

COMPILATION BASED ON A WEB REVIEW

THE SYMBOLIC AND SACRED MEANING OF THE NUMBER 108

FOR THE 108 TREE PATH FOR PEACE CREATED AROUND THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA ON 26.10.2001

by Astrid Stuckelberger, PhD – 6.1.2004

<http://www.yrec.org/108.html>

108: A Symbol-Laden Number

by Georg Feuerstein

In India, the number 108 is a sacred number, suggesting completeness or wholeness. It is widely used in different contexts. Thus there are 108 shepherdesses (*gopī*) devoted to Lord Krishna, 108 holy places of the Vaishnavas, 108 beads on the Hindu and Buddhist rosary, and there also are said to be 108 Upanishads, even though the actual number of these esoteric scriptures exceeds 200. The Buddhists know of 108 *arhats* or "worthy ones."

According to the Tantric heritage, there are 108 pilgrimage centers (*pīṭha*) that are dedicated to the feminine (lunar) principle, or Shakti. There is a marvelous myth that explains the existence of these centers.

The Golden Age (known as the *kṛita-yuga* in Sanskrit) had passed, and a less perfect age was in motion. God Shiva, heavenly prototype of ascetics and yogis, was constantly absorbed in deepest meditation. His austerities caused such heat that the universe was threatened with extinction. Brahma, the Creator, was understandably worried. He begged the Great Goddess to distract Shiva from his yogic efforts and engage him in love play, so that creation could continue to exist. The Mother of the Universe agreed to take human form in order to entrance Shiva, her beloved. She entered the womb of Vīrinī, Daksha's wife, to be born as Satī ("She who is").

Satī was the first-born of the sixty daughters of Daksha. With the power of the Goddess within her, she succeeded in arousing Shiva's interest not only by her exquisite beauty but also by her asceticism. He asked her to be his wife and even assumed human form by her sake. When her father, Daksha, insulted Shiva at a feast, she entered into deep meditation and immolated herself.

Shiva, grief-stricken, recovered her partially consumed body from the flames of the sacrificial fire and bore it away into heaven. Fragments of her body fell to earth in 108 different places over the Indian subcontinent, filling each site with her holy presence. In time, these locations became places of Goddess worship (*devī-pīṭha*).

The three best known sites are the *pīṭhas* near Calcutta, Kāmākhyā in Assam, and Jālandhara, which are said to be the locations of Satī's big toe, womb, and breast respectively. The womb (*yonī*), or female generative organ, has special significance in Tantrism, or Shaktism. It is the primary symbol of Shakti, the feminine power of the cosmos, which is responsible for all creativity.

Historically, the earliest Tantric scriptures mention only four *pīṭhas*. Over time, these seem to have grown to first 51 (said to actually contain the relics of Satī) and later 108. Satī's self-immolation is the mythological core of the Hindu custom of suttee (from *satī*), where the widow enters the funeral pyre of her husband. This tradition was banned during the British rule in India.

The symbol-laden number 108 is thought by some scholars to have astronomical origins, it being the average distance of the Moon from the earth in terms of the Moon's diameter. The same ratio applies to the Sun. However, in symbolism, the number 108 more specifically refers to the lunar principle. Curiously enough, the mineral silver, which traditionally represents the moon, has the atomic weight of 108. Not surprisingly, this number also has played an important role in the Chinese martial arts, the Kabbalah, and the Western hermetic tradition.

Addendum: My own sense is that the number 108 is connected with 18, which, in Hindu symbolism, is said to represent completeness or wholeness. This number is prominent in the *Mahābhārata* epic, which

consists of 18 books, just as the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (embedded in the epic) consists of 18 chapters. The Bharata war was waged for 18 days, and the armies (*akshauhini*) on the opposing sides numbered 18 as well. An *akshauhini* consists of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 65,610 horses, and 109,350 footsoldiers, which makes a total of 218,700 units. The total of the digits of each number adds up to 18! The epic has many more instances of this kind relating to the number 18, and it is also found in other Indian works. The *Mahābhārata* (12.267.28) itself provides a key to this symbolic number as follows:

The [fourteen] "instruments" and the [three] "states" are considered the seventeen qualities [of the embodied human being]. [In addition to] these there is, as eighteenth [part] the Self, which dwells in the body [and] is eternal.

According to one commentator, the fourteen "instruments" (*indriya*) are the five cognitive senses, five conative senses, strength (*bala*), lower mind (*manas*), memory (*citta*), and higher mind (*buddhi*). The three "states" (*bhāva*) are the primary qualities of Nature—the *gunas*. These eighteen "parts" constitute the totality of the human being. The essence of humanness, however, is self-transcendence, which can be paraphrased as "sacrifice." Indeed, the *Chândogya-Upanishad* (3.16.1) states: "The human being, verily, is sacrifice." Thus sacrifice—or self-transcendence—is at the heart of wholeness. That is to say, our human life becomes whole only when we engage it from the perspective of self-transcendence, which is exactly the purpose of Yoga.

The number 108 may well be an expansion of 18. As is little known, zero was the invention not of the Arabs but the Indians. When we look at the macrocosm, the idea of sacrifice can be found in the self-repeating cycles of solar and lunar eclipses. Remarkably, the so-called "saros cycle" of eclipses repeats itself every 6585.32 days, which is every 18.003 years! (This is based on the year being 365.2422 days.) The term *saros* stems from the Babylonian language from which Edmund Halley borrowed it to name this astronomical cycle.

Subhash Kak relates 108 to the distance between Earth and Sun and also between Earth and Moon, saying that it is c. 108 times the diameter of Sun and Moon respectively. However, the distance between Earth and Moon is more accurately 110 times the lunar diameter, while the mean distance between Earth and Sun (150 million kilometers) comes out at c. 107.8 times the solar diameter (1.391 million kilometers)—close enough! Measurements of their respective distance from Earth with simple equipment (such as a stick) do indeed yield a value of around 108 in both cases. Equally astonishing is the related astronomical fact that the Sun's diameter is c. 108 times that of the Earth, which is why, remarkably, the two orbs appear of roughly equal size in the sky.

The connection between 18 and 108 can be found also in an important microcosmic cycle, namely the 21,600 daily breaths we take. According to Tantra, 10,800 breaths are lunar, 10,800 breaths are solar. They alternate in us in the form of the alternating nasal cycle, which medicine has confirmed, so that the body has its microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic eclipses. The microcosmic/macrocosmic parallelism was of the utmost significance to the Indian sages. They saw it as demonstrating the flawless harmony (*rita*) at work in the cosmos.

Now, 21,600 = 18 x 1200 or 108 x 200. 21,600 yields other important numerical derivations:

21,600 :	60 =	360	(the ideal Vedic year)
21,600 :	800 =	27	(number of lunar houses in Vedic astrology)
21,600 :	108 =	200	(number of arcseconds defining a <i>navāmsha</i> in Vedic astrology)

Looking at a larger cosmic cycle—the *yugas* (or world ages)—we find that each is calculated as multiples of 21,600.

<i>krita-yuga</i> —	1,728,000 solar years	=	21,600 x 80
<i>tretā-yuga</i> —	1,296,000 solar years	=	21,600 x 60
<i>dvāpara-yuga</i> —	864,000 solar years	=	21,600 x 40
<i>kali-yuga</i> —	432,000 solar years	=	21,600 x 20

The sum total of these four world ages makes:

<i>kalpa</i> —	4,320,000 solar years	=	21,600 x 200 or 108 x 40,000 or 18 x 240,000
----------------	-----------------------	---	---

Thus the number 18 is fundamental to Indian psychocosmology.

Expanded from Georg Feuerstein, *Spirituality by the Numbers*. New York: J. P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1994, pp. 227-229.

Tibetan Thangka with 108 Images



Shakyamuni gave instructions before his death that his remains were to be interred in a funerary mount or monument, called a stupa. With square, triangular, round, and vertical forms symbolizing the primary elements, surmounted by the victory banners and parasols of enlightenment, stupas have come to symbolize the Truth Body reality of enlightenment, the all-pervasive mind of all Buddhas. Tibetans used stupas to transform the landscape of Tibet, placing these reminders of the omnipresence of enlightenment everywhere.

The stupa [tib. chörten / mchod-rten], originally a royal funerary monument, came to represent the omnipresence of the Buddha's mind, arranging symbols of the elements of the world in such a way as to symbolize architecturally their infusion with the Buddha presence.

There are eight styles or categories of stupas, which commemorate eight important episodes in Buddha Shakyamuni's life.

The Thangka shows 108 images of the Namgyal Tschörten or Vijaya Stupa.

[Tib.: *rNum rgyal mchad rten*].

It is built in memory of Buddha's overcoming a serious illness and symbolizes the victory of Buddhism. It is round and has three steps.

The original antique stupa was located in Vaisali / India.

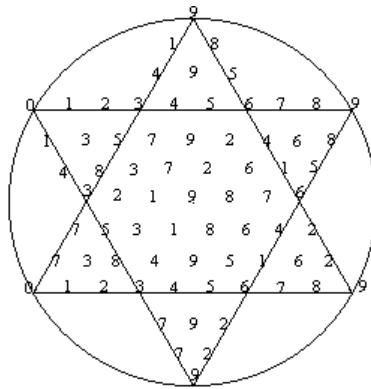
The number "108" plays an important role in the iconography of Tibetan Buddhism.

It is the product of multiplying the 12 months of the year by the nine planets.

It also is the number of prayer beads on a mala, which is a Buddhist type of rosary used for counting repetitions of mantras.

The front site of the central stupa of the painting shows the three-faced, ten-eyed, and eight-handed victorious Ushnishavijaya - this is how her name is translated - is an emanation of Vairocana Buddha. She is one of the three longevity deities in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, along with Amitayus and White Tara. So she is worshipped as the auspicious patroness of long life. Furthermore she is known as the "Mother of all Buddhas."

THE STAR KEY



© All intellectual and pictorial material is the copyright of the author. All rights reserved.

Unless exclusively for the purpose of individual study not for the purpose of financial reward, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author.

The central thesis of this site is that, whether or not it can be considered to be jiggery-pokery, a very simple yet very rich pattern of arithmetic and geometric relationships lies at the heart of much religious imagery and thought.

Kindly note the copyright on this material. *** In particular, after over three years on the net and over a thousand hits to verify their originality at this time (the counter has been reset), I now claim (20 May 2002) that the numeric pattern herein in the shape of a star hexagon should be termed "McDermott's Star", the star referred to as the integral star "The Star of Michael", and the quasi-Penrose tiles as "McDermott tiles". ***

On a personal study basis, I wish you as much fun in exploring for these relationships as I have gained since first discovering it over fifteen years ago. I believe that I have only scratched the surface of those that can still be found, and invite others to communicate any that they may find interesting. Mike McDermott. 1st March, 1999.

