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Morihei Ueshiba – Mystic Martial Artist

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Morihei Ueshiba

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In this [Japanese name](#), the [family name](#) is "[Ueshiba](#)".

Morihei Ueshiba <div>植芝 盛平 <i>Ueshiba Morihei</i></div>	
Morihei-Ueshiba.jpg <div>Morihei Ueshiba</div>	
Born	December 14, 1883 <div> Tanabe, Wakayama, Japan</div>
Died	April 26, 1969 (aged 85) <div> Iwama, Ibaraki, Japan</div>
Nationality	 Japanese
Style	Founder of Aikido
Teacher(s)	Takeda Sōkaku
Children	Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Morihei Ueshiba (植芝 盛平 *Ueshiba Morihei*, December 14, 1883 – April 26, 1969) was a famous [martial artist](#) and founder of the [Japanese martial art](#) of [aikido](#). He is often referred to as “the founder” *Kaiso* (開祖) or *Ōsensei* (大先生/翁先生), “Great Teacher”.

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Early years

Morihei Ueshiba was born in [Tanabe, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan](#) on December 14, 1883.^{[1][2]}

The youngest son of Yoroku and Yuki Ueshiba's five children, Morihei was raised in a somewhat privileged setting. His father was a rich landowner who also traded in lumber and fishing and was politically active. Ueshiba was a rather weak, sickly child and bookish in his inclinations. At a young age his father encouraged him to take up [sumo](#) wrestling and swimming and entertained him with stories of his great-grandfather Kichiemon who was considered a very strong samurai in his era. The need for such strength was further emphasized when the young Ueshiba witnessed his father being attacked by followers of a competing politician.^[3]

Ueshiba is known to have studied several martial arts in his life but he did not train extensively in most and even his training in [Yagyū Shingan-ryū](#) was sporadic due to his military service in those years. Records show that he trained in [Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū jujutsu](#) under Tozawa Tokusaburō for a short period in 1901 in [Tokyo](#); Gotō-ha Yagyū Shingan-ryū under Nakai Masakatsu from 1903 to 1908 in [Sakai](#), and [judo](#) under Kiyochi Takagi 1911 in [Tanabe](#).^[1] However, it was only after moving to the northern island of [Hokkaidō](#) in 1912 with his wife, as part of a settlement effort, that his martial art training took on real depth. For it was here that he began his study of [Daitō-ryū aiki-jūjutsu](#) under its reviver [Takeda Sokaku](#).^[1] He characterized his early training thus:

At about the age of 14 or 15. First I learned Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū Jujutsu from Tokusaburo Tozawa Sensei, then Kito-ryu, Yagyū-ryu, Aioi-ryu, Shinkage-ryu, all of those jujutsu forms. However, I thought there might be a true form of [budo](#) elsewhere. I tried Hozoin-ryu sojitsu and kendo. But all of these arts are concerned with one-to-one combat forms and they could not satisfy me. So I visited many parts of the country seeking the Way and training, but all in vain. ... I went to many places seeking the true budo. Then, when I was about 30 years old, I settled in Hokkaido. On one occasion, while staying at Hisada Inn in Engaru, Kitami Province, I met a certain Sokaku Takeda Sensei of the Aizu clan. He taught Daito-ryu jujutsu. During the 30 days in which I learned from him I felt something like an inspiration. Later, I invited this teacher to my home and together with 15 or 16 of my employees became a student seeking the essence of budo.

Did you discover aikido while you were learning Daito-ryu under Sokaku Takeda?

No. It would be more accurate to say that Takeda Sensei opened my eyes to budo. ^[4]

Takeda Sokaku and Daitō-ryū



Retouched photograph of Takeda Sokaku c.1888

The technical curriculum of aikido was undoubtedly most greatly influenced by the teachings of Takeda Sokaku and his system of *aiki-jūjutsu* called Daitō-ryū.^[1] Although disputed by some, the ledger books of Takeda clearly show that Ueshiba spent a great deal of time training in Daitō-ryū between 1915 and 1937. He received the majority of the important scrolls awarded by Takeda at this time including the *Hiden Mokuroko*, the *Hiden Ogi* and the *Goshin'yo te*. Ueshiba received his *kyōju dairi* certificate, or teaching license, for the system from Takeda in 1922. Takeda had not yet implemented a *menkyo* license, or highest level of achievement license, into his system at this time. He also received

a [Kashima Shinden Jikishinkage-ryū](#) sword transmission scroll from Takeda in 1922 in [Ayabe](#). Ueshiba then became a representative of Daitō-ryū, toured with Takeda as a teaching assistant and taught the system to others under the Daitō-ryū name.^[1]

The basic techniques of aikido seem to have their basis in teachings from various points in the Daitō-ryū curriculum. A source of confusion is the different names used for these techniques in aikido and in the Daitō-ryū system. In part this is because Takeda Tokimune added much of the nomenclature after the period in which Ueshiba studied. In addition the names *ikkajo*, *nikajo*, *sankajo* used in both Daitō-ryū and the early years of aikido, latter supplanted by terms such as *ikkyo*, *nikyo*, *sankyo*, were really generic names translating to “first teaching”, “second teaching”, and so on. ^[5] In Daitō-ryū these usually refer to groupings of techniques while in aikido they usually refer to specific techniques and joint manipulations.

