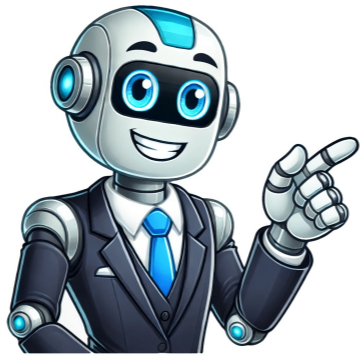


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ancient civilisations like Sumer and Egypt. Many of the worlds ancient symbols, such as the cross, the swastika, and the cresent, have been adopted into modern religious iconography. These symbols often retain their original connotations of power and spirituality. In ancient times, the concept of religion was widely different from what is considered religion today. Religion did not have a separate and distinct role, and people did not operate independently of their religious beliefs in a secular society. Instead, religion was fully integrated into the lives of the communities, gentrity, nobility, and even the kings, not just the priests. As such, you will find innumerable ancient symbols, which appeared in scriptures, on sculptures, amulets, jewellery, pottery, and sarcophagi across history, irrespective of class. Here are the top 23 most important ancient symbols that have held significant relevance in ancient religion, mythology, and culture. The Egyptian Ankh, also called the Key of Life,Devanah via Pixabay The Ankh is one of the earliest, most prominent and important part of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Also called the Key of Life, the Ankh is in the shape of a cross with a loop on top. Hence, it resembles a key. As per ancient Egyptian culture, the Ankh means life and symbolizes the male and female reproductive organs. The loop represents the womb and the cross represents the phallus and their union forms life. In other texts, the Ankh is also considered to be the symbol of water and air, which are basic life-giving elements. Due to this, many water vessels were molded into the shape of the Ankh. Ancient Egyptian artwork also depicted gods giving the Ankh symbols to pharaohs, which further cemented the divinity of pharaohs as a giver of life to the whole of Egypt. The Ankh was also placed in sarcophagi as it was considered a symbol of resurrection and a conduit of life energy that stems from the universe. Hence, it was also used as an amulet to ward against death, evil, degeneration, and decay. A silver coin depicting the owl of Athena was first issued in 479BC in Athens. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons In Greek mythology, a little owl is often depicted sitting on the shoulder of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare. Although scholars have been unable to find a concrete association between Athena and the owl, some believe that the owls ability to see in the dark represents knowledge and enlightenment, which are Athenas characteristics. Regardless of how the association was formed, the owl is considered throughout history as a symbol of wisdom, knowledge, perceptiveness, and clear-sightedness. It is also because of this ancient symbol that owls in general are considered to be wise birds. In Buddhism, the Mandala, meaning circle, is a geometric pattern that represents the universe and wisdom. The mandala is believed to represent the spirit of the Vajrayana teachings that state that the human mind is a microcosm that represents the divine rowers at work in the universe. The outer circle of fire symbolizes wisdom while the ring of eight charnel grounds serves as a reminder of death and the transience of life. Hence, it represents an enlightened mind. In other texts, the ring of charnel grounds depicts the dangerous nature of human life. In the center is Mandala Palace, which is believed to be the home of the Buddhas and deities. Ravens are probably the most famous birds in Norse mythology.Image courtesy: pignels.com Today, the raven is considered to be a carrion bird that scavenges the body of dead humans and animals. In ancient religions, though, this bird holds a loftier position. The raven is believed to be the herald of cosmic secrets that can reveal omens and foretell the future. It is also a symbol of powerful wisdom, mental acuity and high energy. Ravens are probably the most famous in Norse mythology as the companion birds of the All-father, Odin. The chief Norse God had two ravens named Huginn and Muninn meaning memory and thought respectively which would fly all over Midgard (Earth) and bring news of everything they see and hear. In Native American culture, the raven was a magical bird and holy men invoked it to get the gift of foresight and perceptiveness. The Navajo, Zuni, and Hopi tribes regard the bird as a bringer of light and creation because of the belief that the raven created the Earth by dropping stones in the sea and making islands, and bringing sunlight to humans. In Greek and Roman cultures, the raven is a solar animal associated with the sun, light, and wisdom and their respective gods, Apollo and Athena. Mjolnir is the hammer of Thor, the god of thunder and lightning. Mjolnir is one of the best known historical symbols and is considered to be the most powerful weapon in existence that is capable of crushing mountains. When Thor would throw the hammer, it would always return to him like a boomerang. Aside