Genesis

Genesis of Genesis?

A Few Observations

Religious Symbolism

India and Pythagoras

The Flower of Life

The Integral Star and Quasi-Penrose Tiles

Star Heptagons

108

84

The Trinity and the Name of God

Squaring the Circle

Sign Guestbook

View Guestbook

Chapter on 108

The comment that first piqued my curiosity in this area, and that eventually led to my discovery of the Star Key, was an entry in the 'short encyclopedia of religions of the Orient' by Edward Rice called "Eastern Definitions.1 I quote:

"The numerals 1 and 8 appear in various combinations in virtually all Eastern religions: 18, 81, 108, 1008, 10,008 . . . however, 108 is the most common form.

The origin of 108 (however expressed) is now lost, and insofar as is known, no seer, yogi, sadhu, or other holy person is able to explain the symbolism. However, it apparently represents three qualities:

- The figure 1 is the primal unity , the zero, the void . . .;
- the balance point, the bindu standing between unity on one side,
- and on the other, the figure 8, which is the symbol of consciousness, cognition, pure awareness without content, samadhi, etc.

Whatever, 108 represents ecstatic search for the Divine through the mundane, in which man theophanizes daily tools, here the meaning of counting” (ibid, p. 280).

Rice goes on to give examples.

There are 108:

- * repetitions of the name of a deity to be repeated by the twice-born every day (often on a rosary of 108 beads)
- * repetitions needed for the Gayatri matra
- * names of the Great Goddess (or 1,008), and the same number for Shiva pithas, or sacred places of pilgrimage
- * mudras (ritual gestures) in tantra (or 18)
- * bodily positions in yoga (and 18 in sacred classical dance)
- * Indian pandits venerated by the Tibetans
- * fires kindled in Japan in ceremonies for dead ancestors
- * inner shrines, and 108 outer shrines, at Mount Hiei near Kyoto, Japan
- * spiritual impediments to be overcome in the Shin Buddhist sect.

There are 18

- * main gotra (roughly, clan) groups of brahmins
- * main puranas
- * days of war between 18 legions in the Mahabharata
- * sections of the Mahabharata

There are 1,008:

Buddhas to appear in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition.

Rice mentions that they are but a few examples; and they are - there must be at least 108 of them!

Others I have noted from several sources include 108:

- * sacred qualities said to constitute an enlightened mind
- * self-reproductions by the noble snow lion of a Nepalese yogi to repel a snake army of a mountain god;
- * names of the goddess Tara
- * gompas built in west Tibet
- * representations of Akshobhaya
- * repetitions of a spell by an aghora to destroy an enemy

- * repetitions of a mantra to make evil spirits flee
- * repetitions of sadhana with women in tantra (!)
- * names of the River Ganga (or 1,008)
- * plaits in a nomad's hair
- * lions on the beams of the Joklang Temple, Lhasa
- * volumes of the Tibetan Kanjur (precepts of the Buddha)
- * niches around Boudnath in Kathmandu
- * repetitions for many other mantras 2 . . .

And on, and on. If the reader wants further examples, some more can be found at:

<http://www.globetrotter.qc.ca/qt/usagers/sdesr/nu108.htm>

1. Rice, Edward. Eastern Definitions. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York, 1980.
2. For example, see pp. 347-349 of Danielou, A. 1985. The Gods of India: Hindu Polytheism. Inner Traditions International Ltd, New York.

The following article appeared in Issue #7, Winter 1996-97 of Furyu: The Budo Journal. Copyright Charles C. Goodin. All rights reserved. Hawaii Karate Seinenkai.

Hyaku Hachi No Bonno:

The Influence of The 108 Defilements and Other Buddhist Concepts on Karate Thought and Practice

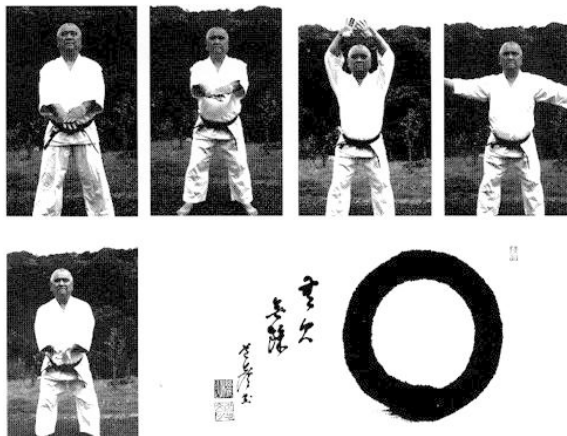
By Charles C. Goodin



Memories of such moments can last a lifetime.

It was just after the end of World War II-American troops occupied the island of Okinawa-and the six year old child had been sent to live in the village of Aha, his mother's hometown. On this particular morning his maternal aunt had taken him to a nearby Buddhist temple perched among the pines on the slope of a steep hill. From the narrow road, down below, the moss-covered stone steps leading up to the shrine rose in a straight line, seeming to the boy to almost touch the sky itself.

Up the steps he climbed, one after the other, until at last he reached the simple wooden shrine. He turned and looked down **at the 108 steps and the road**, which now looked a world away.



Zenko Heshiki demonstrates the opening movement of Kusanku, a popular karate kata taught in many styles. The arms describe an enso, a circle, which he says refers to the Buddhist concept of the Cosmic Void. The enso calligraphy is by Zen master Hosokawa Dogen, abbot of Daihonzan Chozen-ji. The characters to the left explain: "Nothing to be added. Nothing to be subtracted."

Fifty years later, the boy, now a Zen priest at the Daihonzan Chozenji Temple/International Zen Dojo and kyoshi, seventh dan of Matsubayashi Ryu, called me at my office in Aiea, Hawaii, and asked, "Charles, do you know why the kata Gojushiho is called that?" I thought to myself that it must be because the kata has 54 (or gojushi, in Japanese numbering) movements or steps (ho). (1) Before I could answer, Zenko Heshiki sensei added (2), "--And it's not because it has 54 movements because it doesn't, no matter how you count it."

Thereby confessing my ignorance, Heshiki sensei thus began to explain **the influence of the concept of the 108 Defilements (Hyaku Hachi No Bonno) of Buddhism on karate.**

According to Heshiki, it is an Asian predilection to embody profound concepts, such as The 108 Defilements, in ordinary things. Profound inner meanings are captured in mundane, outer forms. To the casual sojourner, the steps leading up to a Buddhist temple are a mere convenience--they simply are there. But after several visits, a more inquisitive person might ask, "Why do these 108 steps lead up to the shrine? Why not put the shrine closer to the road, a little lower on the hill? Why have any steps at all?"

The answer is not inscribed on the steps, at the shrine, or on any sign or guidebook. Instead, the steps themselves are the message in plain view for the world to see. The architect carved his symbolism and meaning into the landscape.

The occurrences of 108 steps leading to Buddhist temples are common. (3) Sometimes they rise in a single flight. Depending on the terrain, they might consist of two flights of 54 steps or three flights of 36 steps. Years after, when Heshiki sensei as an adult returned to the same Aha shrine with his aunt, he knew without counting that it had 108 steps. Through his Zen and karate training he had come to understand the meaning behind the symbolism.

Heshiki sensei explained that all major schools of Buddhism have long recognized the existence of 108 Defilements, which are so named because these faults cause both the body and mind to be afflicted and to suffer. (4) From the Western point of view, they might be defined as human propensities which lead toward sin or wrongdoing. The term defilement is further explained as that which disturbs the mind and body and prevents tranquility. Defilements are classified by the three realms in which they exist: desire, form and formlessness.

Thirty-six types of defilements are found in the realm of desire. Of these, 32 proclivities may be eliminated through the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, namely:

1. The Truth of Suffering: all existence entails suffering.
2. The Truth of Cause: suffering is caused by ignorance, which gives rise to craving and illusion.
3. The Truth of Extinction: there is an end to suffering (this nonsuffering state is called Nirvana);
4. The Truth of the Path: Nirvana is attained through the practice of the Eightfold Path.

The Four Noble Truths lie at the heart of Buddhist doctrine, and were the four essential concepts that the historical Shakyamuni Buddha discovered upon his enlightenment under a bodhi tree. It describes, in highly logical terms, a situation, the cause of the situation, the belief that the situation can be alleviated, and that there is a way, or solution to the situation. The solution, the Eightfold Path, is a prescription of proper behavior:

right view; right thinking; right speech; right action; right living; right effort; right memory; and right meditation.

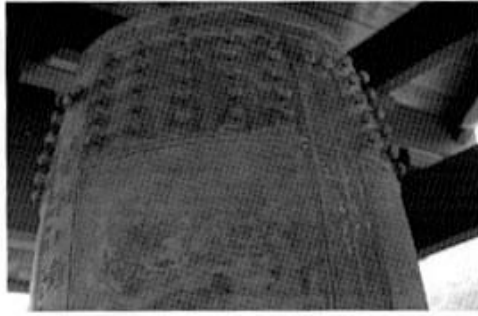
The four remaining proclivities in the realm of desire are cut off through meditation.

Thirty-one proclivities are found in each of the two higher realms of form and formlessness. Adding the 36 proclivities of the realm of desire, 31 proclivities of the realm of form, and 31 proclivities of the realm of formlessness, a total of 98 proclivities is attained. To this total, 10 bonds-or secondary defilements-are added, resulting in a total of 108 defilements.

Upon the exhaustion or elimination of the 108 Defilements through shugyo (the austere practice of bodymind transcendence), one enters a state of enlightenment.

The meaning of the 108 steps leading to Buddhist temples now becomes clear. As each of the steps are climbed and a defilement is symbolically eliminated, the seeker's true nature becomes less and less obscured and afflicted. By the time the shrine is reached, the

seeker is symbolically ready for enlightenment, the state of nonsuffering. In this case, the numeric symbol 108 is combined by the action of climbing, which itself is a powerful symbol of striving.



A close-up of a large bell at the Chozen-ji temple reveals the chi-no-machi, knobs on the bell which number 108, the number of defilements in our selves that must be purified through shugyo.

The number 108 is also found in other symbols and rituals of Buddhism. Zen priests wear juzu (a ring of "prayer beads") around their wrists, which consists of 108 beads and are used somewhat like a Christian rosary. In addition, the large bell in Buddhist temples is struck 108 times on New Year's Eve to represent the elimination of the defilements. (5) In Hawaii as well as Japan, members of some temples each take a turn at the bell until it is tolled a total of 108 times. In addition, one of the features of large temple bells, an area called the chinomachi, consists of an arrangement of 108 knots or knobs.

