis>

<http://www.leafly.com/news/stories/cannabis-a-gift-from-the-ancient-gods>