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Edited by

[Bron Taylor](#)

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of God, mythologist Joseph Campbell argues that the rise of the solar metaphor in worship reflects the development of consciousness as an emergence from the uroboric and lunar matriarchal matrix of Neolithic times (see further, Neumann 1954). A similar argument is put forward by Julian Jaynes (1977).

If the position of Amaterasu-O-Mi-Kami among Japanese Shinto represents the most developed solar cult in the world today, for the Mahayana Buddhists the name of the central *dhyani*buddha, Vairocana, is also suggestive and signifies “coming from the sun.” Among contemporary Western nature religionists, the sun is likewise emerging as an increasingly important focus. But this development faces the onus of associations and abuses in the name of solar worship committed under the Third Reich. Based on the philological studies of Max Müller and Ernest Renan, the German *Volkstumbewegung* developed a practice of sun worship that included nude sun-bathing and celebration of the solstices. It had been prompted by a popular sense of estrangement from nature in the face of early nineteenth-century urban industrialization and machine-based civilization. The *Völkische* movement turned toward pre-Christian beliefs in which ancient sun worship was considered more consistent with scientific modernism than were the prevailing Christian and Jewish theologies. The contemporary Western Pagan solar focus and solstitial/equinoctial celebrations are based on similar reactions, but, unlike German “folk” paganism, the more liberal and/or left-wing spiritual bias of nature-centered religiosity rejects any notions of ethnic purity or eugenics. But whereas Wicca and Craft manifestations honor the Neolithic totality of light and darkness, Druidic and other reconstructed forms of Paganism, despite their use of stone circles, are decidedly post-Neolithic in their preference for solar orientation and metaphor. This last, similar to what occurs in Shinto worship, often involves ritually witnessing the rising sun. In the milieu of Pagan affinities and contemporary youth culture, all-night dance parties typically culminate at daybreak with ravers greeting the emerging solar orb. This suggests the possibility of convergence between traditional indigenous practice and spontaneous sun-worship developments in the Western world.

Michael York

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See also: Hinduism; Jung, Carl Gustav; Müller, Friedrich Max; Odinism; Proto-Indo-Europeans; Roman Natural Religion; Stone Circles; Stonehenge.

P Surfing

To the casual observer surfing is an adventure sport not a religion. Such observers would certainly not expect that surfing might promote a veneration of life and a corresponding environmental activism. For many surfers, however, surfing is a ritual, a practice; a way of life that evokes experiences akin to what some scholars have labeled “oceanic” or mystical feelings of oneness with the cosmos. The perceptual alterations that come with surfing, many of its devotees confess, leads them to recognize their obligations toward the Earth’s living systems, especially “mother ocean.”

Certainly this is not the experience and ethics of all surfers, and popular culture often accurately portrays surfing not as a religious quest producing environmental sensitivity, but as a hedonistic sport sometimes so charged with ego that territorialism leads to brutal fights over the best waves. Meanwhile most religious studies scholars have largely ignored the practice. The popular image and scholarly disinterest has produced a widespread lack of understanding of surfing’s history, spirituality, and transformative power. Here two surfers, one religion scholar (Bron Taylor) and a founder of two nonprofit surfing organizations (Glenn Hening), go tandem in an effort to explain what surfing has to do with religion and nature.

Editor’s note: This co-authored entry is unusual because Glenn Hening is both a contributing expert as well as an important figure in the contemporary evolution of modern surfing and thus a subject of the analysis. It proved best to draw on his first-person writing in the first two sections, to co-author the third section, and for Bron Taylor to lead-write and quote Hening during the last three sections. The role of the writers in each segment is signaled in the sub-headings themselves, and it should be understood that Taylor worked up this introduction and the entry’s framework.

The Endless Energy of Surf "Stoke" [Hening]

When I first wanted to be a surfer in the early 1960s, Mom and Dad said, "No way – you'll just end up a beach bum." And at the time, their fears were well founded, given the public image of surfing driven by the Beach Boys and the popular American television program *Gidget*. Now, four decades later, we've come a long way from the motion picture *Beach Blanket Bingo* to a discussion of surfing in this *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. Or have we? Wild rites of passage, zealots wandering in the emptiness of nature, sacred objects and icons, vestments for holy rites, cloistered believers versus the great unwashed – sounds like surfing to me! And why? Because from beginners experiencing the effortless motion of their first ride to those who've ridden thousands of waves around the world, the fundamental experience of surfing is inner joy, leading to a transformation and, for many, a transcendent or religious dimension. (In surf cultures worldwide, "stoked" is the verb most often used to capture the joyful and sometimes ecstatic experience of surfing.)

