

Name_____

Period_____

8th Grade World History

Mr. Wohlt

Thuggee Cult



The Thuggee Cult is a Hindu sect that is known for its notorious strangulations of travelers in India generally throughout central India (Gordon 404). The Thuggee Cult became more widely known during the 19th century when Sir William Bentinck, along with his chief captain Sir William Sleeman, took vigorous action against the cults during the 1830s. The history of the cult goes back many centuries, yet an exact date of its origins is unclear. What is clear is that the ritual killings were done in honor of the goddess Kali and that the killings were very distinct and highly ritualistic. The members of the Thuggee cult were considered to be hereditary killers; that is Thuggee was thought to be a trait passed down through generations. Sir W. Bentinck's campaign for the eradication of the Thuggee Cult took measures that tended to be extreme in nature. The campaign all effectively eradicated the Thuggee Cult from existence

entirely.

The first recorded arrest of a Thug (also known as thag) was Tipu Sultan in 1799 although at the time it was not known that he was a cult member and that the murder was ritualistic. Although the first arrest was in 1799, there are records from 13th century of Thuggery, which suggests that the Thuggee Cult has more ancient origins. The Thuggee were a cult of professional roadside stranglers who preyed upon travelers as an act of worship to the goddess Kali; interestingly, they did not strangle any of the English who were in the area. The Thuggee Cult membership was passed down through heredity, yet this passage did not function as other castes do in Hindu society. Members of the cult may come from any region, religion, class or caste. Also, outsiders are welcomed into the cult. They are a coherent group in that they share language, belief in the practice that has many minutely observed rituals, prohibitions and superstitions.

Meadows Taylor's novel *Confessions of a Thug* offers an explanation of the divine origins of the cult.

"In the beginning of the world according to the Hindoos, there existed a creating and a destroying power, both emanations from the Supreme Being. These were, as a matter of consequence, at constant enmity with each other, which still continues. The creative power, however, peopled the earth so fast, that the destroyer could not keep pace with him . . . (he) was given permission to resort to every means he could devise to effect his objects. Among others, his consort Deveen, Bhōwanee, or Kalee . . . assembled a number of her votaries, whom she named Thugs. She instructed them in the art of Thuggee . . . She endowed the Thugs with superior intelligence and cunning, in order that they might decoy human beings to destruction, and sent them abroad into the world, giving them, as the reward of their exertions, the plunder they might obtain from those they put to death; and bidding them to be under no concern for the disposal of the bodies . . . (Eventually) corruptions

crept in . . . after destroying a traveler, [they] determined, instead of following the old custom of leaving the body unnoticed, [that they would] watch and see how it was disposed of . . . [Kalee] quickly espied them . . . 'You have seen me,' said she, 'and looked upon a power which no mortal has ever yet beheld without instant destruction; but this I spare you; henceforward, however, I shall no longer protect you as I have done. The bodies of those whom you destroy will no longer be removed by me, and you must take your own measures for their concealment. It will not always be effectual, and will often lead to your detection by earthly powers, and in this will consist your punishment. Your intelligence and cunning still remain to you. I will in future assist you by omens for your guidance; but this my decree will be your curse to the latest period of the world.' So, saying, she disappeared, and left them to the consequences of their own folly and presumption: but her protection has never been withdrawn. (Meadows, 28–29)

Further, the Thuggees were actually widely integrated into Hindu culture, particularly into agrarian life. Among groups of organized criminals, the Thuggee were the most interwoven into local society. They held a symbiotic relationship within villages and were supported by "zaminidars (landowners), Indian princes, law enforcement officials, merchants and even ordinary farmers" (Roy, 125). Large landholders would allow them to live on their land so long as they received their portion of the Thuggee's plunderings. They also provided protection to the area, for they did not harm locals nor did they allow other organized criminals into the area. In return for this, the Thuggee cult members were permitted to practice ritualistic killings for their goddess Kali.

Edward Thornton describes the ritualistic killings in his book *Illustrations and Practices of the Thugs*. The Thuggee members would wait on highways or outside of town in groups of three or four and often with a child of age 10 or so. They would appear as though they had all met there by accident. Then they would learn about any travelers who might be carrying goods and enter into conversation with them. The travelers would then be convinced that the cult members were really fellow travelers who would like to travel along with them for safety. Once the opportunity presented itself they would then throw a silk scarf around the victim's neck. Two Thugs were generally required to perform the murder. Were one Thug to perform the murder singlehandedly he would be praised for his efforts by other cult members. The noose would become tighter around the victim's neck as he/she struggled to get free. The body would then be taken to a spot to be buried face-down in a three or four foot grave. The nature of the murders made detection incredibly difficult to uncover (Thornton 7–11).

Adding to all these difficulties was Hindu law, which prohibited the testimony of approvers (one who had participated in the exploits of the gang and thus was fully culpable (Freitag 238). In an attempt to counteract the difficulties that they were faced with, the Thuggee and Dacoity Department decided to implement Act XXX of 1836. The Act deemed that it was no longer just criminal deeds that would be punishable by law; rather, anyone who was deemed to be a Thug was prosecuted, regardless of whether or not they could be tied to any specific crime. Any person who was convicted of "having belonged to a gang of Thugs, liable to penalty of imprisonment for life" (Roy 33). The law applied retrospectively as well as established special courts for the

trial of Thugs, permitting the arrest of not only individuals but also entire family (as Thuggee was passed down hereditarily). In addition the testimony of approvers was also allowed, as there was a major lack of independent witnesses. <http://www.mahavidya.ca/hindu-sects/the-thuggee-cult/>

The Shiva Lingam, a Sacred Stone



The Shiva Lingam is one of the most sacred stones of the ancient as well as the modern world. These lingams come only from the Narmada River in the Central Western part of India. Those of you who have seen the movie Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom may recall they were searching for the sacred stone. The Shiva Lingam is that sacred stone. Accessible only during the dry season, these stones are collected from the river bed by only a few families who have been trained in the way to identify only the most special pieces. Once collected, these incredible artisans finally shape and polish the stones to bring out the natural markings which are inherent in their composition, much like a diamond cutter who cuts the rough material to bring out the best in the diamond.

The Lingam is symbolic of the Divine Creative manifestation. The Lingam shape is representative of the power of Shiva, the Lord of Creation, the masculine creative energy. The markings, also known as the yoni, symbolize the feminine energy, the seed which is fertilized to manifest the creative power in the dance of the cosmos. Geologists theorize that the iron oxide of which the yoni is composed, was impregnated in the river bed millions of years ago by a meteorite. The Lingam also represents the harmony or balance of the soul that is maintained within the hearts of all of us, the Light that shines from within. It is actually the shape of the soul and the consummate balance of the Universe.

This Sacred Stone relates to the fifth chakra, the heart chakra, and is the manifestation of the love energy that resides in all of us. It seems by destiny everyone has a Lingam that has an energy that relates intimately to them. Our Lingams are processed according to ancient Vedic tradition that has been passed down from one generation to another from Guru to disciple. The quartz composition (along with basalt and agate) and the shape make them powerful energy generators appropriate for healing and unique as tools for meditation and cleansing. A sage stated, "If a minilingam is worn, it will affect mind and heart in positive ways."

<http://www.thecrystalimage.com/Shiva-Lingam-Sacred-Stones-from-India-s/30.htm>

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Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom: History vs. Hollywood

Directions: Some of the best Hollywood movies borrow plots from real historical accounts to create a blockbuster. Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom was no different. As you watch the movie, label scenes that you believe stray from the "real" history of the Thuggee Cult or the Shiva Lingam Stones.

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