Symbolism of the 108 Defilements in Karate

It cannot be denied that the founders of various forms of karatedo were heavily influenced by Buddhism. The expression ken Zen ichinyo or "fist and Zen as one" describes how karate is still taught in some traditional-bent dojo. Ideally, there should be no separation between the two. Just as symbolism of the 108 Defilements was captured in stone steps, juzu, and temple bells, so too was it preserved in the names and movements of certain karate kata.

When Heshiki sensei called me about the Shorin-ryu kata Gojushiho, he naturally knew that 54 is one-half of the 108 steps or defilements. It is also noteworthy that there are 18 kata in Matsubayashi Ryu. When a Buddhist sees numbers which are major factors of 108 (such as 54, 36 and 18), he is reminded of the Defilements. Think again about the flights of stairs leading to a Buddhist shrine. The path might lead up 36 steps, turn to the left for another 36, and finally veer right for the final 36. Each flight is instantly recognized as a portion of the whole number, or 108. Numeric symbolism is also present in the karate style known as Goju-ryu. The ultimate Goju-ryu kata, Suparinpei, literally means 108. Suparinpei is the Chinese (somewhat Japanicized) pronunciation of the number 108, while gojushi of gojushiho is the Japanese pronunciation of the number 54. The other Goju-ryu kata, Sanseru (meaning "36") and Seipai ("18") are factors of the number 108. Heshiki is quick to point out that he is a teacher of Matsubayashi Ryu, not Goju-ryu, and does not presume to speak for that ryu or its founders, but the coincidence of the numbers is truly striking and surely must go beyond mere coincidence.

Keeping in mind that Buddhism originated in India and traveled to Japan through China, it should not be surprising to find Chinese symbols of the 108 Defilements. The legendary Shaolin Temple, from which are traced many Chinese boxing styles, was Buddhist and it is from the Chinese name Shaolin that Shorin of Shorin-ryu systems derived their name. In T'ai Chi Ch'uan and certain forms of gung fu, for example, there are sets that are supposed to consist of 108 movements. In the Chinese healing arts, as well, there is also mention of 108 major energy points.

Karate As Shugyo

"Everything is apparent in black in white," says Heshiki, "but without shugyo, intellectual understanding is useless." It is one thing to mentally digest the meaning of the 108 Defilements. It is quite another thing to diligently work to eliminate them. While zazen, or sitting meditation, is the most widely recognized form of shugyo, Karate itself can and should be practiced as a form of shugyo.

According to Heshiki, kata--the true essence of karate--represents steps to eliminate the 108 Defilements, thus leading to the state of enlightenment. Through the intense practice of kata, the student literally climbs the steps or strikes the temple bell of the Self. With a gleam in his eyes, Heshiki likes to say that the student must literally "burn himself in kata." He further explains:

Through the years of practice the trained body will execute every movement with unbroken fluidity. One no longer knows the difference of mind/body. To get that far, for the skill to become spiritual, a concentration of all the physical and psychic forces is needed. This is the general attitude of Oriental people approaching any art. They have developed arts such as karatedo (The Way of Karate), kendo (The Way of the Sword), judo (The Way of Suppleness), kyudo (The Way of Archery), and also flower arrangement, and tea ceremony. It is the aim of every artist to achieve such a state of mind, so that he no longer has to rely on the techniques he has learned, but transcends into the realm of nature and lives completely in tune with the whole of Nature and the truth of the whole.

(From the booklet [Karate](#), by Zenko Heshiki, Chozenji, International Zen Dojo, currently out of print.)

Kata is shugyo, punching and blocking is shugyo, kumite (sparring) is shugyo. . . practiced properly, every aspect of karate is shugyo.

Other Buddhist Symbols In Karate

Heshiki made me start to think about other Buddhist symbols present in karate. One of the most obvious is the term karate itself. As described in my previous article about Heshiki, the character kara can also be read as ku, which:

[O]riginates from sunya, the small circle called zero in modern mathematics. Sunya or sunyata is the Sanskrit term for void, emptiness, or the absence of duality and conceptualization. Nothing exists in ku but all things spring out of it. It is something like a mirror. Although nothing exists in a mirror, it is possible to reflect everything in it. (From Furu #5, Winter 1995, page 53.)

Heshiki thus translates karate not as "empty hand" in the sense of being "weaponless" but rather as "the hand which emanates from the Void." This phrase is beautifully illustrated in the most advanced Matsubayashi Ryu kata, Kusanku, which was named in honor of an the eighteenth century Chinese martial artist who came to Okinawa. Kusanku is the Okinawan pronunciation of the Chinese master's name.

In The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do, Nagamine Shoshin writes that the kata requires "painstaking practice of more than a decade for mastery" (page 230).

The student begins the kata with his feet at shoulder width and his hands placed in a lower position with the left over the right (as in Fukyugata Ichi). From there, he raises both hands straight up over his head and then brings them down on each side, tracing the perimeter of a giant circle, representative of the Void. As the calligrapher or shodoka expresses his spirit through brush and ink in depicting the enso (a calligraphic circle that describes the energy and spirit of the artist), the karateka expresses his spirit through the movements of the kata. And like the enso, the beginning of Kusanku is a great circle with a definite beginning and ending point. All the kata in Matsubayashi Ryu and many other styles, in fact, begin and end at the same spot.



A path leading up to a temple bell. Many steep paths leading up a slope or hill to a Buddhist temple is in a number that represents the 108 defilements that we must cleanse out of ourselves in order to achieve enlightenment.

--And have you noticed that we always bow when entering and leaving the dojo and meeting our sensei, just as is done in Buddhist temples and Zen dojo? (6) Have you heard that the top portion of the gi is always crossed left over right as is customary in Japanese culture, except for the dead. . . and the Buddha? Have you wondered why the hands are positioned at the beginning of kata almost identically to the hand position of zazen? Have you heard of kata referred to as "moving Zen"? After years of constant intrusion of these tidbits of fact upon our consciousness, one must begin to wonder.

In time, the karateka learns how to execute the basic movements of kata and understands the kata bunkai (application). Self-defense skills are thoroughly developed and the body and mind are strengthened. At some point the student must ask, however, is that all there is? Is karate solely directed to the external and gauged in terms of the actions of others? Are rank, titles and tournament performance really accurate measures of the self? How much selfdefense is really necessary?

At that crucial moment, with the strength and intensity the student has cultivated through years of practice, the symbolism of the 108 Defilements and other Buddhist concepts might come to mind. The karateka might recall the visual symbols of the steps leading to Buddhist shrines, of the striking of temple bells, and particularly the names or number of movements of various kata. He/she might even begin to turn his attention inward and start the essential process of working on his inner self in earnest, in shugyo and of truly "burning himself in kata."

Such an experience and its outcome is strictly personal. Is karate or any other budo you practice just an Asian type of sport? Perhaps the next time you hear the name of kata such as Suparinpei, Gojushiho, Sanseru and Sepai, or hear the numbers 108, 54, 36, or 18, you might stop and consider the possibility that a teacher, perhaps long forgotten in the dim past, had preserved Buddhist concepts in the outer form. . . hoping that someone would one day stop, notice and wonder. . . and read the signs set out for all to see.

Author's Notes and About the Author

I am very grateful to Zenko Heshiki, who asked the questions and generously provided the research and background materials which led to this article.

[Charles C. Goodin](#) is an instructor of [Matsubayashi-Ryu](#) at the [Hikari Dojo](#) in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Footnotes

1. The term ho means steps, as in footsteps. The term kaidan refers to steps as in stairs or levels.
2. Readers of FURYU The Budo Journal will recall Heshiki from the cover of issue #5, Winter 1995, in the article "Zenko Heshiki: Zen Priest and Karate Sensei," by Charles C. Goodin, page 41.
3. I have been told that the 108 steps applies to Buddhist temples rather than Shinto shrines because the 108 Defilements is a Buddhist concept.
4. The following explanation is condensed for purposes of this article and Sanskrit terminology has been omitted for simplicity.
5. In ancient times, temple bells were struck 108 times at morning and evening but now it is only done on New Year's Eve and special occasions.
6. Heshiki describes the dojo as "the place of enlightenment, the place of the do or Tao or Way, the place where the mind and body are cultivated and come together." FURYU The Budo Journal, Issue 5, Winter 1995, page 53.

Barry Carroll on the Number 108

Barry Carroll writes:

Here's the text from an old essay on 108.

The drift is that it represents a form of creative energy identical to that which created the 4-fold cosmos.

What is the significance of the number 108 or 1080?

Why is it associated with the moon and both Shiva and Buddha?

What is the nature of the force associated with it?

A look at the cultural context these numbers appear in gives hints as to what it's about.

English antiquarian, John Michell is the author of, *City of Revelation*, a sourcebook on the numerological implications of the City of St. John described in the book of Revelations. As part of his analysis, he asserts that the numbers 108 and 1080 are lunar numbers associated with the pentagon and he contrasts them with the infamous solar number 666, and the hexagon. He points out that the angle of two adjacent sides of a pentagon equal 108 degrees. Furthermore he states that 108 is associated with the waters of the earth. He also points out that the Rigveda has 10800 stanzas of 40 syllables each, that the Hindu fire altar has 10800 bricks and that the Buddhist rosary has 108 beads. In his book *Dimensions of Paradise* he offers up some more expanded commentary on the symbolism of the number 1080 which is well worth reading--i won't cover his ground--just read it--the part on Durer and Melancholia is very good.

The question remains: Why these numbers?

The answer begins to take shape in a Sumerian myth. Enki is the god of the waters on which all creation floats. All creative power resides with him.

He is known as The Great Shaman. Enki is moved one day by the sensual beauty of his grand-daughter, Inanna, who is radiant knowing she is the possessor of a magnificent vulva (that's what it says). In an act of drunken generosity, Enki gives her the gift of many "me". These are defined as "the Arts of Civilization". Before Enki can change his mind, this daughter of the goddess, Nanna, and the moon-god, Ningal, makes off with them in a crescent-moon shaped boat. On arriving in port city of mortals, she then gives these "me" to humanity. In the story the number of Enki's "me" are counted. There are 252 in all. But when the ship is unloaded extra "me" are found. These are understood to be Inanna's own "me". Their number is not given. But if there were 108, this would produce the number 360, an essential number in the ordering of time and space -- certainly a key to the establishing the Sumerian vision of order in the universe. We still use 360 degrees today in measuring and mapping the earth and the heavens. In this story the female sexual vitality of Inanna, born of the moon, is identified with 108 and results in benefit to humanity.