From aiki-jūjutsu to aikido

In the earlier years of his teaching, from the 1920s to the mid-1930s, Ueshiba taught the *aiki-jūjutsu* system he had earned a license in from Takeda Sokaku. His early students' documents bear the term *aiki-jūjutsu*.^[6] Indeed, Ueshiba trained one of the future highest grade earners in Daitō-ryū, Takuma Hisa, in the art before Takeda took charge of Hisa's training.^[7]

The early form of training under Ueshiba was characterized by the ample use of strikes to vital points (*atemi*), a larger total curriculum, a greater use of weapons, and a more linear approach to technique than would be found in later forms of aikido. These methods are preserved in the teachings of his early students [Kenji Tomiki](#) (who founded the [Shodokan Aikido](#) sometimes called Tomiki-ryū), [Noriaki Inoue](#) (who founded Shin'ei Taidō), [Minoru Mochizuki](#) (who founded [Yoseikan Budo](#)), [Gozo Shioda](#) (who founded [Yoshinkan Aikido](#)). Many of these styles are considered “pre-war styles”, although some of the teachers continued to have contact and influence from Ueshiba in the years after the [Second World War](#).

Later, as Ueshiba seemed to slowly grow away from Takeda, he began to implement more changes into the art. These changes are reflected in the differing names with which he referred to his art, first as *aiki-jūjutsu*,^[6] then Ueshiba-ryū,^[8] [Asahi-ryū](#),^[9] *aiki budō*,^[10] and finally aikido.^[11]

As Ueshiba grew older, more skilled, and more spiritual in his outlook, his art also changed and became softer and more circular. Striking techniques became less important and the formal curriculum became simpler. In his own expression of the art there was a greater emphasis on what is referred to as *kokyū-nage*, or “breath throws” which are soft and blending, utilizing the opponent's movement in order to throw them. Many of these techniques are rooted in the *aiki-no-jutsu* portions of the Daitō-ryū curriculum rather than the more direct jujutsu style joint-locking techniques.

Onisaburo Deguchi's spiritual influence

After Ueshiba left Hokkaidō he came under the influence of [Onisaburo Deguchi](#), the spiritual leader of the [Ōmoto-kyō](#) religion in [Ayabe](#). In addition to the effect on his spiritual growth, this connection was to have a major effect in introducing Ueshiba to various elite political circles as a martial artist. The Ueshiba Dojo in Ayabe was used to train members of the Ōmoto-kyō sect. He was involved in the first Ōmoto-kyō Incident, an ill-fated attempt to found a utopian colony in [Mongolia](#).^[11] Although Ueshiba eventually distanced himself from both these teachers, their effect on him and his art cannot be overstated.

The real birth of Aikido came as the result of three instances of spiritual awakening that Ueshiba experienced. The first happened in 1925, after Ueshiba had defeated a naval officer's *bokken* (wooden *katana*) attacks unarmed and without hurting the officer. Ueshiba then walked to his garden and had a spiritual awakening.



Onisaburo Deguchi

... I felt the universe suddenly quake, and that a golden spirit sprang up from the ground, veiled my body, and changed my body into a golden one. At the same time my body became light. I was able to understand the whispering of the birds, and was clearly aware of the mind of God, the creator of the universe.

At that moment I was enlightened: the source of budo is God's love – the spirit of loving protection for all beings ...

