

Similarities And Distinctive Features Of Temples In The World Religions

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ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization, arbitrariness and the intensification of conflicts in one region threaten all parts of the world. In recent years, there have been many disturbances and conspiracies related to religious factors in the world. These incidents demonstrate that the formation and strengthening of a culture of religious tolerance, respect and cooperation among representatives of different faiths is an objective historical necessity. At the same time, the role of religious knowledge in strengthening and preserving peace and stability, as well as harmony among peoples and religions, is incomparable. This article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the teachings of world religions, as well as the definition, history and structure of temples. In particular, it describes the interior decoration of temples, the activities of priests, as well as vestments of religious rank and attributes of the temple.

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Введение

Religion is a commitment that obliges believers to perform certain actions or to refrain from others. Choosing and embracing a particular religion imposes on a person the duty to unconditionally adhere to that religion's principles, to perform daily and weekly prayers as prescribed by sacred texts. This includes observing fasts and organizing ceremonies associated with holidays and sacred days, as well as performing rituals that take place once in the lifetime of every believer (such as rites at the birth of a child or a funeral rite).

We all know that religious ceremonies and rituals are held in places of worship. And every place of worship has its own unique characteristics. In this article, we will examine the similarities and differences among places of worship in the world's major religions.

A world religion is defined as a religion that anyone has the right to practice, regardless of their origin, gender, social status, nationality, skin color, or race [4:p. 15]. The world's major religions are Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. While Buddhism is considered the oldest of the world's major religions [11: p. 124], Christianity has the largest number of adherents in the world [15]. In turn, Islam is the youngest of these religions.

While the teachings of Christianity and Islam are based on monotheism, Buddhist doctrine has no concept of God [3: p. 96]. This, in turn, led experts to raise the question of whether this philosophical doctrine could be considered and described as religious?

In addition, it should be noted that while the Christian doctrine of God is based on the Trinity (the manifestation of God in three persons), and that God created man in His own image and likeness [2:1:26],

then Islamic doctrine states that Allah is one, there is none like Him, and ascribing partners to Him is considered an unforgivable sin [20].

While in Christianity (with the exception of rituals such as baptism) prayers are required to be performed only in a church under the guidance of the clergy, in Islam it is preferable to pray in a mosque. Islamic teachings permit worshipping Allah without the guidance of clergy anywhere on earth. Furthermore, unlike in Christianity, home prayer (without the guidance of a priest and without an altar) is acceptable for Muslims.

The situation regarding the observance of religious traditions, rites, and rituals in Buddhism is different. First, although Buddhist philosophical doctrine is regarded as religious, it originally lacked a system of worship that would manifest itself in prayers, religious ceremonies, donations, sacrifices, or the celebration of holy days.

Second, the Buddha's teachings are based on the doctrine of suffering: birth is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, being separated from loved ones is suffering, being reunited with those one dislikes is suffering, and not getting what one desires is suffering [5: p. 40], etc.

In addition, the Buddha taught that Pratimoksha (the observance of moral precepts) is the foundation of karma management and the path to achieving nirvana [6: pp. 154–155].

Third, since the deification of the Buddha developed later, it is evident that the temples and the system of prayers and ceremonies practiced today in various parts of the world were shaped under the influence of other religions or religious beliefs. This has contributed to the fact that the systems of worship and religious practices within Buddhism differ sharply from one another.

While Christian scripture provides a detailed description of the history and structure of the church, the Quran does not specify where or how a mosque should be built. It should also be noted that Buddhist scripture contains no verses mentioning a temple.

The Bible not only describes the history and structure of the First Temple (the Tabernacle) and the significance of its religious symbols, but it also details the building materials to be used in its construction [2:25:8-31]. According to Old Testament tradition, the architecture of the temple was divided into three parts: the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the courtyard. Accordingly, the layout of all churches is also divided into three parts: the altar, the nave, and the narthex.

Although the word “masjid” appears 27 times in 26 verses of the Holy Quran [1:2:144; 2:149; 2:150; 2:191; 2:196; 2:217; 5:2; 9:7; 9:19; 9:28; 17:1; 48:25; 48:27; 22:25; 8:34; 72:18] the Quran does not specify the structure of the mosque, the system, form, and order of establishing religious attributes, or their meanings. In Islam, the structure of the mosque and construction guidelines are regulated by the hadiths.

The issue of temple construction and structure in Buddhism is different. This is because the Buddhist scriptures, the *Tripitaka*, do not contain any verses specifically about temples. Instead, the scriptures discuss the structure and leadership of the *Sangha*—the community of monks and nuns. However, these rules are not considered absolute. This is because the Buddha himself, during his lifetime, urged people to reflect on his philosophical teachings. According to Russian Buddhologists T.V. Ermakov and E.P. Ostrovskaya, the foundation of Buddhism does not consist of specific religious rules and moral codes that every believer must follow. Every believer must be guided by moral principles, must be able to monitor them, and, if necessary, adhere to them [6: p. 154-160]. Based on this, it can be said that the foundation of Buddhist doctrine lies in attaining nirvana, but this can be achieved through any valid method.