In India the theme continues to develop with a different cultural twist and two more Great Shamans. Early images from the Indus valley (next door to Sumeria in N.W. India) depict wandering ascetics wearing crescent shaped horns. Shamans wearing the horns of wild beasts are invoking the sexual energy that makes male animals sprout those horns. horny means sex driven even in english. Their presence further suggests the the raising of this energy up the spine to the head as yogis do in kundalini yoga. Like their early counterparts, both Shiva and Buddha were wandering ascetics who and by their yoga discipline made themselves the repositories of this creative sexual energy. Significantly, later images of Shiva replace the ascetic's horns with a crescent moon twined in his hair.

I'm presently lacking the iconography I'd like to have linking Buddha to lunar symbols, but the buddhist holidays are set by the lunar rather than the solar calendar.

Regarding the 108 rosary beads, they are made of seeds called bodhi-tse, an allusion to the bodhi tree under whose branches Buddha received enlightenment. "Popular belief is that saying mantras with the bodhi-tse increases the mantra's benefit like casting seeds on the ground".

Once again 108 is associated with increase and benefit. Going farther out, it may be worth noting that Buddha's enlightenment, his gift to humanity, followed after his temptation by the daughters of Mara, lord of desire.

(that desire is the source of suffering is an ascetics vision if ever there was one.) Similar to the episode with Enki and Inanna, it appears that sexual energy generated by contact with desirable females is rechanneled to the benefit of humanity. Management of this energy is not the exclusive domain of ascetics, however. It is very familiar to tantric practitioners as well.

Returning to the Hindu tradition, assorted texts explicitly link the creative power of this sexually charged energy to the concept of Shiva's seed grown supernaturally potent by means of his ascetic practice. Some of these stories are recounted in Heinrich Zimmer's, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*. A cycle of fantastic tales recounts its absurd, comically rampant powers of fertility. The creative power—the essence— of this seed is also explicitly identified with the magical substance Soma which is stored in the moon. It is the source of immortality for the gods who drink it each time the moon is full. Thus it is this creative lunar force, which sustains the gods, is embodied in Shiva.

In the Christian tradition 108 would be linked to the concept of the Holy Ghost. In the Bible it appears that the holy ghost directly engendered Jesus. It impregnated Mary thus demonstrating the fertilizing power we have already encountered in Hindu myth. The birth of Jesus from Mary who is clearly associated with the moon in some of her iconography recreates an already established pattern. Jesus goes on to a career as an ascetic who reveals his divine powers thru life-giving miracles similar to those ascribed to Shiva, such as the multiplication of the fishes and loaves, raising Lazarus from the dead, etc.. The 5 gifts of the Pentecost (prophecy, speaking in tongues, etc) which are the cornerstone of the Pentecostal faith are among phenomena related to possession by the energy 108 symbolizes.

As emblematic of the creative force, 108 takes its place in the imagery of the center and at the source of creation. Mircea Eliade's books, *The Sacred and the Profane*, and, *The Eternal Return*, have a lot to say about the role of the center in cosmology .

It was mentioned above that 108 is associated with the pentagon. First its important to recognize the importance of the 5 pointed star which the Pythagoreans equated with " Logos", the Word of God. The Christian Bible captures the importance of the Logos in the Gospel of John, with the quotation, "In the beginning was the Word... ". As the source of creation, its place, like the seed of Shiva, is at the center.

The Masons also place the star prominently in their lodge. They place a "G" in its center (allegedly standing for Geometry). The allusion is presumably to the creative force of Logos—expressed thru geometrical patterning. Taking this one step further, the structure of the 5 pointed star divides each of its sides into a golden section relationship. For the newcomer to the subject, there are many books on this. The golden section, the ratio 1:1.618, also known as Phi, is integral to patterns of growth among living things. Aesthetically, this ratio casts a long shadow of influence over the art and architecture of the Renaissance. It provides a cooler architectural vehicle for translating the beauty and magic and mystery of that same energy identified with Inanna, Shiva, and that rough and ready Indus valley ascetic.

Now the Math Part:

In the Hindu tradition the cosmological center consists of Meru's central peak surrounded by four secondary peaks, one for each of the cardinal directions. This is the home of the gods; this is the source of creation;

its the point where divine influence touches the earth and spreads to its 4 corners. The conventionalized image of Meru as world mountain is pervasive in Eurasian cosmology. Most Hindu temples are designed to represent Meru.

In the buddhist tradition, the stupa is Meru.

By placing Shiva atop Meru as the Shivaites do, his creative lunar kundalini energy radiates out from the center of the cosmos. The fabric of time and space described by numbers provides boundaries for the infinite possibilities of creation. 108 figures prominently here. Its connection to the seed numbers for the lengths of the Indian cosmic ages, the yugas, and to some of the numbers which recur throughout Eurasian myth cycles can be examined below. They describe a 4-fold pattern of expansion out from the center to the 4 directions and up and down the vertical axis also by a factor of 4:

$108 \times 4 \times 1 = 432$ $108 \times 4 \times 2 = 864$

$108 \times 4 \times 3 = 1296$ $108 \times 4 \times 4 = 1728$
--

The structure of the Rigveda mentioned at the beginning--10800 stanzas of 40 syllables, shows 108 and 4 in association with one another in a sacred context. It suggests that the text is symbolically making itself part of the forces of creation in the same way that the Christian Bible as the sacred word of God is also an extension of Logos--the 1st principle of creation. (These patterns of numbers are connected with a system whose roots i have mentioned many times.)

Remnants of a similar 4 fold pattern of expansion appears in medieval England as a model for the sub-division of landholdings and political entities--from the 4 acre homestead around a house, to the smallest township of 4 holdings, up to the four quarters of the kingdom as a whole with the king at its center. In parts of India, phallic boundary markers which identify the the 4 corners of a plot of land are intended to invoke the original pattern of unfolding. When anointed, they are a prayer for the blessing of magical fertility associated with Shiva or his stand-in, Bhirava. In similar fashion the ritual of building and lighting the fire altar, a ceremony observed when taking possession of land or dedicating a building, is also an invocation of the power of the original creation. The number of bricks used in the altar is related to ideas already discussed and its construction begins using 4 square bricks.

Finally, these symbol systems are only aids to visualization. They are not the thing itself. The energy represented by 108 has substance but it has no single shape. It takes on the form of as many cultural containers as there are cultures who recognize its presence. Apparently it can be directed as well. For example, the earth energy called "Chi" by fung shui practitioners, is also a manifestation of this same energy. Fung shui maintains that while Chi is always present, its flow in some natural settings is more beneficial than in others. However the flow of Chi thru an environment can be modified to yield its most beneficial effect. In the recent history of the western world, conspicuous individuals like Anton Mesmer, Nikola Tesla and Wilhelm Reich are associated with attempts to manipulate this force technologically. There is a widespread belief that old circles of standing stones in England were once linked to the management of this force. Sedona, Arizona, USA, has built a tourist industry around its reputation as a natural focus point for it. Meanwhile at shrines like Lourdes, the energy is found in the waters. Water seems to be its natural vehicle. In the Hebrew tradition the yod, symbol of god's creative energy, is referred to as "a dew". this is interesting because chi is also identified with the mists that flow from the mountain peaks. The paths that chi follows are those that fogs and mists flow along or settle in. This is how geomancers visualize the movement of this energy in the natural environment

***** Barry

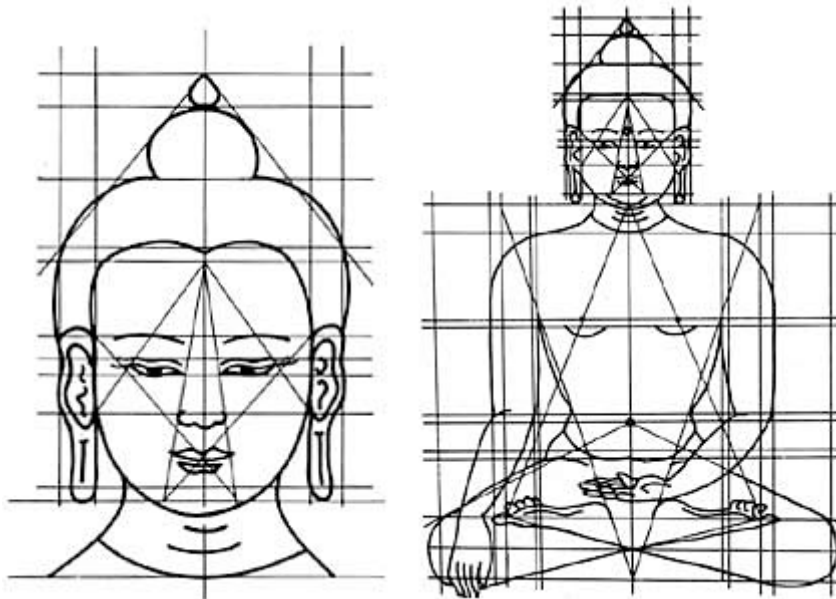
PS if anyone is interested in more on Fung Shui they should request Cat's outstanding comentary on Fung Shui and her analysis of the perversion of its true nature by its presentation in the popular media.

Buddhist Art & Architecture

The Buddha Image

Canon of the Physical Proportions of a Great Being

The image of Buddha, who was called The Greatest Yogin of all Times, expresses serene quiescence. The harmony of his physical proportions is the expression of great beauty. The required measurements are laid down in the canon (or standard pattern) of Buddhist art, which corresponds to ideal physical proportions. The span is the basic measure, i.e. the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the tip of the thumb of the outspread hand. This distance corresponds to the space between the dimple in the chin and the hair-line. Each span has twelve finger-breadths. The whole figure measures 108 finger-breadths or 9 spans corresponding to the macro-micro-cosmic harmony measurements.



The perfect proportions of a Buddha, the graciousness of his physical form, represent one of the ten qualities or powers of a Buddha. They are the characteristics of the physical harmony and beauty of a Great Being, and are described in Story of the Life of Buddha Shakyamuni. There are thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics. The lines of the eight-spoked on the soles and palms of a Buddha are among them. The appearance and the measurements of a Buddha are perishable and a worldly conception: they describe the ideal picture of a Heavenly Body. They are not subject to change like growth, sickness and death, which can only affect the earthly incarnation of a Buddha.

Examining the canon of the body of a Buddha, one realises that every detail represents harmonious proportions. Everything, the spot between the eyebrows, marking the eye of wisdom, as well as the tip of the nose, has its own special place. The nose has its specific length, just as the ears have their own characteristically exaggerated length. The symbol of a Buddha's greatest enlightenment is the so-called enlightenment-elevation on the top of the head, described in old texts as that which emerges out of the head of an enlightened saint. It is the visible symbol of the spiritual generative power that strives towards heaven and passes into the immaterial sphere.