Budo is not the felling of an opponent by force; nor is it a tool to lead the world to destruction with arms. True Budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in nature.^[12]

His second experience occurred in 1940 when,

“Around 2am as I was performing [misogi](#), I suddenly forgot all the martial techniques I had ever learned. The techniques of my teachers appeared completely new. Now they were vehicles for the cultivation of life, knowledge, and virtue, not devices to throw people with.”^[13]

His third experience was in 1942 during the worst fighting of WWII, Ueshiba had a vision of the “Great Spirit of Peace”.^[2]

“The Way of the Warrior has been misunderstood. It is not a means to kill and destroy others. Those who seek to compete and better one another are making a terrible mistake. To smash, injure, or destroy is the worst thing a human being can do. The real Way of a Warrior is to prevent such slaughter – it is the Art of Peace, the power of love.”^[14]

In 1927, Ueshiba moved to [Tokyo](#) where he founded his first [dojo](#), which still exists today under the name [Aikikai Hombu Dojo](#). Between 1940 and 1942 he made several visits to [Manchukuo](#) (Japanese occupied Manchuria) to instruct his martial art. In 1942 he left [Tokyo](#) and moved to [Iwama](#) in the [Ibaraki Prefecture](#) where the term “aikido” was first used as a name for his art. Here he founded the [Aiki Shuren Dojo](#), also known as the [Iwama dojo](#). During all this time he traveled extensively in Japan, particularly in the [Kansai](#) region teaching his aikido.

In 1969, Morihei Ueshiba became ill. He died suddenly on April 26, 1969 of cancer.^[15] Two months later, his wife Hatsu (植芝 はつ; *Ueshiba Hatsu*, née *Itokawa Hatsu*; 1881–1969)^[16] died in turn. His son [Kisshomaru Ueshiba](#) carried forward.

Legacy

In an interview [Shoji Nishio](#) reported : “At that time, a former Karate sensei of the Butokukai named Toyosaku Sodeyama who was running Konishi Sensei’s dojo and also teaching there came up to me and said: “I met someone who is like a ‘phantom’. I couldn’t strike him even once.” I was amazed that there was someone that even Sodeyama Sensei couldn’t strike. It was O-Sensei.”^[17]

To this day, Ōmoto-kyō priests oversee a ceremony in Ueshiba’s honor every April 29 at the [Aiki Shrine](#) in Iwama.

Over the years, Ueshiba trained a large number of students, many of whom have grown into great teachers in their own right. Some of them were [uchideshi](#), or live-in students. There are roughly four generations of students. A partial list follows:^{[18][19][20]}

First (pre-war) generation (c.1921–c.1935)	Second (war) generation (c.1936–c.1945)	Third (post-war) generation (c.1946–c.1955)	Fourth (and last) generation (c.1956–c.1969)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zenzaburo Akazawa (born 1920) since 1933 ▪ Masahiro Hashimoto (born 1910) since 1931 ▪ Takuma Hisa (1895–1980) since 1934 ▪ Yasuhiro Konishi (1893–1983) ▪ Noriaki Inoue (1902–1994) since c.1921, nephew of Morihei Ueshiba ▪ Ikkusai Iwata (born 1909) since 1930, 9th dan Aikikai ▪ Hisao Kamada (1911–1986) since 1929 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tadashi Abe (1926–1984) since 1942, 6th dan ▪ Minoru Hirai (1903–1998) since 1939, founder of the Korindo style. ▪ Kisaburo Osawa (1911–1991) since 1941, 9th dan ▪ Kanshū Sunadomari (1923–2010) since 1942, 9th dan ▪ Bansen Tanaka (1912–1988) since 1936, 9th dan ▪ Saburo Tenryū (1903–1989) since 1939, he was a famous sumo wrestler ▪ Koichi Tohei (1920– 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seiseki Abe (1915–2011) since 1952, 10th dan ▪ Sadateru Arikawa (1930–2003) since 1947, 9th dan ▪ Katsuaki Asai (born 1942) since 1955, 8th dan ▪ Hiroshi Kato (born 1935) since 1954, 8th dan ▪ Yasuo Kobayashi (born 1936) since 1954, 8th dan ▪ Reishin Kawai (1931–2010) since 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nobuyuki Watanabe (born 1930) since 1958, 8th dan ▪ Kazuo Chiba (born 1940) since 1958, 8th dan ▪ Shigemni Inagaki (born 1946) since 1958, 8th dan ▪ Yasunari Kitaura (born 1937) since 1959, 8th dan, founder of Asociación Cultural de Aikido en España (ACAE) ▪ Terry Dobson (1938–1992) since 1960, 5th dan ▪ Seishiro Endo (born 1942) since 1964, 8th dan