Of course, it is always a high-wire act when talking about what is "religious" in our lives outside of our church, synagogue, temple or other formal places of worship. One misstep and next thing you know even brushing your teeth could qualify as a religious experience. However, with surfing, we can make some statements that are wholly unique, and from them these threads of truth that are unbreakable no matter where waves break or who is riding them.

The first locus and center point for surfing is, of course, surf. Each wave is born in the marriage of wind and water, but exactly how that birthing occurs is still not fully understood. Every wave is unique, and no two can ever be exactly the same. And wave events, or swells, cannot be predicted with complete accuracy.

It must be remembered that waves are all around us all the time: sound, electricity, light, emotions, are all understood in terms of waves. So waves are not a foreign concept in the real world: there are light waves bouncing off this page and stimulating your eyes, for example.

But the waves of a surfer are a unique energy form in that we can ride them. They occur only where ocean and land combine to transform energy into entities that will exist momentarily before they are gone forever. A surfer's waves exist first in wind-shaped infinitesimal patterns that coalesce into groups, then as walls of water that often march across thousands of miles of ocean. When we witness the final moments of a wave's journey, or participate in its death throes by transforming the energy into personal motion through time and space, we are in contact with the initial center of the surfing "religion."

Surf and Ancient Peruvian Culture [Hening]

In the late 1980s I was invited to an ocean festival in Northern Peru dedicated to honoring the traditions of

coastal fishermen and their connection to modern surfing. Because they still use small craft made from bundles of reeds to push out through some of the longest rideable waves in the world, I was very interested in the possibility that a new version of surfing could be found that would pre-date the first accounts of surfing from Hawai'i.

Well, not only did I have a chance to ride waves using craft essentially unchanged since 1000 B.C.E., but I also visited archeological sites where incontrovertible evidence of "surf stoke" can be observed. I have since returned to Northern Peru several times to study the Moche and Chimu societies whose temples, cities, and lifestyles provide a fascinating insight into ancient human relationships with the power of the ocean, breaking waves, and possibly even surfing itself. Based on this research I have concluded that the pre-Columbian coastal cultures of Northern Peru provide the earliest example of how surf can affect a civilized society.

This may be a bold statement to some. Given that humankind has inhabited coastlines around the world for millennia, how can we talk about a "first" in such a context? Quite easily, I think. The Southern Hemisphere is more water than land, and the storms of the "roaring 40s" (the southern ocean from latitude 40 degrees south to latitude 60 degrees south) circle the planet unimpeded by land masses. This zone of energy is the spawning grounds of more waves than any other oceanic area on the planet. Those waves sweep primarily from west to east as well as northward toward the coast of Peru. Along that coast flows the Humboldt Current, a cold water "river" in the ocean that is one of the richest fishing grounds in the world, a source of protein easily accessible to coastal inhabitants using fishing craft made from reeds, and there is evidence of this going back three thousand years before the Spanish arrived. The ancient Peruvians lived in one of the rare places on Earth where food and waves were omnipresent.

I do not find it surprising, therefore, that sea life and sea energy resonate through the belief systems, architecture, jewelry, weavings, and ceramics of ancient Peruvian coastal cultures. Temple walls, ceremonial courtyards, deities in reed boats gliding through the heavens, even the iconography of specific priesthoods and theocracies suggest a fascination and veneration for what must have been, to them, the unlimited sources of food and sheer power of waves.

The ancient Peruvians didn't know about the causes of storms or big waves. They didn't have satellites or weather buoys. All they knew was that the power of waves was beyond anything else in their world – and that a hundred waves, a thousand waves, a million waves, an infinite number of waves – were coming toward them throughout their lives from a source that was unknown.