While a single term suffices to refer to a place of worship in Christianity and Islam (church [9: p. 316] or mosque [8: p. 298]), in Buddhism the names of temples vary by tradition. For example, Buddhist temples in Japan are known by various names: gan, tera, dera, or ji. Among the Kalmyks and Tuvans, a temple is called a khurul; among the Buryats, a dugan; in Tibet, they are called datsans; and among the Mongols, the terms khuree (хүрээ), sume (сүм), and khid (хийд) are used to refer to Buddhist temples.

In Japan, a Buddhist temple is represented by the character 寺 and is pronounced “ji” or “tera.” The choice between these two readings depends on how the temple's main name is pronounced: if the temple is named after the area where it was built or after the nickname of its lay founders, then the character 寺 in its name is read as “tera” or “dera.” Examples include Asuka-dera (the temple on the Asuka Plain), Kiyomizu-

dera (the temple by the Kiyomizu Waterfall), and Tachibana-dera (the temple of the Tachibana clan). If, however, the name includes the name of a revered being or a title of the teachings, then 寺 is read as ji. For example, Yakushiji (the temple of the healing Buddha Yakushi, also known as Bhaisajyaguru), Horyuji (the Temple of the Development of the Law). Sometimes a temple is named after the years of the reign during which it was founded. For example, Enryakuji (the temple of the Enryaku years) [13].

Temples in world religions can be divided into three categories: first, large temples for communal worship (usually built in the city center); second, “local temples,” where specific rituals can be performed with one or a small number of devotees; and third, prayer houses.

In Islam, there are two types of mosques: the Masjid al-Jama'ah and the Masjid al-Mahalli (local mosque).

Masjid al-Jumu'ah is a large mosque equipped with religious features such as a mihrab (prayer niche) and a minbar, and is intended for communal Friday prayers (Jumu'ah) [7: c. 153].

A local mosque is a mosque intended for the daily five-time prayer (salat) with a small congregation; it is equipped with a mihrab but does not have a minbar.

In Christianity and Buddhism, all three types of places of worship can be found. A Christian place of worship is called a church. A church is a large temple equipped with religious objects such as a throne, an altar, an iconostasis (in Orthodoxy), and a statue of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ (in Catholicism), and is intended for the celebration of religious holidays, public prayers, and sacraments (liturgy, baptism, confirmation, burial, etc.).

A chapel is a “small church.” A chapel is a small structure without a throne or altar, intended for performing specific religious services and rituals other than the main and fundamental prayers, with a small number of worshippers. Such churches typically do not hold regular services. Furthermore, they do not have a staff of clergy or rectors [17]. Such chapels are often found in train stations and airports, in cemeteries (to pray for the deceased), in hospitals, at the burial sites of saints, and at places of spiritual and historical significance. It is worth noting that Orthodox Christians decorate chapels with icons, while Catholics place a statue of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

A chapel – a room used for worship, a home church [16]. A chapel is a room without an altar, designed for specific religious services, and typically features icons arranged in several tiers (in Orthodox churches) or a statue of Jesus Christ (in Catholic churches). A home chapel is usually a separate room within a house.

This tradition can also be observed in Buddhism. The term “prayer hall” is characteristic of certain branches of Buddhism. This tradition emerged under the influence of indigenous religions such as Shintoism and Hinduism. Buddhists in the Far East adhere to this tradition. They have established home shrines by setting up an altar in a separate room of their homes. For example, in Japan, a home altar is called a butsudan. A butsudan (仏壇) is a small home or temple altar found in traditional Japanese homes. Usually, a butsudan is designed as a cabinet with doors, inside which objects of religious worship are placed (statues of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, scrolls with images of the Buddha (honzon, 本尊), images of Buddhist mandalas) [14]. It is placed on the south or east wall of the house, at a convenient angle.

While in Christianity, the floor plan of a church is based on specific religious symbols—such as a basilica (salvation), a rotunda (circle), or a cross—in Buddhism, the floor plan of a temple is rectangular. In contrast, in Islam, the shape of the floor plan is irrelevant when constructing a mosque. The most important factor is practicality.

In Christianity, every sign and symbol has meaning. For example, a basilica symbolizes Noah’s Ark (the ship of salvation). Every believer is convinced that those who visit the church will be saved, just as those on the ship were saved during the Great Flood. Therefore, churches are built based on the symbol of the basilica [10: p. 146].