- [Minoru Mochizuki](#) (1907–2003) since 1930, 10th dan (received from the [International Martial Arts Federation](#))
- Aritoshi Murashige (1895–1964) since 1931
- [Gozo Shioda](#) (1915–1994) since 1932, founder of the [Yoshinkan](#) Aikido
- Rinjiro Shirata (1912–1993) since 1933, 9th dan
- [Yoshio Sugino](#) (1904–1998) since 1934, 10th dan IMAF, 10th dan Katori Shinto-ryu
- [Isamu Takeshita](#) (1869–1949) since c.1925
- [Kenji Tomiki](#) (1900–1979) since 1926, was the first 8th dan awarded in aikido in 1942.
- Shigemi Yonekawa (1910–2005) since 1933
- [Tsutomu Yukawa](#) (1911–1942) since 1931
- 2011) since 1939, only 10th dan awarded by Ueshiba *and* approved by Aikikai
- [Michio Hikitsuchi](#) (1923–2004) since 1937, 10th dan (verbally awarded by Ueshiba), opened Shingu's Kumano Juku in 1951 (when he was 7th dan)
- Yamada Senta (1924–2010) live-in student in Wakayama & toured Japan with Ueshiba. Student of Jigoro Kano, 6th dan Aiki & Judo, later trained with Kenji Tomiki
- 1952, 8th dan
- Yoshio Kuroiwa (1932–2010) since 1954, 6th dan
- [Koretoshi Maruyama](#) (born 1936) since 1954, 6th dan, founder [Aikido Yuishinkai International](#)
- [Mutsuro Nakazono](#) (1918–1994) 7th dan
- [Shoji Nishio](#) (1927–2005) since 1951, 8th dan
- [André Nocquet](#) (1914–1999) since 1955, 8th dan, the first European *uchideshi*
- [Masamichi Noro](#) (1935–2013) since 1955, 6th dan, founder of [Kinomichi](#)
- [Morihiro Saito](#) (1928–2002) since 1946, 9th dan
- [Hiroshi Isoyama](#) (born 1937) since 1949, 8th dan
- [Mitsugi Saotome](#) (born 1937) since 1955
- [Hiroshi Tada](#) (born 1929) since 1950, 9th dan
- Yoshifumi Watahiki (born 1937) since 1949, 7th dan
- [Nobuyoshi Tamura](#) (1933–2010) since 1953, 8th dan
- [Seigo Yamaguchi](#) (1924–1996) since 1951, 9th dan
- [Robert Frager](#) (born 1940) since 1964, 7th dan
- [Gaku Homma](#) (born 1950) was the last *uchideshi* Ueshiba trained before he died.
- Norihiko Ichihashi (1940–2001) since 1960, 8th dan
- Shizuo Imaizumi (born 1938) since 1959, 7th dan
- [Mitsunari Kanai](#) (1939–2004) since 1959, 8th dan
- [Yutaka Kurita](#) (born 1940) since 1959, 7th dan founder [(Kurita Yuku Aiki)]
- [Shuji Maruyama](#) (born 1940) since 1959, 6th dan, founder of [Kokikai](#)
- Seijuro Masuda (born 1936) since 1962, 8th dan
- [Robert Nadeau](#) (born 1937) since 1962, 7th dan
- [Kenji Shimizu](#) (born 1940) since 1963, 8th dan
- [Roy Suenaka](#) (born 1940) since 1961, 8th dan, founder [Wadokai Aikido](#).
- [Seiichi Sugano](#) (1939–2010) since 1959, 8th dan
- [Morito Suganuma](#) (born 1942) since 1964, 8th dan
- [Akira Tohei](#) (1929–1999) since 1956, 8th dan
- Takeji Tomita (born 1942) since 1961, 7th dan
- [Yoshimitsu Yamada](#) (born 1938) since 1956, 8th dan
- [Hirokazu Kobayashi](#) (1929–1998) [Kobayashi aikido](#)
- Motohiro Fukakusa since 1960, 8th dan
- [Alan](#)

Personal traits

Morihei Ueshiba regularly practiced cold water *misogi*, as well as other spiritual and religious rites. He viewed his studies of aikido in this light.^[21]

As a young man, Ueshiba was renowned for his incredible physical strength. He would later lose much of this muscle, which some believe changed the way he performed aikido technique.^[22]

Ueshiba was said to be a simple but wise man, and a gifted farmer. In his later years, he was regarded as very kind and gentle as a rule, but there are also stories of terrifying scoldings delivered to his students. For instance, he once thoroughly chastised students for practicing *jō* (staff) strikes on trees without first covering them in protective padding. Another time, as students sneaked back into the *dojo* after a night of drinking and brawling, he smashed the first one through the door over the head with a *bokken* (wooden practice sword), and proceeded to scold them.