from being a formidable weapon, the Mjolnir was also a ceremonial item and was used in hallowing rituals to ensure the Viking communities well-being and for blessing weddings, birth, and funerals. Amulets molded in the shape of Mjolnir were worn for healing and safety. Hence, Mjolnir not just is depicted destructive powers but also symbolized protection from evil. The Horned God is a symbol with roots in ancient Europe. Otoufly, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons The Horned God is a symbol with roots in ancient Europe. It dates back to Paleolithic times and the first sighting of the symbol was from a 13,000 BC cave wall in France. In Wiccan religion, the horned god represents the masculine polarity of the universe and the opposing force to the Triple Goddess. He is also believed to be associated with the wilderness, wealth, hunt, and virility. Some scholars also claim that the Horned God carried the souls of the dead to the underworld. The concept of the Horned God is also seen in Greek myth, in which Osiris was considered the horned god of fertility, rebirth, and the underworld. The Scarab is an ancient Egyptian symbol depicted in the form of dung beetles and was considered to be the personification of the early morning sun and rebirth, the god Khepri. In ancient Egypt, hundreds of memorial scarabs were created to immortalize Amenhotep IIIs deeds, including the ball hunt scarab which represents victory and strength over chaos. Around 2000 BCE, scarabs were worn as amulets to provide protection from the dangers of the mortal world and the afterlife. Later, scarabs were placed on a mummys heart so that it could convince Maat, the goddess of truth, who judged a persons soul that the person was innocent and trustworthy and should move to the afterlife. Scarabs were also created with wings, which symbolized rebirth. A deception of the Egyptian god of mummification and afterlife, Anubis, holding a was scepter.mohamed Hassan via Pixabay Anubis is the god of the dead, afterlife, and the patron god of the helpless and lost souls. In many ancient Egyptian depictions, Anubis is represented as a man with the head of a jackal. Jackals were found in graveyards, which may be why the ancient Egyptians portrayed him as such. Anubis was also represented as the protector of Osiris, the god of the underworld, and guarded his body after death, oversaw the mummification and assisted Osiris in judging people in the afterlife. He was also invoked for getting vengeance by enforcing curses on others as well as for protection against curses. In many Egyptian hieroglyphs, Anubis is seen holding a sceptre, a tall staff with a stylized animal head on the top and a forked bottom. This sceptre symbolized dominion and power but also symbolized protection from evil. The dove symbol was first seen in depictions of the Early Bronze age but has been widely associated with peace around the world. In ancient Mesopotamian culture, the dove was considered to be the physical incarnation of Inanna-Ishtar, the goddess of sexuality, love, and war. In Greek myth, the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, was also associated with doves. The dove is also mentioned in Christianity. According to the Old Testament, a dove brought Noah an olive branch, indicating that flood waters were receding. According to Slavic folklore, the dove transferred the soul of the dead to the underworld. The Triple Moon symbol on a ceremonial Pagan cup, Amber Avalona via Pixabay The Triple Moon is a symbol of the Moon Goddess, which is the opposite divine force to the Horned God. This ancient symbol is believed to represent the three stages of womanhood: maiden, mother, and crone. In ancient Celtic lore, the Triple Moon represented the three Fates or the Wyrd sisters, who controlled birth, life, and death. In Greek mythology, the Triple Moon symbol has been associated with Diana, the goddess of the moon and hunt. The pentagram is a regular five-pointed star, which was first seen in depictions from 3000 BC Mesopotamia. In Babylonian times, the five points in the star were meant to represent the planets Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Saturn, and Venus. In ancient Greek culture, the pentagram represented the golden ratio, which symbolized perfection. Hence, the symbol was considered to be a powerful protection against the forces of evil. Hebrews also used the symbol to depict Truth and the five books of the Pentateuch. In Christianity, the five points represented the wounds received by Christ. The Druids referred to the pentagram as the Godhead. The Triquetra, also known as the Trinity Knot, was adopted by Christians from the Celts. Peter Lomas via Pixabay The Triquetra, also called the trinity knot, is made up of three intersecting pointed ovals. The symbol was used by Celts and dates back to as early as 500 BC when it was used to symbolize the Triple Goddess. It is also used to symbolize the elements of air, water, and Earth, which create an infinite circle of life, death, and rebirth. As such, it