To the best of my knowledge, it is in Northern Peru that we find the earliest known graphic design that consist-

ently depicts oceanic waves in their two most easily visible forms: long walls of water moving across the open ocean, and curved, liquid forms that arc forward and explode when the ocean's energy meets terra firma. As Thor Heyerdahl, the famous Norwegian adventurer best known for his kon-tiki and ra expeditions, said during an interview I had with him in 1990,

Here in Northern Peru we find the earliest examples of large societies living in close proximity to consistently big waves. Of course, the Egyptians and Babylonians also developed the reed boats. However, there is no surf on the Nile, and you'll never see groundswells marching from the horizon in the Mediterranean or the Persian Gulf.

Thus the ancient Peruvians may have been the first to formally consecrate a human connection to waves, a fundamental connection that exists to this day. All this suggests, I think, that a primal constant lies at the center of surfing: endless and immense power formed into beautiful patterns constantly moving towards us.

There is a second fundamental reality of surf: the breaking wave itself. The physics and geometry of how waves break present observers with a striking fact: depending on the underwater topography and the character of the incoming swell, the curves of a breaking wave are the same curves of a nautilus shell, the pattern of seeds in a sunflower, the arms of a storm, the spiraling of a galaxy. And not only does the water spiral over in a beautiful curve, but that curve continues to form as the wave moves along the coast, thus providing a continuous view *inside* nature for as long as the wave is alive. And when its energy is finally expelled, there is another wave right behind it providing the same vision.

On my expeditions to Peru, most recently in 2002 as a tour guide for "thinking surfers" interested in new perspectives on the sport, I focused on possible origins of surfing spirituality in ancient Peruvian depictions of the curves of breaking waves in their art and architecture. There is a temple complex 500 miles north of Lima, for example, built on a promontory overlooking a corner of the coastline where incoming waves bend into the beach and tube over perfectly. Along one wall of the temple a frieze depicts the arcs of breaking waves connected one to another. Further to the north a Pre-Incan society was ruled by kings who would ring their crowns and their raiment with waves as if to suggest that they drew their royal power from the waves themselves, the most endless source of energy they knew.

Endless energy in motion culminating in perfect natural curves – the ancient Peruvians seemingly had a unique vision of the natural world, perhaps as rich and even earlier than was had in the better-known case of Hawai'i, where there is greater documentation of a cul-

ture's deep connection if not veneration of the surf, where riding waves was a significant part of the daily lives and rituals of a people.

Surfing in Hawai'i [Hening with Taylor]

There are those such as former world surfing champion Felipe Pomar who would like to trace the reed craft rituals of the Peruvians through Easter Island and then throughout Polynesia and all the way to Hawai'i. Given the available evidence this is a tenuous connection at best, although Thor Heyerdahl's investigations in the early 1950s did turn up stone carvings of reed craft on Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Moreover, we know that ancient Polynesian wayfinders were able to sail across great distances. We also have an early account from the missionary William Ellis, first published in 1836, who reported that in 1823 the Tahitians had a god of the surf called *Huaouri*. But moving beyond curiosity and speculation regarding the possibility of a Peruvian diffusion of reed craft into the Pacific, the recorded history of surfing certainly begins with the Hawaiians, and dates to the 1600s.

Hawai'i is unique in that it is exposed to swells from all directions, and there are literally hundreds of places to surf on all the islands. Ellis mentioned that the surfing he saw in Tahiti in 1823 was nowhere near as developed as what he witnessed in Hawai'i. This is supported by the recorded references to surfing and evidence of a strong connection between the Hawaiian islanders and the waves around them in the reports from the earlier expeditions to Hawai'i by Captain Cook and by subsequent accounts from Europeans and Americans arriving in Hawai'i throughout the nineteenth century.

In Hawai'i, however, as James Houston and Ben Finney explain in *Surfing: A History of the Ancient Hawaiian Sport*, there was no god of the surf, as there was in Tahiti. Nor was surfing specifically a religious observance. It was, however, like other aspects of Hawaiian life, integrally involved with the culture's gods, spirits, and rituals. There may not have been a special god for surfing, but making a surfboard was very much a ritualized process, starting with offerings to the soul of the tree to be cut down.