Morihei Ueshiba played the game of *Go* often. During one game with Sokaku Takeda, Takeda utilized the *Goban* as a weapon against a man he mistook for an assassin. The “assassin” was actually a friend of Ueshiba, and had arrived in a scarf due to bad weather. The scarf hid the man’s identity, triggering Takeda’s paranoia as, at the time, many people actually were trying to kill him.^[23]

Honors

- [Medal of Honor](#) (Japan), 1960.^[24]
- [Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette](#), 1964.^[24]
- [Order of the Sacred Treasure](#) (Japan), 1968.^[25]

Works

- Morihei Ueshiba, *The Secret Teachings of Aikido* (2008), Kodansha International, [ISBN 978-4-7700-3030-6](#) [1]
- Morihei Ueshiba, *Budo: Teachings of the Founder of Aikido* (1996), Kodansha International, [ISBN 978-4-7700-2070-3](#) [2]
- Morihei Ueshiba, *The Essence of Aikido: Spiritual Teachings of Morihei Ueshiba* (1998), Kodansha International, [ISBN 978-4-7700-2357-5](#) [3]

See also

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11. ^ Prandin, Stanley (2006). “[Aikido](#)”. *Encyclopedia of Aikido*.
12. ^ Ueshiba, Kisshomaru. *Aikido* Hozansha Publications, Tokyo, 1985.
13. ^ [Morihei Ueshiba's Second Vision](#) from the Oregon Graduate Institute’s Aikido Club.
14. ^ Speaking of a vision of the “Great Spirit of Peace” in 1942, during World War II, as quoted in *Adjusting Thought Reflex: Romancing Zen* (2010) by Rodger Hyodo, p. 76.
15. ^ [Interview with Shoji Nishio \(1984\), Part 1](#) “His face was really beautiful like a *Noh* mask of an old man. If one dies of cancer, there is usually a lot of suffering and the pain remains on the face. But, that wasn’t the case with O-Sensei. He had a divinely beautiful face.”
16. ^ Dang, P. T., & Seiser, L. (2006): *Advanced Aikido* (p. 3). Tokyo: Tuttle. ([ISBN 978-0-8048-3785-9](#))
17. ^ [Interview with Shoji Nishio \(1984\), held on May 22, 1983 in Tokyo](#)
18. ^ [Aikido Journal Encyclopedia](#)
19. ^ [List of Deshi](#)
20. ^ [Interview with Kisshomaru Ueshiba in Aikido Journal](#)
21. ^ Phong Thong Dang, Lynn Seiser; *Advanced Aikido* Tuttle Publishing, 2006 [ISBN 978-0-8048-3785-9](#) p17
22. ^ Stone, J and Myer, R; *Aikido in America*, Frog Books, 1995, [ISBN 978-1-883319-27-4](#) p2

23. [^] [^] Stevens, John. *Invincible Warrior*. ISBN 1-57062-394-5.
24. [^] [^] [^] North Austin Tae Kwan Do: "[Chronology of the Life of Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of Aikido.](#)"
25. [^] [L'Harmattan web site \(in French\)](#).

External links

- "[The Art of Peace](#)". *sayings of Morihei Ueshiba translated by John Stevens*.
- [A Day in the Life of the Founder Morihei Ueshiba, April 1968](#) – By [Gaku Homma](#).

Preceded by (<i>none</i>)	Dōshu of Aikikai 1940 – April 26, 1969	Succeeded by Kisshomaru Ueshiba
Preceded by (<i>none</i>)	Dōjōcho of Iwama Dōjō 1942–1964	Succeeded by Morihiro Saitō
Preceded by (<i>none</i>)	Dojocho of Aikikai Hombu Dojo 1931-1969	Succeeded by Koichi Tohei

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YELLOW HIMALAYAN SHAMANISM

POSTED BY MANTRIK IN BUDDHISM & OTHER RELIGIONS, HIMALAYAN SHAMANISM, SHAMANISM EXPLORED

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Yellow shamanism

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Yellow shamanism is the term used to designate a particular version of [shamanism](#) practiced in [Mongolia](#) and [Siberia](#) which [incorporates rituals and traditions](#) from [Buddhism](#). "Yellow" indicates Buddhism in Mongolia, since most Buddhists there belong to what is called the "[Yellow sect](#)" of [Tibetan Buddhism](#), whose members wear yellow hats during services.^[1] The term also serves to distinguish it from a form of shamanism not influenced by Buddhism (according to its adherents), called "[black shamanism](#)".^[2]

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[\[edit\]](#) Terminology and background

While the applicability of the term "yellow" (or any other term) is still somewhat disputed, scholars consider the variety of shamanism practiced by the [Khalka Mongols](#), the largest population group of Mongolia, to be yellow shamanism; others refer to the shamanism practiced by the [Buryats](#) of Siberia as yellow shamanism.^[1]