was worn as a protective rune. The symbol was later adopted by Christians in Ireland to represent the Holy Trinity. In Greek myth, the Caduceus was the staff of Hermes, the winged messenger god. The symbol is represented by two snakes intertwined on a tall staff. In some versions, the staff also has wings, further associating it with Hermes. The Roman equivalent of Hermes is Mercury and it too is symbolized by the Caduceus. Mercury is also the god of travel, eloquence, communication, divination, commerce, thievery, and the guide of souls to the underworld. Hence, the Caduceus symbolizes everything that Mercury stood for. In the modern world, there is an ongoing controversy regarding the use of Caduceus in the medical field. The real symbol of medical science is the rod of Asclepius, who was the deity of healing and medicine. The symbol is different from Caduceus in that it only has one snake entwined on a rod and the staff has no wings. In Chinese philosophy, the Yin and Yang symbol consists of a circle bisected by an S-shaped line into a dark and light segment, each containing the seed of the opposing force. In Taoism, the outer circle represents the source of all existence. The black half is the Yin qi, which is the negative feminine energy, while the white half is the Yang qi, which is the positive masculine energy. The symbol represents the division and continuous interplay of the creative energies, which is the source of all existence in the universe. The small seed inside the Yin and Yang indicates the two forces are never independent of each other and can transform into each other. For example, birth comes to death; death gives way to rebirth, just as the night gives way to the day. The fleur de lis is a symbol in the form of a stylized lily and is found in many Catholic emblems, particularly in France, but also in other European countries like the United Kingdom and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The symbol was used to represent light, life, and perfection as well as the French royalty. In French legend, when Clovis, the Merovingian king of Franks converted to Christianity, an angel bestowed a golden lily to him, which symbolized his purification. However, the fleur de lis has been used since ancient times and was often depicted in Scythian as well as Mesopotamian cultures. The symbol is also depicted in 10th century coins and seals. The Eye of Horus is associated with the Egyptian sky god, Horus.Image courtesy: ID 42734969 (christianm)Dreamstime.com One of the most famous and beautiful symbols in Egyptian mythology is the Eye of Horus, which is depicted as a stylized eye with a long tear drop and another long line which ends in a curlicue. The symbol is associated with the god Horus, the most beloved and popular god of Ennead, who represented many things, including the sky, healing, regeneration, sacrifice, protection and wholeness. Because of its many positive qualities, the Eye of Horus was often carved into jewellery and amulets to ensure the protection and continued health of the wearer and bring them wisdom and prosperity. The Eye of Horus is also unique as it is made of six different pieces, each of which represents a different sense of men: the sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch, and thought. Each section also corresponds to a fraction value. . 1/8, 1/16, 1/32, and 1/64, which when added together do not make 1 whole but 63/64. According to ancient Egyptians, the remaining 1/64 fraction represents magic or indicates nothing in the world is perfect. The Tree of Life is a symbol of eternal life, energy, and renewal. In ancient Celtic religion, the Tree of Life harks back to at least 2000 BC when trees were an important part of the Celtic culture as they took care of all life. The trees were also associated with the spirits and the supernatural world. In fact, the oak tree was particularly sacred and was known as daur which means door. This indicates that the Celts believed the oak tree was a portal to the realm of the dead or the Otherworld, the realm of fairies. As such, it was also considered to be the center of the world. The Tree of Life was also associated with strength, longevity, rebirth, and wisdom and the Celts believed that if they cut down their enemies sacred trees, they would be rendered powerless. The Ouroboros is one of the most ancient and mystical symbols that appeared in ancient Egypt as early as 1600 BC. The symbol shows a snake eating its own tail, which represents the transmigration of souls or the cyclic nature of life, death, and rebirth as well as the beginning and the end of time. The Ouroboros sign also represents fertility as the snakes mouth is the womb-like symbol and the tale is a phallic symbol. The mathematical symbol of infinity is also believed to be derived from the Ouroboros. The symbol has also been seen in early alchemical text as a black and white snake eating its own tail. This symbol may point towards the costs duality of existence and is similar to the Yin and Yang philosophy of ancient