Houston and Finney also discuss a stone temple *heiau*, apparently dedicated to surfing, which is located directly in front of a good surfing break. They also note the existence of a surf chant:

Arise, arise ye great surfs from Kahiki
The powerful curling waves
Arise with pohuehue
Well up, long ranging surf
(in Fourlander 1916–1920: vol. 6, 206–7).

It would be tempting to conclude, in the light of such evidence, that Hawai'i provides an example of surfing's religious presence in a culture. But if this is true, then why

did the practice plummet and nearly go extinct there? It is commonly believed that missionaries were responsible for the near death of surfing in the 1800s. Houston and Finney, however, argue that the missionaries did not see surfing as the problem, but objected to the betting and sexual freedom that accompanied the pastime. They believe that when the betting and mixing of the sexes was prohibited, the Hawaiians lost interest in surfing, which if true, seems to cast doubt on the idea that surfing was religiously important to the Hawaiians.

Consequently, it appears we are on shaky ground if we would ascribe to the Hawaiians any sort of deeply held religious beliefs when it came to breaking waves or the act of riding them. Indeed, we have less evidence of such beliefs in Hawai'i than we do from Northern Peru.

But what we do have emerging from Hawai'i is the beginning of a continuum that we can stretch to the present day, where surfing comes to dominate the lives of many people in ways that exemplify certain forms of worship and ritual, providing some of them meaningful, liminal experiences. The aloha spirit of giving, personified by the father of modern surfing, Duke Kahanamoku, is one of the touchstones of surfing's soul. The Duke promoted surfing around the world, and modern surfers see him as the embodiment of an ethical spirituality that may be just this side of a religious belief system.

Surfing Spirituality and Experience [Taylor with Hening]

The key to understanding surfing as a religious experience, of course, is to understand the experience itself.

The archetypal experience in modern surfing, made possible only in recent decades with the advent of relatively lightweight surfboards, is riding inside a perfect wave. The first lightweight surfboards were crafted of balsawood in the early 1950s and by the end of the decade, boards built with foam cores and resin shells were invented. But it was not until the mid-1960s that boards under 10 foot long became popular, and only in the late 1960s that they shrunk in such a way as to provide an entirely new experience. Suddenly the best surfers could visit a space on the planet never before experienced by humankind: the spinning interior of a perfect wave, a place where time actually seems to stand still. This experience was first depicted in a 1970 film called *The Innermost Limits of Pure Fun*. In it one sees the vision that previously only a skilled surfer would have: that of flying through a liquid cylinder – an experience surely outside the boundaries of ordinary reality.

Glenn Hening, who has had extensive experience inside the tubes of perfectly shaped waves, described during our “surf writing” collaboration, how riding inside the tube can alter one's experience of time:

In the tube one has no frame of reference except the cylinder of water spinning above, around, and

below you. The only thing in your vision that provides a sense of place is the opening, or mouth of the wave in front of you. What can happen next is truly remarkable: if the wave starts peeling faster than you are surfing, the illusion is created that you are either not moving at all, or are moving backwards. And in relation to your only visual frame of reference, you are. So you can be going at top speed forward, but the sensation can be that you are going backward.

As 70s surfing explorer Kevin Lovett wrote after discovering and surfing one of the most perfect waves in the world in Indonesia, “One of the most amazing aspects of the surfing experience is the view of life looking out from inside a breaking wave. These unique, intense, timeless, moments help shape consciousness and are carried with you forever” (Lovett 1998).

Commenting on such experience, Hening finds a corollary in how worship can be thought of in ways outside many traditional connotations associated with the word. In this quote from *The Urantia Book*, a text purportedly given through a dream to a Chicago Psychiatrist in the 1930s that Hening considers a guide to enlightened Christianity, Hening found an apt description of the peak surfing experience. For Hening the book suggests that we think of worship as

the act of a part identifying itself with the whole, the assumption of refreshing, creative, fraternal and romantic attitudes by the human spirit. It is self-forgetting, it is superthinking. It is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, and yet a form of restful spiritual exertion . . . It is the yardstick which measures the extent of the soul's detachment from the material universe and its simultaneous and secure attachment to the spiritual realities of all creation. Worship is identifying . . . the finite with the infinite, time in the act of striking step with eternity (Urantia Foundation 1955: 1616).