[\[EDIT\]](#) MONGOLIA

Buddhism first entered Mongolia during the [Yuan Dynasty](#) (thirteenth-fourteenth century) and was briefly established as a state religion. The cult of [Genghis Khan](#), who had been accepted into the *tnгри*, the highest pantheon of spirits in [Mongolian shamanism](#), became annexed into Buddhist practice as well. Mongolia itself was at a political and developmental standstill until the sixteenth century, when after the conversion of [Altan Khan](#) Buddhism re-established itself.^[3] In 1691, after [Outer Mongolia](#) had been annexed by the [Qing Dynasty](#), Buddhism became the dominant religion of the entire area and shamanism began incorporating Buddhist elements. Violent resistance in the eighteenth century by the hunting tribes of Northern Mongolia against the (Buddhist) ruling group, the Khalk Mongols, led to the foundation of [black shamanism](#).^[1]

During the Soviet domination of the [Mongolian People's Republic](#), all varieties of shamanism were repressed; after 1991, when the era of Soviet influence was over, religion (including Buddhism and shamanism) made a comeback.^[1]

The term “yellow shamanism” was first introduced in 1992 by Sendenjav Dulam and its use then adopted by Otgony Pürev, who considers it to be the Buddhism-influenced successor of an unbroken practice that goes back to [Genghis Khan](#)—that earlier practice was “black shamanism” and was practiced by the [Darkhad](#) in defiance of the Buddhism introduced to the area by the Khalka. According to Pürev, the center of yellow shamanism was the Dayan Deerh monastery in [Khövsgöl Province](#), where he found evidence of yellow practices in the recitations and prayers of a shaman born in the province in 1926; he argues that yellow shamanism has by now ceased to exist anywhere.^[1]

Opponents argue that Pürev’s argument relies too much on the evidence of one single monk from one province, and that it is more likely that yellow shamanism developed as a result of the tension between the Buddhism of the [Qing Dynasty](#), for which conversion to Buddhism was in part a colonializing tactic. In agreement with Pürev’s argument, though, yellow shamanism is also considered to not have survived Soviet and Communist rule.^[1]

[EDIT] BURYATIA

The territory of the [Buryats](#), who live around [Lake Baikal](#), was invaded by the Russian Empire in the seventeenth century, and came to accept Buddhism in the eighteenth century at the same time they were recognizing themselves as Mongol; to which extent Buryat shamanism mixed with Buddhism is a matter of contention among scholars. A nineteenth-century division between black and white shamanism, where black shamanism called on evil deities to bring people misfortune while white shamanism invoked good deities for happiness and prosperity, had completely changed by the twentieth century. Today, black shamanism invokes traditional shamanic deities, whereas white shamanism invokes Buddhist deities and recites Buddhist incantations but wears black shamanist accoutrements. White shamans worship [Sagaan Ubgen](#) and [Burkhan Garbal](#) (the “Ancestor of Buddhism”).^[1]

[edit] See also

- [Shamanism in Siberia](#)
- [Dayan Deerh](#)
- [Sagaan Ubgen](#)

[edit] References

Notes

- ¹ ^ [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#) [e](#) [f](#) [g](#) [Shimamura 2004](#), pp. 649–650
- ² ^ [Pegg 2001](#), p. 141
- ³ ^ [Hesse 1987](#), p. 409

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MALAS IN RELIGION

Buddhist malas are used at a basic level for counting mantras, but the materials used and the number of beads have acquired meanings as their use has evolved. There is a nice book entitled 'Beads of Faith' (authors Henry & Marriott) which charts the use of rosaries across all faiths, and of course our own Robert Beer who offers some insight into Tibetan usage:

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_handbook_of_Tibetan_Buddhist_symbols.html?id=-3804Ud9-41C&redir_esc=y

For a really entertaining insight, check out Tsem Tulku:

I am not at all shy to admit that the Buddhist mala derived from the Hindu 'japa mala' and that the meanings ascribed to 108 beads have been adapted for our needs. There are also superstitions – use only the left hand, the ring finger or the index finger and thumb. (A Hindu would be horrified – they use the right hand as the left is used for 'toilet' functions.)

Most monks I have spoken to (mainly Tibetan) have a simple wooden or seed mala with no markers or decoration, and advise that either hand will do and the superstition of not crossing the guru bead is not important. 108 beads mean that we have 100 plus 8 to account for mistakes. Tibetans also use their mala for blessing others, as it is believed the mala absorbs great power through deity mantra practice. I've also heard that in a monastery if a monk becomes arrogant, the others will rub their malas into his head. LOL 😊

Some, I believe, have a 'public' mala, but use another in private for Tantra, when the numbers and usage become much more complex and meaningful than originally indicated by the monks.

They will cover a mala when in use for mantra recitation.

Maybe this is a cultural habit from India. Hindu monk will use the mala inside a mala bag when in public, which prevents others seeing it – there is quite an emphasis on seeing as the principal way of engaging with a deity and the 'evil eye' is prevented from affecting a hidden mala.