The ideal proportions of any image of the Buddha are described in books on iconography. The canonic prototype shows the seated Buddha with his legs crossed and the soles of his feet visible. This yoga-posture has a pre-Buddhist tradition in India, appearing for the first time on the seals of Mohenjodaro in the third millennium BC. This yoga-posture hides the lower part of the body. The broad shoulders are emphasised in early Buddhist sculptures of Mathura. These characteristics, and the slightly almond eye of Buddha Sakyamuni, hint at his descent from the Licchavi clan, related to the Proto-Tibetans by kinship and blood. Before the final domination of the Indo-Europeans, these Licchavis ruled in northern India and the Himalayan regions. Their principalities had democratic constitutions

with equal rights and no discrimination of sex or race. Buddhism and its founder must be considered on the basis of this social structure which is confirmed in the oldest texts as well as in the modern Oxford History of India.

Physical Marks

Ushnisha, the Enlightenment Elevation above the fontanelle; is the flame-topped elevation on the head of the Buddha, defined as that which emerges from the head of a Fully Enlightened One.

Urna, the mark in the centre of the forehead, called the Eye of Wisdom, also depicted as a Bundle of Rays or fine hairs between the eyebrows.

The lower part of the body is covered by the Diamond-Seat (*Vajrasana*). This is the meditation pose (*Dhyanasana*) of utmost concentration with the legs crossed so that the soles are visible.

The Subtle Energy-Spheres of the Body

The Enlightenment-Centre, the Top of the Head or fontanelle above the upper cerebrum, called Sphere of the Thousand-petalled Lotus (*SAHASHRARA-CAKRA*).

The cerebral centre of thinking and conscious-power, called Command-Centre (*AJNA-CAKRA*), the forehead between the eyebrows; ascribed to lotus-centre.

The guttural centre or subtle Sphere of Speech (*VISHUDDHA-CAKRA*) at the base of the throat.

The cardiac plexus, the emotional Sphere of the Inner Voice (*ANAHATA-CAKRA*), called the Source of the Heart, situated in the central region of the thorax or chest.

The solar plexus with the gastric plexus, called 'the brain of the belly', Fiery-lustrous or Navel-Centre (*MANIPURA-CAKRA*) in the region of the loins and connected with the lumbar plexus.

The sacral plexus, called Root-Centre (*MULADHARA-CAKRA*) or Secret Place, being the root of all streams of vital energy (*NADIS*) in the region of the rump-bone or sacrum.

The human body is the receptacle of the power of thinking described as a bundle of energy and pervaded by the so-called breath of life flowing in subtle streams throughout the body.

<http://www.goldenlandpages.com/animals/>

Peacock, Symbol of the UN in Geneva, living in the Park



Although it is said the peacock has been since the days of Pagan, it was not earlier than Ava that the Burmese took seriously of the symbol. The same is true of the peacock as the symbol of the sun. In Pagan mural paintings the sun is always represented by a horse. The use of the peacock for the sun began in Konbhaung period. **In the 108 of the Buddha's footprint No 83 is the peacock.** In Yatanapon period the peacock is used on the observe side of the coin. During the nationalist movement the peacock came to the forefront.

Sitaram

<http://www.sulekha.com/chpost.asp?forum=philosophy&show=0&cid=38651>

108: A Symbol-Laden Number

In India, the number 108 is a sacred number, suggesting completeness or wholeness. It is widely used in different contexts. Thus there are 108 shepherdesses (gopī) devoted to Lord Krishna, 108 holy places of the Vaishnavas, 108 beads on the Hindu and Buddhist rosary, and there also are said to be 108 Upanishads, even though the actual number of these esoteric scriptures exceeds 200. The Buddhists know of 108 arhats or "worthy ones."

According to the Tantric heritage, there are 108 pilgrimage centers (pīṭha) that are dedicated to the feminine (lunar) principle, or Shakti. There is a marvelous myth that explains the existence of these centers.

The Golden Age (known as the krita-yuga in Sanskrit) had passed, and a less perfect age was in motion. God Shiva, heavenly prototype of ascetics and yogis, was constantly absorbed in deepest meditation. His austerities caused such heat that the universe was threatened with extinction. Brahma, the Creator, was understandably worried. He begged the Great Goddess to distract Shiva from his yogic efforts and engage him in love play, so that creation could continue to exist. The Mother of the Universe agreed to take human form in order to entrance Shiva, her beloved. She entered the womb of Vīrinī, Daksha's wife, to be born as Satī ("She who is").

Satī was the first-born of the sixty daughters of Daksha. With the power of the Goddess within her, she succeeded in arousing Shiva's interest not only by her exquisite beauty but also by her asceticism. He asked her to be his wife and even assumed human form by her sake. When her father, Daksha, insulted Shiva at a feast, she entered into deep meditation and immolated herself.

Shiva, grief-stricken, recovered her partially consumed body from the flames of the sacrificial fire and bore it away into heaven. Fragments of her body fell to earth in 108 different places over the Indian subcontinent, filling each site with her holy presence. In time, these locations became places of Goddess worship (devī-pīṭha).

The three best known sites are the pīṭhas near Calcutta, Kāmākhyā in Assam, and Jālandhara, which are said to be the locations of Satī's big toe, womb, and breast respectively. The womb (yonī), or female generative organ, has special significance in Tantrism, or Shaktism. It is the primary symbol of Shakti, the feminine power of the cosmos, which is responsible for all creativity.

Historically, the earliest Tantric scriptures mention only four pīṭhas. Over time, these seem to have grown to first 51 (said to actually contain the relics of Satī) and later 108. Satī's self-immolation is the mythological core of the Hindu custom of suttee (from satī), where the widow enters the funeral pyre of her husband. This tradition was banned during the British rule in India.

The symbol-laden number 108 has astronomical origins, it being the average distance of the moon from the earth in terms of the moon's diameter. The same ratio applies to the sun. However, in symbolism, the number 108 more specifically refers to the lunar principle. Curiously enough, the mineral silver, which traditionally represents the moon, has the atomic weight of 108. Not surprisingly, this number also has played an important role in the Chinese martial arts, the Kabbalah, and the Western hermetic tradition.

The moon's diameter (2160 mi.) is exactly 1/400th of the sun's diameter (840,000), coupled with the moon's distance from the sun causes the rare total solar eclipse. If these numbers were different, this would not occur. Whether you believe in creationism or evolution we would not see the fabulous corona if this curious placement were not perfect.

The moon is an average of 250,000 miles away from the earth. The Sun is 93 million miles away from the earth.

$2160 \times 108 = 233280$ $108 \times 864,000 = 90,720,000$ What is the significance of the number 108 or 1080? Why is it associated with the moon and both Shiva and Buddha? What is the nature of the force associated with it? A look at the cultural context these numbers appear in gives hints as to what it's about.

English antiquarian, John Michell is the author of, *City of Revelation*, a sourcebook on the numerological implications of the City of St. John described in the book of Revelations. As part of his analysis, he asserts that the numbers 108

and 1080 are lunar numbers associated with the pentagon and he contrasts them with the infamous solar number 666, and the hexagon. He points out that the angle of two adjacent sides of a pentagon equal 108 degrees. Furthermore he states that 108 is associated with the waters of the earth. He also points out that the Rigveda has 10800 stanzas of 40 syllables each, that the Hindu fire altar has 10800 bricks and that the Buddhist rosary has 108 beads. In his book *Dimensions of Paradise* he offers up some more expanded commentary on the symbolism of the number 1080 which is well worth reading--i won't cover his ground--just read it--the part on Durer and Melancholia is very good.

The question remains: Why these numbers? The answer begins to take shape in a Sumerian myth. Enki is the god of the waters on which all creation floats. All creative power resides with him. He is known as The Great Shaman. Enki is moved one day by the sensual beauty of his grand-daughter, Inanna, who is radiant knowing she is the possessor of a magnificent vulva (that's what it says). In an act of drunken generosity, Enki gives her the gift of many "me". These are defined as "the Arts of Civilization". Before Enki can change his mind, this daughter of the goddess, Nanna, and the moon-god, Ningal, makes off with them in a crescent-moon shaped boat. On arriving in port city of mortals, she then gives these "me" to humanity. In the story the number of Enki's "me" are counted. There are 252 in all.

But when the ship is unloaded extra "me" are found. These are understood to be Inanna's own "me". Their number is not given. But if there were 108, this would produce the number 360, an essential number in the ordering of time and space -- certainly a key to the establishing the Sumerian vision of order in the universe. We still use 360 degrees today in measuring and mapping the earth and the heavens. In this story the female sexual vitality of Inanna, born of the moon, is identified with 108 and results in benefit to humanity.

In India the theme continues to develop with a different cultural twist and two more Great Shamans. Early images from the Indus valley (next door to Sumeria in N.W. India) depict wandering ascetics wearing crescent shaped horns. Shamans wearing the horns of wild beasts are invoking the sexual energy that makes male animals sprout those horns. ***** means sex driven even in english. Their presence further suggests the raising of this energy up the spine to the head as yogis do in kundalini yoga. Like their early counterparts, both Shiva and Buddha were wandering ascetics who and by their yoga discipline made themselves the repositories of this creative sexual energy. Significantly, later images of Shiva replace the ascetic's horns with a crescent moon twined in his hair.

I'm presently lacking the iconography I'd like to have linking Buddha to lunar symbols, but the buddhist holidays are set by the lunar rather than the solar calendar. **Regarding the 108 rosary beads, they are made of seeds called bodhi-tse, an allusion to the bodhi tree under whose branches Buddha received enlightenment. "Popular belief is that saying mantras with the bodhi-tse increases the mantra's benefit like casting seeds on the ground".**

Once again 108 is associated with increase and benefit. Going farther out, it may be worth noting that Buddha's enlightenment, his gift to humanity, followed after his temptation by the daughters of Mara, lord of desire. (that desire is the source of suffering is an ascetics vision if ever there was one.) Similar to the episode with Enki and Inanna, it appears that sexual energy generated by contact with desirable females is rechanneled to the benefit of humanity. Management of this energy is not the exclusive domain of ascetics, however. It is very familiar to tantric practitioners as well.