Indeed, “From the unique and extraordinary vision while riding inside a perfect wave,” Hening believes, “the mystic kernel of the religious in surfing grows.” And he thinks this is the “first source and center of surfing's spiritual power” even for many of those without the requisite skill to directly experience this vision. This certainly seems plausible, for indeed, in surf film, art, and music, this archetypal experience is presented as somewhat of an experiential holy grail.

Many surfers, such as former world champion Shaun Tomson, report that “time is expanded inside the tube,” a place where one can experience space/time relativity, where time seems literally to stand still. Hening's descrip-

tion of the physical reality of a tube ride (above) allowed him to find in Albert Einstein's relativity theory a scientific explanation for the experience. Other well-read surfers find that authors such as Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of Physics*) help them understand their heightened sense of perception while inside a breaking wave. It is remarkably common for surfers to reflect on experiences that for them are satori-like, that resemble the spiritual awakening sought in Zen Buddhism, whereby the practitioner feels as though the universe is flowing through her or his body as the self of self dissolves into that universal, eternal energy.

Although no great surfer, I (Taylor) have had a few hints at such experience. One particularly memorable one was while surfing a southern hemisphere groundswell (waves created by storms thousands of miles away) in northern Malibu. Taking off on a steep wave in an unfamiliar area and making the bottom turn, the wave suddenly pitched up, revealing a rocky reef immediately below the intended, liquid pathway. Suddenly "making it" appeared clearly as the one way to survive the ride, but at the same time I realized that the wave breaking immediately behind me was so fast that survival seemed unlikely. Just as this realization came into consciousness, I had an experience as though I was surfing by automatic pilot – time seemed to stand still and I somehow made the break – then in slow motion, perfectly, I emerged safely out the other side to the hoots of nearby friends. It occurred to me then, as it does now, that the experience was kindred to that which John Muir once had on the North Face of Mt. Ritter, where temporarily frozen in fear and stuck, unable to climb up or down, he suddenly felt the universe take over and flow, climbing, through him, enabling his escape to the mountaintop. It occurs to me that without religious studies lenses, few surfers would interpret such experiences in metaphysical ways. But nevertheless, some do.

It is not difficult on many levels to apply religious categories to an analysis of surfing sub-cultures. Surfers do, for example, engage in elaborate and ritualized pilgrimages all over the Earth, as *The Endless Summer* (1964) and countless other surf films depict – as they go "in search of the perfect wave." The places where spiritual epiphanies occur are constructed in the minds of some surfers as sacred places – self-consciously in some cases and implicitly in others. These places are venerated in many of the same ways that other sacred places are today: they are named, written about, photographed, and fought over. Battles over them are sometimes among surfers coveting the experience and at other times between surfers and those engaged in commercial enterprises that threaten them. These latter types of disputes can be framed as battles between agents of desecration and those having a proper humility and spiritual appreciation of them. Thus are surfing spots, and the surfing experience, made sacred by human action. Two examples of this can, perhaps, be found in the organiza-

tions that Glenn Hening has played a major role in inventing, which he describes in the next section.

The Surfrider Foundation and Groundswell Society [Hening and Taylor]

Given the experiential power of surfing and the history of religion it should not be surprising that many would try to exploit the practice commercially. Surfing has become a multi-billion dollar business, extending globally in many manifestations, from surf contests and promotions, to apparel, to the media, music and more. A number of surfing organizations have formed, however, to resist these trends and focus attention on the reasons surfing took off in the first place, the value and power of the oceans.

In 1984 Glenn Hening founded the Surfrider Foundation by forming a team of surfers that included Lance Carson, Tom Pratte, Steve Merrill, Chris Blakely, and Dan Young. Their mission was to create a new respect for the wave and beach environments and to protect them from polluters and developers. The organization chose, fittingly enough, a logo designed by David Moeller, a Huntington Beach (California) graphic artist and Surfrider board member, that depicts the vision from inside a perfect wave. Twenty years later, Surfrider has over fifty chapters in the U.S. and affiliates around the world.