I have tried several different materials because I felt 'drawn to them'. Fancy lapis with heavy carved gemstone dorje dangling and tinkling as a bell, huge seed malas which would be more at home around the neck of a Saddhu (or 2), and weird materials such as fossil coral.

Some practitioners use Lapis for Medicine Buddha, Carnelian for Vajrayogini, Bone for wrathful practices etc. – a different one for each deity. The colour of the deity is matched by the gemstone, in general.

Others believe that as the mala may be part of an 'offering' (for example as part of a mandala) they should be of the best material we can afford.

With many hundreds of thousands of mantras to count, in the end simple and lightweight seems best, so I have strung a few of my own using small bodhiseed, green sandalwood (scented), and ebony – with gemstone markers. I have found doubled-up nylon thread is best, sometimes with a single very thin fishing monofilament as a backup in case of breakage, with knots superglued, and with a stainless steel ring at the bottom, instead of a tassel, for me to attach whatever I want. I have one bodhiseed mala which shows little sign of wear after several hundred thousand recitations.

I have give away many malas as I have experimented and have no 'attachment' to them, but find the use of them interesting.

The method of blessing I have been taught involves placing the mala in the right palm, placing the left hand on top (so cupping the mala) silently reciting the Yidam's mantra 3 or 7 times and then blowing on the mala 3 times. When finished with, the same is done.

I oil wooden or seed malas (patchouli and lavender) but not gemstones. Some gemstones are quite fragile; lapis, for example, can be harmed by sweat and water, so is not a good one to wear all the time. If there is a risk of dampness (of any sort) I keep gemstone malas in a waterproof pouch on my belt or in my pocket. Some oils may have chemicals which affect gemstones, but I'm not sure. I do spray any new wood or seed mala with fabric waterproofer to protect the string and bead, then oil afterwards.

There is a special demand for bone malas made from the skulls of dead monks. I believe there to be a lot of fake malas of this type on the net. The Chinese (including Hong Kong) also may call any blue mala 'lapis', for example, and pretend they are unaware that it is a specific material. There are also many fake gemstones in use. Gems described as 'moonstone' may in fact be opalite (glass), and most dzi beads are the result of laboratory chemistry and cookery rather than nature. Caveat emptor. 😊

Methods of stringing vary as well. Three strands (or another significant number) tends to be recommended in Tibetan malas, but most I've seen are on a bit of rough waxed string, maybe some made from Yak wool or simply cotton. In India malas tend to be knotted between the beads (a Hindu preference for beads not to touch each other). In China, the trend seems to be a single piece of strong thread.

There is a practical consideration. In group work the sound of gemstones clicking may be distracting. Easily resolved – use a wooden or seed mala, or string the gemstone mala so that it may be tightened a little to avoid noise, or knot between adjacent beads.

When dealing with Bodhiseed or bone, 5 or 9 threads is possible, especially if twisted into one string and waxed beforehand, as the holes drilled in the beads tend to be large. With gemstones I rarely find the holes large enough to take more than 3.

Some shapes are easier to use than others I find. Doughnut shaped beads (say 8x6 mm) are easy to move and allow the mala to be shorter than if using round beads (of say 8mm). This means a full mala can be easily kept off the ground during prostrations or when seated on the floor.

Aside from the various meanings ascribed to the beads and threads, practical considerations are also important. I've found (no surprise) that good quality costs more and that good maintenance (restringing, cleaning, oiling) is very important. But even more important is its place in the relationship with the guru, who may have given the mala to you or blessed it, and that can be priceless.

Apparently they are also used in Zen and in the Theravada:

<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/754783>

quoted by Gyatrul Rinpoche in "The Generation Stage in Buddhist Tantra " :

Padmasambhava, says: "The best type of mala to use to increase the number of recitations is a mala made from some type of precious jewel (Tib. Tin O che). A mediocre type of mala is made from the seed of a tree or fruit, and inferior type of mala is made from wood, earth, stone or medicine."

A mala made from seashells, earth, wood or seeds from trees or fruit is meant to be used to accomplish peaceful sadhanas and peaceful action. A mala made from gold will accomplish expansive karmas. A red coral mala is best for accomplishing powerful sadhanas. A steel or turquoise mala is good for wrathful activity. A mala made from dzi or other precious stones can be used to accomplish any of the karmic activities you are doing.