Returning to the Hindu tradition, assorted texts explicitly link the creative power of this sexually charged energy to the concept of Shiva's seed grown supernaturally potent by means of his ascetic practice. Some of these stories are recounted in Heinrich Zimmer's, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*. A cycle of fantastic tales recounts its absurd, comically rampant powers of fertility. The creative power--the essence-- of this seed is also explicitly identified with the magical substance Soma which is stored in the moon. It is the source of immortality for the gods who drink it each time the moon is full. Thus it is this creative lunar force, which sustains the gods, is embodied in Shiva.

In the Christian tradition 108 would be linked to the concept of the Holy Ghost. In the Bible it appears that the holy ghost directly engendered Jesus. It impregnated Mary thus demonstrating the fertilizing power we have already encountered in Hindu myth. The birth of Jesus from Mary who is clearly associated with the moon in some of her iconography recreates an already established pattern. Jesus goes on to a career as an ascetic who reveals his divine powers thru life-giving miracles similar to those ascribed to Shiva, such as the multiplication of the fishes and loaves, raising Lazarus from the dead, etc.. The 5 gifts of the pentecost (prophecy, speaking in tongues, etc) which are the cornerstone of the Pentecostal faith are among phenomena related to possession by the energy 108 symbolizes.

As emblematic of the creative force, **108 takes its place in the imagery of the center and at the source of creation.** Mircea Eliade's books, *The Sacred and the Profane*, and, *The Eternal Return*, have a lot to say about the role of the center in cosmology .

It was mentioned above that **108 is associated with the pentagon**. First its important to recognize the importance of the 5 pointed star which the Pythagoreans equated with " Logos", the Word of God. The Christian Bible captures the importance of the Logos in the Gospel of John, with the quotation, "In the beginning was the Word... ". As the source of creation, its place, like the seed of Shiva, is at the center. The Masons also place the star prominently in their lodge. They place a "G" in its center (allegedly standing for Geometry). The allusion is presumably to the creative force of Logos--expressed thru geometrical patterning. Taking this one step further, the structure of the 5 pointed star divides each of its sides into a golden section relationship. For the newcomer to the subject, there are many books on this. The golden section, the ratio 1:1.618, also known as Phi, is integral to patterns of growth among living things. Aesthetically, this ratio casts a long shadow of influence over the art and architecture of the Renaissance. It provides a cooler architectural vehicle for translating the beauty and magic and mystery of that same energy identified with Inanna, Shiva, and that rough and ready Indus valley ascetic.

Now the Math Part:

In the Hindu tradition the cosmological center consists of Meru's central peak surrounded by four secondary peaks, one for each of the cardinal directions. This is the home of the gods; this is the source of creation; its the point where divine influence touches the earth and spreads to its 4 corners. The conventionalized image of Meru as world mountain is pervasive in Eurasian cosmology. Most Hindu temples are designed to represent Meru. In the buddhist tradition, the stupa is Meru.

By placing Shiva atop Meru as the Shivaites do, his creative lunar kundalini energy radiates out from the center of the cosmos. **The fabric of time and space described by numbers provides boundaries for the infinite possibilities of creation. 108 figures prominently here. Its connection to the seed numbers for the lengths of the Indian cosmic ages, the yugas, and to some of the numbers, which recur throughout Eurasian myth cycles, can be examined below.** They describe a 4-fold pattern of expansion out from the center to the 4 directions and up and down the vertical axis also by a factor of 4:

108x4x1=432
108x4x2=864
108x4x3=1296
108x4x4=1728

The structure of the Rigveda mentioned at the beginning--10800 stanzas of 40 syllables, shows 108 and 4 in association with one another in a sacred context. It suggests that the text is symbolically making itself part of the forces of creation in the same way that the Christian Bible as the sacred word of God is also an extension of Logos--the 1st principle of creation. (These patterns of numbers are connected with a system whose roots i have mentioned many times.)

Remnants of a similar 4 fold pattern of expansion appears in medieval England as a model for the sub-division of landholdings and political entities--from the 4 acre homestead around a house, to the smallest township of 4 holdings, up to the four quarters of the kingdom as a whole with the king at its center. In parts of India, phallic boundary markers which identify the 4 corners of a plot of land are intended to invoke the original pattern of unfolding. When anointed, they are a prayer for the blessing of magical fertility associated with Shiva or his stand-in, Bhairava. In similar fashion the ritual of building and lighting the fire altar, a ceremony observed when taking possession of land or dedicating a building, is also an invocation of the power of the original creation. The number of bricks used in the altar is related to ideas already discussed and its construction begins using 4 square bricks.

Finally, these symbol systems are only aids to visualization. They are not the thing itself. The energy represented by 108 has substance but it has no single shape. It takes on the form of as many cultural containers as there are cultures who recognize its presence. Apparently it can be directed as well. For example, the earth energy called "Chi" by fung shui practitioners, is also a manifestation of this same energy. Fung shui maintains that while Chi is always present, its flow in some natural settings is more beneficial than in others. However the flow of Chi thru an environment can be modified to yield its most beneficial effect. In the recent history of the western world, conspicuous individuals like Anton Mesmer, Nikola Tesla and Wilhelm Reich are associated with attempts to manipulate this force technologically. There is a widespread belief that old circles of standing stones in England were once linked to the management of this force. Sedona, Arizona, USA, has built a tourist industry around its reputation as a natural focus point for it. Meanwhile at shrines like Lourdes, the energy is found in the waters. Water seems to be its natural vehicle. In the Hebrew tradition the yod, symbol of god's creative energy, is referred to as "a dew". this is interesting because chi is also identified with the mists that flow from the mountain peaks. The paths that chi follows are those that fogs and mists flow along or settle in. This is how geomancers visualize the movement of this energy in the natural environment

http://www.lovely.clara.net/crop_circles_sacredgeo2.html

It is from the golden mean that we also extrapolate the pentagon and the five-pointed star, and with it the association with humanity since the human figure with outstretched limbs is similar to the pentagram. This was the symbol of the Pythagorean's humanistic science and consequently worn as a talisman of good health. Its symbolism frequently pervades native American philosophy, just as Christians associated the pentagram with Jesus. *The pentagon is lunar and psychic; the angle between two sides of a pentagon is 108 degrees, 1080 being the characteristic lunar number.*

=====

<http://www.jainworld.com/jainbooks/guideline/111.htm>

=====

<http://www.omsakthi.org/worship/mantra.html>

The number 108 has been considered sacred for thousands of years in India.

The origin of this number probably lies in astronomy. The average distance from the sun and moon to the earth is 108 times each of their respective diameters. This is true to an accuracy of 0.5% for the Sun and 2% for the Moon. The thought that this was known so long ago is amazing. Like all tantric mantras each line is preceded by om and concluded with om. These characteristics give the mantras great potency.

http://www.geocities.com/tulsidas_ramayan/page094.htm

'Name of the Lord' occurs in 108 verses in the KJV Bible - Page 94

The word QADASH is translated as SANCTIFY 108 times in the King James Bible

Sanctified

Hebrew: qadash {kaw-dash'} a primitive root;

In this text:

1) to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to be set apart, be consecrated

1a2) to be hallowed

1a3) consecrated, tabooed

1b) (Niphal)

1b1) to show oneself sacred or majestic

1b2) to be honoured, be treated as sacred

1b3) to be holy

1c) (Piel)

1c1) to set apart as sacred, consecrate, dedicate

1c2) to observe as holy, keep sacred

1c3) to honour as sacred, hallow

1c4) to consecrate

The word qadash appears many times in the Bible. It is translated differently in various texts appearing as; sanctify **108 times**, hallow 25 times, dedicate 10 times, holy 7 times, prepare 7 times, consecrate 5 times, appointed 1 time, bid 1 time, purified 1 time and in miscellaneous forms 7 times for a total of 172 appearances.

From Perfect wisdom Edward Conze

The 108 Names of the Holy Perfection of Wisdom

Homage to the blessed perfection of wisdom

The jinas of the past, future and present, to them all you are a lovely mother.

The Jinas, O goddess, are your sons. To have no own-being is your own-being.

Of the names of the lovely Mother of the Buddhas I will now speak.

If you want ample merit, listen !

The perfection of wisdom is:

1 All-knowledge 2 Knowledge of the modes of the path 3 Knowledge of all modes 4 reality-limit 5 Suchness 6 Non-falseness 7 Unaltered suchness 8 True reality 9 what truly is 10 Unpervertedness 11 Emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness 12 the state of non-existence 13 absence of own-being 14 having non-existence for own-being 15 dharmahood 16 Dharma-element 17 the stability of Dharma 18 the fixed sequence of Dharma 19 the mark of Dharma 20 absence of self in dharmas (and absence of own-being in them) 21 a being 22 a living soul 23 a person 24 a personality 25 and of individuality 26 inexpressible 27 not to be talked about 28 bereft of thought, mind and consciousness 29 unequalled 30 equal to the unequalled 31 without sense of ownership 32 without self-conceit 33 unimpeded 34 free from impediments 35 absolutely beyond all impediments 36 Mother of all the Buddhas 37 genatrix of all bodhisattvas 38 support of all disciples, nurse of all Pratyekabuddhas 39 support of the entire world 40 inexhaustible store of equipment with merit 41 a torrential descent of cognitions, achievements of 42 the various wonderworking powers, 43 the purification of the heavenly eye 44 the clarification of the heavenly ear 45 the cognition of the thoughts of others 46 the recollection 48 holy, pure and immaculate, 49 sacred and majestic 50 firmly established in the applications of mindfulness 51 associated with the strength of the right exertions 52 associated with the four roads to psychic power, achievement 53 the purification of the faculties 54 of the powers 55 of the unblemished jewel of the seven limbs of enlightenment 56 of the gift of seven prizes 57 exhibition of the eightfold path 58 achievement of the exhibition of the attainment of the nine successive stations 59 acquisition of the ten sovereignties 60 achievement of the dwelling on the ten stages 61 perfect achievement of the ten powers 62 adornment of the ten All-bases 63 acquisition of the ten cognitions 64 achievement of the destruction of the ten inimical evil tendencies 65 perfect accomplishment of the trances 66 achievement of the transcending of the formless world 67 praised by all the fully enlightened Buddhas 68 achievement of all cognitions 69 emptiness of subject 70 emptiness of object 71 emptiness of subject and object 72 emptiness of emptiness 73 great emptiness 74 ultimate emptiness 75 conditioned emptiness 76 unconditioned emptiness 77 infinite emptiness 78 emptiness without beginning and end 79 emptiness of non-repudiation 80 emptiness of the essential original nature 81 emptiness of all dharmas 82 emptiness of own-marks 83 emptiness of non-apprehension 84 emptiness of non-existence 85 emptiness of own-being 86 emptiness of the non-existence of own-being 87 no birth 88 non-production 89 non-stopping 90 non-annihilation 91 non-eternity 92 not one thing 93 not many things 94 not coming 95 not going away 96 the full meditational development of conditioned co-production absence 97 of thought-construction 98 of all inclination towards entities or their signs 99 something to be known 100 from the very beginning unsupported by any foundation 101 non-dual 102 undivided 103 entrance into the quiet calm of purified understanding 104 identical with the unobstructed and stainless ether 105 neither existing nor expressible in words 106 her own-being like a dream, her true nature like an illusion 107 like unto a fiery circle 108 the one single taste of all dharmas

Any who recites these 108 names of the perfection of wisdom is freed for ever from all the states of woe. All the Buddhas bring him to mind, and all the Bodhisattvas constantly and always protect, guard and defend him.