A particularly important question is: in which direction should the altar be placed? Muslims face the altar toward the holy city of Mecca, since in the Holy Scriptures, Allah commands Muslims to pray while facing Mecca [1:2:144].

Christians place the altar in the eastern part of their churches, while Buddhists place it in the northern or southern part of their temples.

Unlike in Islam, the clergy plays a special role in Christianity and Buddhism. While in these two world religions the clergy is considered a religious ministry and has a priestly hierarchy, in Islam there is no religious order. Therefore, among Muslims, any adult male who possesses religious knowledge and moral integrity can lead communal prayers and guide the religious life of the community.

Although Islam does not have the concept of religious offices, an imam, an assistant imam, a mutawalli, and a muezzin serve in the mosque to ensure that Muslims perform religious rituals and ceremonies in accordance with Islamic rules.

In Christianity, unlike in Buddhism, the clergy is divided into two branches: the Catholic and the Orthodox. Each has a three-tiered priestly hierarchy: deacon, priest, and bishop [18].

Priests of the white clergy are permitted to marry and are not required to observe a vow of celibacy. Priests of the black clergy are not permitted to marry and are required to observe a vow of celibacy.

The issue of marriage for monks and other clergy in Buddhism is different. In Buddhism, monks and nuns are not permitted to marry and are required to observe a vow of celibacy. However, in some schools of Buddhism, the practice of “semi-monasticism” exists, and marriage is permitted for both monks and nuns. For example, while in Japanese Buddhism marriage is permitted for all monks and priests, in Tibet marriage is permitted only for the highest-ranking clergy.

In Islam, marriage is considered a Sunnah of the Prophet not only for religious leaders but for all believers. Every Muslim is obligated to marry.

According to Islamic teachings, rejecting marriage is tantamount to rejecting the Prophet. In Christianity, religious rituals performed without the guidance of priests are not accepted by God. Furthermore, in both Christianity and Buddhism, although both men and women are accepted into monastic life, women are prohibited from leading or independently conducting religious rituals. This tradition can also be seen in Islam. Like other world religions, Islam does not assign the role of imam to women; that is, in Islam as well, women are prohibited from leading communal prayers.

While in Buddhism monks and nuns typically live outside the city, in mountainous regions, in Christianity the clergy live at churches or monasteries not far from the community.

In addition, it is worth noting that both Christianity and Buddhism have the concept of religious vestments. Clergy and monks are required to wear these vestments. These vestments are divided into two categories: ceremonial vestments and everyday vestments.

According to Christian teaching, worship services, prayers, and ceremonies are not considered valid without specific priestly vestments. A distinctive feature of Christianity is that ritual vestments vary by rank and are brightly colored. That is, each religious office has specific vestments, and they differ from one another. The liturgical vestments of the clergy are described in the Old Testament as the garments of Aaron and other priests, made by God’s direct command [2:2: 28, 2; 31, 10].

In addition, there are differences in the color and shape of the vestments worn by Orthodox and Catholic priests. For example, consider the miter, the headdress worn by bishops. Furthermore, priests’ vestments come in various colors—white, black, red, purple, yellow, blue, and green—depending on the occasion.

Unlike in Christianity, in Buddhism, the sacred vestments of the clergy do not differ from one another. Furthermore, monks and nuns sew their own vestments, and their color does not change depending on the occasion.

I would also like to note that the color of the religious robes worn by Buddhist monks and nuns indicates their affiliation with a particular school. For example, Zen Buddhists wear black, gray, or brown robes (Chinese), dark red (Koreans), or black and white (Japanese); Mahayana and Vajrayana practitioners, as well as Tibetans, wear burgundy robes; residents of Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Mongolia wear robes ranging from contrasting orange to dark brown, and so on [19].

The issue of religious and ceremonial attire in Islam is different. Islam does not require Muslims to wear specific clothing either during religious services (except for the Hajj and Umrah) or in everyday life. Muslim clothing must cover the parts of the body required by Sharia law (awrah) [21].

While in Christianity and Buddhism, altars are adorned with specific religious objects, as well as icons (in Orthodox Christianity) and statues of revered figures (such as the statue of the crucifixion of Jesus in

Catholicism), in Islam it is forbidden to place statues or icons, as this is considered idolatry and the creation of a partner to Allah.

In addition to other religious objects, a statue of the Buddha is placed on the altar of a Buddhist temple. Unlike in Christianity, the statue of the religion's founder is placed in a sitting, standing, or reclining position in the center of the temple. Furthermore, a single temple may house numerous statues of the Buddha or other deities. In a Buddhist temple, alongside male statues, one can also find depictions of female figures of Buddha [12: p. 65-67].

According to Christianity and Buddhism, only priests are permitted to enter the sanctuary, whereas in Islam, the mihrab is not marked by any special signs, and access to it is open to everyone.