China. The Phoenix is a bird of fire that carries a lot of significance in both the ancient Egyptian and Greek cultures. Eartha Cranston via pixy.org / CC0 The phoenix, also known as the Bennu symbol, is a bird that carries a lot of significance in both the ancient Egyptian and Greek cultures. Its name originates from the word Wben which means to shine or rise. This is in accordance with its ability to die in a show of combustion and then be reborn from the ashes. As such, it is associated with fire and the sun and is a symbol of rebirth. The bird is believed to be vibrant in colour though ancient sources do not agree on exactly what colours it bears. In Greek culture, the bird was venerated as a deity at Heliopolis where it is believed to live on the Benben stone or the sacred willow tree. Its cry is also believed to signal the beginning of time and it was also associated with the planet Venus. The dragon is a symbol of imperial authority, power, and glory.Image courtesy: pikrepro.com Dragons are depicted as large and fearsome serpentine creatures, with or without wings. In Chinese culture, the dragon remained at the top of the hierarchy of animals and is considered to be a symbol of imperial authority, power, glory, and strength. These mythical creatures are also associated with water and are believed to control rains, hurricanes, and floods as well as protect rivers, springs, and wells. Dragons are also depicted in other Asian cultures, including the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. Most of these countries consider dragons to be the symbol of prosperity, supremacy, longevity, fertility, life, growth, and regeneration. They are also guardians of treasure. A stone relief of the Star of David, also known as the Shield of David.Image by wal 172619 from Pixabay The Star of David, also known as the Shield of David, has origins in the Jewish religion. Historical records show that the earliest depiction of the Star of David was a hexagram or two equilateral triangles joined together. The Star of David was used as a motif in synagogues as far as 3rd and 4th centuries and was carved into Jewish tombstones from the 3rd century CE. Aside from its Jewish associations, however, this symbol has a more mystical meaning. Some scholars think that the six points of the star mark Gods dominion over all the directions in the universe: north, south, east, west, up, and down. Other scholars believe the two equilateral triangles that point in different directions show the relationship between God and man or the quality of human nature. Many people believe that the Eye of Providence is the symbol of Satan or Lucifer. In reality, though, the Eye of Providence or the All-Seeing Eye is a symbol of divine providence and omniscience. The ancient symbol is used in Christianity to represent the Holy Trinity and the symbol represents the God watching over his subjects and offering them benevolent guidance. Aside from Christianity, the Eye of Providence was also found in other religions like Buddhism, which referred to the symbol as the Eye of the World and Coadaimn, in which the eye is believed to be the image of God. It is also a very important symbol in freemasonry. The lotus flower is a symbol of creation and rebirth.Nam Nguyen via Pixabay The lotus flower holds a place of prominence in both the Egyptian and Buddhist religion. It plays a significant role in a story about the creation of the universe, which originated in Heliopolis. The story goes that before the creation of the universe, there was nothing but endless stagnant water, which gave rise to a mythical being called Nun. A lotus flower emerged from Nun, along with the first dry land. From the open petals of the flower emerged the sun god Atum or Ra to give birth to the day. It is in that flower that the sun god returned to every night. As such, the lotus flower is a symbol of creation and rebirth. In Buddhism, the lotus flower represents the pure spirit of man, which should aim for worldly detachments. These are just a few symbols that played a prominent role in the ancient world. Can you think of any more important ancient symbols that we might have missed? Let us know in the comments below. References //books.google.com.pk/books?id=s4AP30k4IFwC&q=Minerv+%27s+owl+wisdom&pg=PA71&redir_esc=y#v=snippet;q=Minervas%20owl%20wisdom&t=false Header image courtesy: Ri Butov via Pixabay Paul Kennedy takes a trip back in time to the Ice Age with renowned Canadian archaeologist Genevieve von Petzinger. That's where they discuss the possible meaning behind the strange geometric shapes that appear along with cave art from the Paleolithic Period, and her struggle to crack the code on the first form of graphic communication. *This episode originally aired September 15, 2016.Genevieve von Petzinger describes some of the 32 geometric signs she has discovered, within and without Europe?Two hundred thousand years ago, modern humans appeared on the African landscape for the first time. They had our bodies, they had our brains. But the real question is: when did they become us?The more time I spent studying this ancient chapter of our history, the more fascinated I became with the art and the minds that had created it. Without a doubt a doubt, the art is magnificent, but that's not why I study it." The Ice Age artists who entered this muddy little cave appear to have only left behind two red dots to mark their visit (though it may be that there was originally more art which has since disappeared). (Dillon von Petzinger)/Genevieve von Petzinger is a world-renowned expert on prehistoric art.What's she's discovered has shaken up her entire field. Most researchers of Ice Age art focus on paintings of mammoths or bison, from famous sites like Lascaux or Chauvet. But Genevieve von Petzinger has devoted her professional life to something else: the lines, hand prints, and dots that have – until now – been given scarce attention. "I am standing on the Camino de Santiago, the ancient pilgrimage route in northern Spain. . . This part of the Camino winds its way along the coast, passing through medieval villages on its way west. . . We are here to explore a cave in the hillsides behind us that is supposed to contain Ice Age paintings. We walk along in single file, our boots making sucking sounds in the mud. The sounds echo off the walls, and I notice that the ceiling is starting to get low again. . . We scour the wall for the engravings and other mysterious red signs, using all the tricks at our disposal, but we were able to find the two red dots. " Those red dots, and other marks – like intersecting lines or asterisks – may not be as sexy as paintings of woolly mammoths, or ancient bison. But these geometric designs may actually hold the key to understanding our prehistoric ancestors – and maybe,ourselves. "Art presents us with a window into the minds of these people that other types of artifacts just can't provide. It offers us glimpses into their culture, and their belief systems, intriguing hints about their level of sophistication, thinking in the abstract and manipulating symbols; and insights into how far along they may have been in the development of graphic communication. While all the art has this potential, the geometric imagery in particular seems to indicate a high degree of mastery of many of these uniquely human traits. This category of geometric signs is my passion." Abstract meander or possible depiction of two converging rivers? Ribeira de Piscos, Portugal. This engraving from the Ca Valley is found on an open-air stone block on a hillside overlooking the Piscos River near its point of confluence with the Ca River. (Dillon von Petzinger) The St. Germain-la-Rivire teeth France. These nine teeth are part of a collection of forty-eight deer teeth decorated with geometric signs. Found in a 16,000 year-old burial in France, these artifacts are thought to have originally been part of a necklace included as grave goods. (D. von Petzinger, courtesy of the Musee Nationale de Prehistoire, les Eyzies-de-Tayac, France.) The thirty-two signs depicted in this typology are the main abstract shapes created by early humans living in Europe during the Ice Age (10,000 to 40,000 years ago). There are distinct patterns across space and time for each of the signs, suggesting that they were part of a system - possibly one of the oldest systems of graphic communication in the world. (Genevieve von Petzinger) Probable Male Hand. Recent studies of the hands at sites like El Castillo have shown that many of the hands were probably those of women based on the index and ring finger being about the same length, while with males, the ring finger is usually longer. (Dillon von Petzinger) Web Extra | WatchGenevieve von Petzinger's Ted Talk:Why are these 32 symbols found in ancient caves all over Europe? Related Websites: Pratik Patil, an IT engineering graduate turned passionate writer, is known for his meticulous research and engaging storytelling at Oldest.org. Despite his technical background, his love for history, culture, and storytelling led him to explore the worlds oldest records across topics like people, sports, politics, food, nature, religion, and the arts. A curious mind with a knack for uncovering hidden stories, Pratik enjoys visiting historical sites, reading biographies, and watching documentaries on ancient civilizations. He has a deep love for traditional Indian cuisine, especially home-cooked Maharashtrian dishes, and often experiments with old recipes. When hes not writing, he enjoys sketching, playing chess, and listening to retro music. His ability to blend thorough research with engaging narratives makes history come alive, making it both informative and captivating for readers. Pratik Patil, an IT engineering graduate turned passionate writer, is known for his meticulous research and engaging storytelling at Oldest.org. 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Oldest symbol ever found. Oldest known symbols. Old ancient symbols. Oldest symbols. Oldest symbols in the world.

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