And also by the uttering of the following mantra should she repeatedly be recalled in mindfulness

" Homage, homage to the perfection of wisdom, the lovely, the holy; who is adorable and endowed with immeasurable virtues ! Homage to the knowledge of all modes of all the tathagatas and to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas " i.e :

OM PRAJNE PRRAJNE, MAHAPRAJNE, PRAJNAVABHASE, PRAJNALOKAKARE, AJNANAVIDHAMANE, SIDDHE SUSIDDHE SIDDHAMANE, BHAGAVATI SARVANGASUNDHARI BHAKTIVATSALE PRASARITAHASTE SAMASVASAKARI, TISTHA TISTHA, KAMPA KAMPA, CALA CALA, RAVA RAVA, GACCHA GACCHA, AGACCHA AGACCHA, BHAGAVATI, MA VILAMBA, SVAHA

When someone has learned this perfection of wisdom, he will thereby bear in mind perfection of wisdom one hundred thousand lines. He should always murmur it. All the obstacles (arising) from (his past) deeds will then be

extinguished. Deceased from here he will be reborn as who is mindful, self-possessed and of matchless wisdom. He will bear in mind of all the Tathagatas of the three times all the dharmas without exception, and he will have taken hold of all the mantras and spells. Deceased from here will be reborn as one who is mindful, self-possessed and of great wisdom.

Jain PRARTHANA (PRAYER)

The Morning Prayer

Every day, after getting up, one must recite with devotion the Navkarmantra 108 times.

If not 108, then at least, twelve Navkars should be recited. The day's activities should be begun with the hymn of prayer given below along with a glorification of the Lord remembering his benefactions and expressing a desire for the welfare of all creatures in the universe.

May the whole world attain spiritual prosperity; May all the beings be engaged in the attempt to achieve welfare for all; May all derogations get destroyed; May all Jivas (Creatures) attain bliss.

The Evening Prayer

Every night before going to sleep, one must recite with devotion the Namaskar Mantra and seek the sacred refuge of Arihant, Siddh, Sadhu and the religion (Dharma). One must express devotion for and faith in Jina, Preceptor and Religion; and must seek the forgiveness from all creatures. It is only after doing all this, that one must go to sleep. In that case, the night passes peacefully. If the mind is peaceful, even the dreams would be sweet and good. Hence, one must remember the following verses of prayer.

Chattari Mangalam: The four are of auspicious form
Arihanta Mangalam: Arihant (the destroyer of the inner enemies) is auspicious
Siddha Mangalam: The Siddhas are of auspicious
Sahu Mangalam: The Sadhus are of auspicious
Kevali Pannatto Dhammo Mangalam: The religion expounded by perfect soul is auspicious.
Chattari Loguttama: In the world, four are the highest.
Arihanta Loguttama: The Arihant is the highest in the world
Siddha Loguttama: The Siddha is the highest in the world
Sahu Loauttama: The Sadhus are the highest in the world
Kevali Pannatto Dammo Loguttama: The religion expounded by Kevalis is the highest in the world
Chattari Saranam Pavajjami: I seek the holy refuge of the four.
Arihanta Saranam Pavajjami: I seek the holy refuge of Arihant.
Siddhe Saranam Pavajjami: I seek the holy refuge of Siddhas.
Sahu Sarsnam Pavajjami: I seek the holy refuge of Sadhus.
Kevali Pannattam Dhammam Pavajjami: I seek the holy refuge of Dharm expounded by Kevalis.
Khamemi Savajive: I forgive all creatures.
Sarve Jiva Khamantu me: May all living beings forgive me.
Mitti Me Savva Bhuyesu: I have friendship with all creatures Jivas
Veram Majjham na Kenai: I do not have animosity against any creatures
Arihanto Mahdevo Javajjivam: Throughout my life Arihant is my god.
Susahunno Guruno: The Noble Sadhus are my perceptrors.
Jino Pannattam Tattam: I have faith in the Tattva (Doctrine) expounded by the Jina.
Iya Sammattam Maye Gahiam: I have accepted this Samyaktva or this Doctrine.

<http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hangar/3979/platonic.htm>

The angle of a perfect pentagon is equal to 108°

Platonic Solids

A special attention in the ancient Science was given to perfect geometric figures called regular polyhedrons. It is well known that there exist only 5 regular convex space figures called the Platonic solids namely tetrahedron, cube (regular hexahedron), octahedron, icosahedron, and dodecahedron.

The dodecahedron has 12 faces and 30 edges and its face is of the regular pentagon having 5 plane angles. There follows from this consideration the one more numerical parameter of the dodecahedron, the number 60 which is equal to product of the dodecahedron face number (12) by the number 5. Let us note that the product of the number 12 by 30 is equal 360.

As is well known the diagonals of the regular pentagon form a pentagonal star called the pentagram. It is easy to prove that the crossing points of the diagonals F, G, H, K, L divides the diagonals in the Golden Section. There follows from this consideration that the numbers 12, 30, 60, and 360 are the "natural" numbers of the dodecahedron and the Golden Section underlying the pentagon is the principle proportion of the dodecahedron.

The Platonic solids played a special role in ancient philosophy because they symbolized the 4 "basic" elements of the Universe namely the fire (the tetrahedron), the earth (the hexahedron), the water (the icosahedron), and the air (the octahedron). But the main Platonic solid symbolising the whole Universe (including the material and a spiritual World) was the dodecahedron. One may ask the question: "Why was it the dodecahedron that had been chosen to express the Harmony of the Universe?" The answer to the question is given through the correlation of the number characteristics of the dodecahedron with the cyclic processes of the Solar system closely connected with the movement of two gigantic planets, Jupiter and Saturn.

Dodecahedron and Cyclic Processes in the Solar System

Since ancient times the Egyptians and the Babylonians gave a special attention to Jupiter, the biggest of all the giant planets, which makes its complete revolution around the Sun approximately in 12 years. There is a good reason to believe that the latter is closely connected with the creation of the Jupiterian calendar with celestial symbolism of the duodecimal «animal» cycle. Besides, of a great importance for calendar making was also Saturn with its about 30 year's complete revolution around the Sun. The cycle of 60 years was chosen as the main cycle of the Solar system. During this time Saturn makes 2 revolutions and Jupiter 5 revolutions around the Sun because $60 = 2 \cdot 30 = 5 \cdot 12$.

The formal coincidence of the number characteristics of the dodecahedron with the numerical parameters of the cyclic processes in the Solar system (12-year's Jupiter cycle, 30-year's Saturn cycle, 60-year's basic cycle) was, maybe, the reason why the dodecahedron was chosen as the geometric symbol of the Universe Harmony.

Dodecahedron as Reason of the Egyptian Calendar, Time and Angle Measurement System Origin Following the dodecahedron the Egyptians divided one year into 12 months (12 faces of the dodecahedron), one month into 30 days (30 edges of the dodecahedron), one day into 24 hours ($24 = 2 \cdot 12$), one hour into 60 minutes (60 plane angles of the dodecahedron), one minute into 60 seconds.

This idea was applied by the ancient Egyptians for the angle value measurement system. All the Sun path by the ecliptic was divided into 12 equal parts (12 Zodiac's Signs). Each part was divided into 30° but one degree into 60 angle seconds. Thus, all the Sun path was divided into 360° . It corresponds to the Egyptian calendar year which consisted exactly of 360 days. It meant that one day corresponds to the Sun movement by the ecliptic in 1° .

As a result of this consideration there resulted in ancient Science the well-proportioned theory of the Solar system based on the Dodecahedron and Golden Section..

Let us note that the idea considered above gives a good explanation why the Babylonians chose the «strange» number 60 as the radix of their number system (60 plane angles of the dodecahedron and the 60-years cycle of the Solar system).

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/7779/7sisters.htm>

The ratchet/Mercury spiral in the Barbury Castle formation may also indicate a cycle of time of six steps, followed by a seventh. The angle from the center of the triangle to the corner touching the ratchet was at 120 degrees, a tetrahedral point. From that point to the center of the ratchet, the angle was 108 degrees. 108 is a Gematrian number, and is associated with time cycles of $108 \times 4 = 432$, or 1080 years. It is the number of names for the goddess in India. $108 \times 120 = 12960$, the number of years in half the precession number. Divided by the six archs, gives 2160, the length of one Age of the Zodiac. This may suggest the period of time between Leo through Pisces. The Sphinx may also indicate this by the head of a man and the body of a Lion. It was probably built in the Age of Leo, and it faces east, corresponding to the equinox points at that time. Directly behind, at 180 degrees, would be Aquarius. Another interesting thing - $6 \times 108 = 648$, which was the length of the "double-helix/DNA".

http://www.sphere.ad.jp/hgs/manual/5-00/50_03-05.html

The Sugar forming a 5-membered ring, such as Deoxyribose, Ribose etc called Furanose Ring, takes special conformations, since the pentagon shaped ring has an inside angle of 108, where carbons forming the pentagon have bonding angles 109 28' causing C@' to raise upwards from the plane of 5-ring in some cases and C3' to raise in other cases. This plays an important role when assembling DNA, tRNA models.

Roger Penrose, of Oxford, Put forward an astounding notion with anaesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff of the University of Arizona: consciousness arises from quantum-mechanical processes taking place within tubes of protein inside nerve cells, and is, in part Virtual, non-local "no-thing". (See "Quantum states of mind", New Scientist, 20 August 1994). "According to the standard rules of quantum theory, the quantum-gravitational state would involve the super positions of all possible geometries - here space-time geometries, which are four-dimensional things - with complex weighing factors." (Penrose, 1996, Oxford. Chapter 5, Structure of the Quantum World, pp 378) This great British physicist and mathematician, has developed a series of aperiodic tilings, which themselves incorporates the Golden Mean and the five-fold pentagonal symmetry lies inherent in it, and hence is infinitely recursive in its connectivity.