In the late 1990s Hening co-founded the Groundswell Society with Jericho Poppler and Matt Meyerson. "With Surfrider, the problem was surfers getting sick from the ocean. But now, given surfing's explosive growth, the problem is surfers getting sick of each other." Formally incorporated in 2001, the Groundswell Society adds two dimensions to Surfrider's original mission. First, a peace-making mission, seeking to reduce the violent territorialism that had come to characterize the sport as it became more popular. Second, frustrated by Surfrider's identity as an increasingly mainstream environmental organization, Hening has shaped the Society's annual publication to serve as a "voice of conscience" that highlights individuals and groups that contribute to a positive future for surfing while forthrightly identifying elements in modern surfing that profit from surfing's energy and growth while failing to nurture and protect the oceans and surfing communities from which they ultimately draw their substance. Surfrider and the Groundswell Society, along with others such as Europe's Surfers Against Sewage and the Surf Education Committee, represent a nonprofit, nascent and fledgling institutionalization of the spirituality and ethics that characterize surfers and surfing at their best.

One of the best examples of this is the Clean Water Classic, an event held annually at Rincon in California beginning in 1997, which raises funds to fight ocean pollution, and tries to promote a more cooperative and non-commercial surfing culture. Rincon is a place where you can ride inside a perfect wave, and usually the place is very crowded and the attitude in the water very aggressive

and intense. But the Clean Water Classic combines environmental *and* social ideals into a memorable experience unique in the world of modern surfing.

Surfing into the Future? [Taylor]

There is much in surfing and its sub-cultures that, if anything, works against the kind of spirituality and ethics that we have suggested is sometimes involved. As Hening has insightfully written, there are aspects of surfing that can work against a spirituality that connects people with each other and the wider natural world:

The fundamental problem with surfing will always be how powerfully it drives the ego. There is nothing inherently social in surfing's purest moments, because riding a wave is 100% personal. There is nothing "team" about it. So cooperation and humility takes a back seat to aggression and arrogance . . . As with every powerful experience that involves self-inflation amongst individuals in a crowd, surfing can go from the sublime to the ridiculous in an instant . . . from a generous free natural environment to a monstrous example of human greed and enmity. Surfers are the blessed sons and daughters of Kahuna gliding through Neptune's kingdom, until they start acting like troops of baboons defending territory against outsiders while engaged in internecine conflicts typical of lower order primate communities (Hening in Young 2000: 137).

This critique is found in an article Hening titled "The Stain on the Soul of Surfing," and it reminds me of the Western prophetic tradition, suggesting that surfing may have its first prophet. In it Hening reminds surfers of their unique blessing, that they are privileged to ride "aqua blue energy in warm water along beautiful coastlines, where the power and the visions provided by our mother ocean combine to make surfing an almost religious experience." But he chastises his fellow surfers for forgetting "that waves are living magic" and argues that the internecine violence they too often engage in will "ruin our heaven on Earth." He continues with, essentially, a call to repentance, suggesting that sharing and generosity must become definitive characteristics of surf culture.

Until these instincts become definitive of our surfing culture, starting with the surf industry and those making a living off the sport, surfing will suffer from a cancerous sore that won't go away. The pro tours, contests, magazines, videos, surf star reunions, big-wave exploits, and guided trips to remote perfection will all mean very little until the leaders of our sport/art publicly make a commitment that says, "Enough! We leave our egos on the beach, and we enter the ocean with humility and a true sense of brotherhood."

In a way, Hening is calling surfers back to their roots, or at least to those of the patron saint of modern surfing, Duke Kahanamoku, who more than any other figure was responsible for the globalization of the sport, and its original aloha spirit. *Longboard Magazine* has commented, "Groundswell Society's idealism could be surfing's new voice of conscience" (Holmes 2002: 73). Its founders and members, along with Surfrider Foundation, are inventing a surfing style that blends surfing's nature spirituality with environmental and social conscience to create a positive legacy for future generations of surfers.

Glenn Hening
Bron Taylor

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- See also: Hawai'i; Mountaineering; Polynesian Traditional Religions; Rock Climbing.

Sustainability and the World Council of Churches

The word "sustainable" has been a normal part of the English language for a long time. It has had obvious applicability to agriculture, forestry, and fishing, and other human activities that use natural resources. It means that