While in Buddhism and Christianity, sculptural depictions of the founder of the religion, religious historical events, as well as gods or goddesses have risen to the level of religious culture, in Islam it is strictly forbidden not only to depict or draw Allah or the founder of the religion, but even to draw a picture of a human being.

The Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine that humans were created in the image and likeness of God [2:1:26.] contributed to the emergence of a religious culture in which God or religious-historical events are depicted through drawings, paintings, and sculptures. A striking example of this is the statue of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ installed in the altar of a Catholic church, the wall icons of priests, or the iconostasis installed near the altar of an Orthodox church. Also, in support of our view, we can mention the historical Christian images painted on the domed ceilings of Orthodox churches.

While the display of a statue of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a distinctive feature of Catholicism, the veneration of icons and the deification of priests are distinctive features of the Orthodox Church. The situation is different in Protestantism. According to Protestantism, the veneration of icons is considered idolatry, and the placement of a statue of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the altar is prohibited.

This tradition has its own unique history within Buddhism. First, Buddhist painting (depictions or representations of the Buddha) and sculpture were adopted from Indian culture. Second, the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation and the Buddha's repeated rebirths contributed to the diverse depictions of the Buddha. Later, this tradition evolved into a religious culture within Buddhism. Today, in various parts of the world where Buddhists live, in city centers and on the altars of Buddhist temples, we can see statues of the Buddha depicted in sitting, standing, or reclining poses.

The depiction of Buddha reflects regional characteristics. For example, while in India Buddha is depicted as a thin, beggar-like figure with round eyes and black curly hair, in Buryatia, Mongolia, and China he is depicted as a self-sufficient, full-figured man with narrow eyes and a shaved head, dressed in traditional Chinese clothing.

It is worth noting that, across all branches of Buddhism, the Buddha is depicted as a man. Nevertheless, Tibetan Buddhism is unique in its depiction of Buddha statues. An English scholar and monk known as Sangharaksha notes in his book **Buddhism: The Fundamentals of the Path**: "In Tibet and in countries that have adopted its culture, male and female figures of the Buddha in sexual union are called 'yab-yum': 'yab' means 'father,' and 'yum' means 'mother'; thus, these figures are the archetypal father and mother". In the monasteries and temples of Tibet, one can easily find many beautiful statues and scrolls depicting these figures of Buddha in sexual union [12: c. 65-67].

The absence of a concept of a god or gods, as well as his philosophical teachings on attaining nirvana, meant that the beliefs and religious views of the local population were not rejected. As a result, Buddhism spread rapidly to new territories. At the same time, as a result of religious syncretism with local religious views, new branches of Buddhism began to emerge, such as Japanese Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Korean Buddhism, and others. It is worth noting that the process of religious syncretism was widespread among peoples adhering to primitive forms of religious belief: animism, fetishism, shamanism, and totemism.

Indian missionaries found the best way to attract people to Buddhism. Initially, without disregarding the religious beliefs of the local people, they began building temples. Later, to attract the local people on a large scale, they placed statues of the Buddha—made of various materials such as clay, copper, silver, and

gold—in the temple altars, alongside icons and rock paintings of revered deities. Gradually, through missionary work, the local people were encouraged to embrace Buddhism.

A distinctive feature of this policy is that Indian missionaries erected statues of deities in a manner modeled after Buddhist statues. An example of this can be seen in the Buddhist temples of Korea, Japan, and China, where statues of numerous gods revered by the people are displayed alongside those of the Buddha.

There are many temples in China where multiple deities from different religions (Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism) are worshipped simultaneously. Several distinctive features can be observed in these temples.

First, the presence of various religious deities in temples indicates that these religions are practiced throughout China.

Second, in Buddhist temples in China, statues of Confucius, the Dao, and Hindu gods are depicted as subordinate to the statue of the Buddha.

Third, the role of religious syncretism is enormous. This has led to the diversity of Buddhism.

Based on the information provided above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

First and foremost, the role of religious studies in ensuring peace and stability in a multinational, multi-confessional state is significant. It is impossible to possess knowledge of religious studies without studying the components of religion, such as the history and structure of places of worship, prayer, religious traditions and rituals, symbols, as well as the essence and significance of religious attributes.

Second, a comparative analysis of places of worship helps identify the distinctive features of the teachings of the world's religions.

Third, studying the history of places of worship, religious symbols, the hierarchy of clergy, and the rules for visiting places of worship will help counter the emergence and spread of religious xenophobia among young people.

Fourth, a comparative study of the teachings of world religions helps foster a culture of respect among young people for the religious values of followers of other faiths and allows them to become acquainted with new cultures. This, in turn, contributes to the formation and development of a culture of religious tolerance among different segments of the population.

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