These tilings are composed of two rhombi, both with exceptionally important numbers (embedded in Egypt and Angkor Wat, Cambodia; one has the angle of 36, and the other of 144 degrees. These are in fact two Golden Triangles, base-to-base), and the other one has the angles of **72° and 108° degrees**, which again are part of the Unified Field Cartography system, as well as the Unified Field Universal Map, which we have been mathematically generating in our recent work.

Some interesting URLS (not all deal with 108)

<http://www.akasha.de/~aton/PENROSEtile.html>

<http://www.handsonmath.com/PAGES/Timeline.html>

http://www.klingenstein.org/Additional_Resources/projects/2000/courant/courant.html

<http://www.panchangam.com/qayathri.htm>

<http://www.himalayanacademy.com/books/dws/M28.html>

<http://www.nepalhomepage.com/travel/places/himal/annapurna.html>

<http://www.nepalnews.com.np/contents/englishdaily/ktmpost/2001/jun/jun17/local.htm>

<http://www.bangalorenet.com/system1/jeeva/janmash.htm>

<http://www.yrec.org/108.html>

http://www.netmastersinc.com/secrets/108_essay.htm

see also "Sadhus: Holy Men of India" <http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/dolfhart/>

<http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/dolfhart/stories/rampriya.html>

<http://www.grace-for-today.com/chstp108.htm>

<http://www.kanian.com/seeindia/knowindia-city-thiruvannamalai-girivalam.html>

<http://www.media-software.com/tourism/sikkim.htm>

<http://www.deccan.net/tirukural/intro.htm>

<http://www.omsakthi.org/worship/mantra.html>

<http://www.indiayellowpages.com/zoroastrian/>

http://www.netmastersinc.com/secrets/108_essay.htm

108 Holy Names of Lord Ganesh

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1951/page5.html>

<http://www.megabaud.fi/~vajra/108names.htm>

<http://www.indiangyan.com/books/otherbooks/108%20name%20of%20rama/rama.shtml>

108 Name of Rama

Author:- Vijaya Kumar

<http://www.himalayanacademy.com/books/dws/M28.html>

How Is the Affirmation of Faith Used?

SHLOKA 140

Intoning the affirmation of faith, we positively assert that God is both manifest and unmanifest, both permeating the world and transcending it, both personal Divine Love and impersonal Reality. Aum Namah Sivaya.

BHASHYA

On the lips of Saivites throughout the world resounds the proclamation "God Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality." It is a statement of fact, a summation of truth, even more potent when intoned in one's native language. "God Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality," we repeat prior to sleep. "God Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality," we say upon awakening as we recall the transcendent knowledge gained from the rishis during sleep. These sacred words we say as we bathe to prepare to face the day, God Siva's day, reminding ourselves that His immanent love protects us, guides us, lifting our mind into the arena of useful thoughts and keeping us from harm's way.

Devotees write this affirmation 1,008 times as a sahasra lekhana sadhana. It may be spoken 108 times daily in any language before initiation into Namah Sivaya. Yea, the recitation of this affirmation draws devotees into Siva-consciousness. The Tirumantiram says, "The ignorant prate that love and Siva are two. They do not know that love alone is Siva. When men know that love and Siva are the same, love as Siva they ever remain." Aum Namah Sivaya.

<http://www.sikhsamaj.com/gurdwara/indiangurudwara/gurudwaralist6.htm>

A few kilometers away from Mandi is Rawalsar. Rawalsar has a great significance, as it was sanctified by the visit of tenth Guru Gobind Singh. A Gurdwara was constructed here by devotees of the Guru to perpetuate his memory. Adjoining the Gurdwara is a big tank, whose water has medicinal value.

A dip in this tank is considered auspicious. *The Gurdwara is built of stone and one can it by climbing 108 stairs.* People visit this shrine with great devotion.

It is a sacred place for Buddhists too. Many people from Tibet come here on pilgrimage, to pay homage to Buddhist shrine situated here.

Regular Polyhedra

Polygonal Face	Measure of Interior Angle	Number of Polygons at a Vertex	Sum of the angles at the vertex	Possible? (< 360)	Polyhedron
----------------	---------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------	------------

Triangle	60	3	180	Yes	Tetrahedron
----------	----	---	-----	-----	-------------

Triangle	60	4	240	Yes	Octahedron
----------	----	---	-----	-----	------------

Triangle	60	5	300	Yes	Icosahedron
----------	----	---	-----	-----	-------------

Triangle	60	6	360	No	
----------	----	---	-----	----	--

Square	90	3	270	Yes	Cube
--------	----	---	-----	-----	------

Square	90	4	360	No	
--------	----	---	-----	----	--

Pentagon	108	3	324	Yes	Dodecahedron
----------	-----	---	-----	-----	--------------

Pentagon	108	4	432	No	
----------	-----	---	-----	----	--

Hexagon	120	3	360	No	
---------	-----	---	-----	----	--

Rudra_Joe

Oddly enough you left out the most obvious reason for 108 and that is the 4 padas of each nakshatra multiplied by the 27 nakshatras. All together these represent the 108 impulses of the conscious mind.

THE FESTIVALS OF SHINTO

Ringling the Bell 108 Times...

Chapter 10: Omisoka - Ringing Out the Old in Tokyo

(Note: Again, many Omisoka traditions are Buddhist, but they are entwined with Shinto traditions and they bring the festival wheel full circle back to *Shogatsu*, thus it is included here.)

Omisoka, the time leading up to the new year, is one of the most important times in Japan and also means a new start in one's personal life. Before January 1st, the house and business are thoroughly cleaned, all that is old is thrown away and debts, obligations and problems in relationships are all settled, cleared up and taken care of. This idea of purification and of banishing all negativity is important according to both Shinto and Buddhist customs. To this end *kadomatsu* (boughs of pine, bamboo and sometimes plum) are placed at the entrance of almost every home and business as well as in beautiful smaller arrangements inside the house or apartment to bless the dwelling. Also displayed in temples, shrines and homes are charms and images that depict the animal of the new year, called the *eto*.



Old charms and daruma being burned at the end of the year.

On New Year's Eve, the family often eats a special *soba* (buckwheat noodles) on beautiful dinner ware. Some people spend the last hours of the old year in a bath or with thousands of other people mobbing a shrine or temple, but special sake with flecks of gold-leaf in it is often consumed.



Temple bell ready to be rung at Omisoka.

One of the most interesting Omisoka traditions that originally came from China is the the ritual moment that truly ends the old year, destroys all "sins" and announces the renewal of the world: the midnight ringing of the temple bells. At midnight on December 31st, no matter where you are in Japan, you will probably hear the *joyanokane*, **the ringing of a temple or shrine bell 108 times as the new year is born.**

This ritual ringing of the new year's bell is over a thousand years old in Japan and probably far older in China. It was originally done on the "Chinese New Year," a date in the Chinese lunar calendar when the entire cycle of the Chinese Zodiac is finished. Today we refer to this as "Buddhist New Year," but in Japan, as with so many things, the ancient Chinese custom, Japanese traditions and things Western (in this case the calendar) have collided. Thus the bells will ring the new year in across China about one month after they do in Japan, this year it will be about February first.

But why are temple bells (or drums) rung 108 times? For an answer to that we have to trace the origins of Japanese Buddhism, as well as other cultural traditions, far into the past. Buddhism, various Pagan gods, mathematics and a number of other things originally came to China from India. The Goddess Benten-sama, worshipped all over Japan (and specifically at the Temple in the center of

Shinabazu Pond in Ueno Park) is actually the Indian Goddess Sarasvati, Buddhist sutras and “magical language” used on sacred memorials is actually an altered form of Indian Sanskrit. **The prayer beads that most Japanese Buddhists use, called *juzu*, are actually from India where they are called *mala* or “circle” and, interestingly enough, they always have 108 beads.**

This is not a coincidence. The *juzu*, what Westerners call a rosary, symbolizes the totality of the world and the circle of the heavens. In Indian astrology and religion, the circle of the visible universe was extremely important and clearly divided into twelve areas with specific meanings. Each of these zones was ruled by a constellation of the Zodiac and the passage of time was seen as a mythic journey through the influence of these twelve powers, each represented by an animal, the *eto* previously mentioned. This system was used to understand and mark the exact moments when such things as the new year would occur. Now, each zodiac sign “zone” was further divided into nine “digits,” much as a circle is divided into 360 degrees. **Thus the totality of the heavenly round was 108 digits and this number became sacred and a symbol of the cycles of life and time in India, China and, finally, Japan.**

Buddhism adopted these ideas from Hinduism, but added a new concept; “sins” or negative actions. **Some Chinese Buddhist saint came up with the tradition of there being 108 sins and 108 beneficial acts to match the 108-digit circle of the universe.** Since New Years Eve was the moment when all the past sins should be done away with, with the grace of Buddha, it became common to ring the temple bell 108 times. this would broadcast the power of the temple’s prayers and chants and anyone who heard this *joyanokane* would be washed clean of all last years sins, ready to begin a new year. It is for this reason that it is considered very unlucky in Asia to die near the end of the year!

During the Edo period, it became common for some temples to open their doors and let people ring the bell or pound the sacred drum 108 times themselves, usually for a fee. In this way people gained merit and the temple gained donations! Whether you are an ardent Buddhist or just an interested tourist, you are welcome participate in this continuing tradition by going to one of many temples in the Tokyo area and pounding out the old year and all it entails.

A New Years Eve temple pilgrimage is a chilly but unforgettable experience. It’s quite a scene when the bell begins to ring and everyone rushes inside to get the first blessings of the year. If you want to “ring out the old” yourself, you need to plan ahead. Usually there is a strict number of people (often about 500) allowed to participate directly in each temple’s bell ringing. A few of the most popular temples, such as Zojoji near Tokyo Tower, sell tickets for *joyanokane* as early as the beginning of December, but most begin to sell tickets (or give them away for free) on a first-come, first-served basis about an hour before the midnight. It’s a good idea to get there several hours early, competition is fierce but civil, so be forewarned! You usually will have to ring the bell as a group with four or five other people, but the bells are huge, often a meter or more tall, and its fun to get a handful of people in-sync pulling back and letting go of the large log that rings the bell. Many of these bells are very old and a few, like the one at Zojoji which dates back to the fourth Shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna, are designated as cultural treasures.



Special sake drunk at a shrine (Nikko).

Afterwards, wandering from the bell tower, doubtlessly breathless and with tired arms, you may be given (or wish to buy) a house-protecting new years charm. When you finally get to sleep (many people will stay up all night to see the dawn) you might even be rewarded for your spiritual effort by either a “lucky dream” or, more likely, a hangover!

Out with the old, in with the new!