A mala made from apricot stones will accomplish expansive activity. A mala made from "lot ton" (a tiny, round black seed within a fruit) accomplishes powerful activity A mala made from raksha beads accomplishes wrathful practices. A mala made from bodhi seeds accomplishes all dharmas. Malas of bodhi tree wood accomplish peaceful karmas. A mala of mulberry beads accomplishes powerful karmas. Malas of mahogany wood accomplish wrathful practices. Malas made of ivory, especially from an elephant's tusk, will accomplish all concerned activity.

Beads made of stone are good for expansive practice. Beads made of medicine are good for wrathful practice. Malas with many different types of jewels are good for any practice. However, I suggest that you not attempt to create a mala with a lot of different beads on it because, unless you know which combinations are effective, you may cause a non-positive result.

Next, the text mentions the different kinds of benefits that are derived from using different types of malas. An iron or steel mala multiplies the virtue that is accumulated with each recitation in a general way. A copper mala multiplies each recitation four times. A raksha mala multiplies each recitation by 20 million, and a pearl mala by 100 million. A silver mala multiplies by 100,000 and a ruby mala by 100 million. A bodhi seed mala manifests limitless benefits for any form of practice, be it peaceful, expansive, powerful or wrathful.

You should all know the mala's meaning and the best way to string it. String your mala using three, five or nine strings, and no other number. Three strings symbolize the three kayas, five strings symbolize the five buddhas, and the nine strings symbolize the nine vehicles.

The main guru bead may be composed of three beads, symbolizing the three vajra states of being, the three kayas. The smallest bead on the outside should be blue, perhaps made of lapis. The color blue symbolizes the unchanging mind of ultimate truth. The bead in the middle should be red, to symbolize vajra speech, and the innermost bead should be white, to symbolize the vajra body.

Your mala must be blessed by a lama, and you should constantly bless your mala yourself by imbuing it with energy. You must put energy into your mala before counting recitations with it, to produce real benefit.

You should clean your mouth and hand, and then your mala, before using it. You may also scent it with sandalwood oil.

Next, generate yourself as the deity, place the mala in your left hand and arrange the beads with the guru bead placed vertically in the center. Recite the mantra that transforms all dharmas into the awareness of their true nature: OM SWABAVA SHUDDO SARVA DHARMA SWABAVA SHUDDO HAM. This mantra cleanses and transforms impure perceptions into the awareness of emptiness.

From emptiness, the guru bead appears as the central deity in the mandala, and the other beads appear as the members of the entourage. This part of the practice is the meditation upon the samayasattva. Next, invoke the jnanasattva. Invite the primordial wisdom beings to come forth, hooking them so that they dissolve into the samayasattva, just as you would in a sadhana. Invite the wisdom beings to come from their pure lands into the space in front of you. They then dissolve into your mala and remain firm there. Thus, every part of your mala is the entire mandala. This includes the central deity, entourage, lotus seats, ornaments, hand emblems, colors, etc. Blessing your mala in this way multiplies each syllable of whatever mantra you then recite 100,000 times, besides causing good karmic results. Therefore, it is extremely important to do this.

Your mala represents not only the form of the deity but the speech of the deity as well. For example, if you recite the One-HundredSyllable mantra, the guru bead represents the syllable OM and the other beads represent the remaining syllables.

Guru Padmasambhava said, "Whenever you recite peaceful mantras, use the tip of your thumb to count the mala. When reciting expansive mantras, use the third finger. Use the ring finger and thumb when reciting powerful mantras, and use the little finger when reciting wrathful mantras." Use only your left hand to count mantras. The right hand is but rarely used; for instance, in some wrathful practices. Some books teach the use of both hands, but do not use the right hand only.

Whatever kind of practice you are doing, whether peaceful, wrathful, powerful or expansive, always be aware that the thumb is a vajra hook which hooks spiritual powers, deities and other blessings. It is also easy to move the beads with your thumb.

The text does not elaborate, but there are some extensive teachings on how to move the beads on the malas when performing certain practices. In some wrathful practices, you jerk the beads with both hands and so forth. If your mala has been repeatedly blessed by great lamas, by your own teacher and by yourself as part of your deity practice, it should accompany you like your shadow. You keep the root samaya of the vajra mala by never letting it leave your body.

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2. Buddhism is strictly not a religion in the context of being a faith and worship owing allegiance to a supernatural being. 3. No saviour concept in Buddhism. A Buddha is not a saviour who saves others by his personal salvation. Although a Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha as his incomparable guide who indicates the path of purity, he makes no servile surrender. A Buddhist does not think that he can gain purity merely by seeking refuge in the Buddha or by mere faith in Him. It is not within the power of a Buddha to wash away the impurities of others. 4. A Buddha is not an incarnation of a g Because not everyone has the same inclinations and interests, the Buddha taught a wide variety of methods to suit different people. With this in mind, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said that it's

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