

# **COPFS GUIDE TO CULTURAL AWARENESS 2009**



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## **FAITH AND RELIGION**

### **BAHÁ'Í FAITH**

#### **Introduction**

The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the World Faiths. It has been in Scotland for around 100 years. The Bahá'í Faith in Scotland is not associated with any particular nationality or culture.

The Bahá'í community believes in one God and the unity of humankind. The primary duty of the Bahá'ís is to search after truth.

Bahá'ís at present have no Temples in Scotland. They do however have Faith Centres in Edinburgh and Orkney.

#### **Accused/Witness Issues**

##### Prayers

Every Bahá'í aged 15 years and over must recite daily 1 of 3 obligatory prayers. This should be done privately and facing the 'Point of Adoration' (the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, Israel), as well as reading a passage from the Bahá'í scriptures each morning and evening. Before reciting the prayers, Bahá'ís wash their hands and face, but ablutions do not require special facilities.

##### Requirements

A prayer book and book of Bahá'í Scriptures are essential for a Bahá'í to fulfil their daily obligations of prayer and study. Some Bahá'ís require an aid to counting such as beads to keep count of obligatory devotions. Bahá'ís may read the scriptures in any language, so it is preferable in the UK to provide English-language editions.

##### Fasting

Fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset for 19 days from the 2 March to 20 March. Pregnant women, the sick and elderly are exempt from fasting.

The Festivals/Holy Days fall on the same date each year and for the majority, it is recommended that Bahá'ís suspend work.

#### **Communication Issues**

Bahá'ís in Scotland generally speak English, Scots and or Gaelic. There is no specific language required to communicate with Bahá'ís.

The point of contact for a local Bahá'í community is the Local Spiritual Assembly, found in most cities. Elsewhere or on a national level the Bahá'í Council for Scotland covers the whole country. These elected institutions are the only authorities. There are no clergy and for all requirements, these bodies constitute the leadership.

As with other religions Bahá'ís are offended by the abuse of the names of the founders of the world's religions and the use of 'God' as an expletive. Bahá'ís will generally be happy to help with pronunciations of important Bahá'í names and terms.

#### **Death Customs**

There are no special religious requirements for Bahá'ís who are dying, but they may wish to have a family member or friend to pray and read the Bahá'í scriptures with them.

While there is no concept of ritual purity or defilement relating to the treatment of the body of a deceased person, respect however is expected to the highest standards. This respect should also be shown to bodies donated for research.

Funerals should be carried out 'with dignity and honour' since death marks the passage from this life to the next phase of existence. Cremation is prohibited since, in accordance with the laws of nature, the body should be allowed to decompose naturally. Burial of the body must take place in a location no further than one hour's journey from the place of death.

Special prayers are recited at the funeral and subsequently for the benefit of the deceased. For those who die without having made a will, there are recommendations for the division of wealth.

There are a few simple and specific requirements relating to Bahá'í burial and the Bahá'í funeral service, the Local Spiritual Assembly will offer help with these.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

Bahá'ís abstain from alcohol, but can take it if medically prescribed. Foods made with alcohol are not appropriate for Bahá'ís.

There are no special requirements regarding dress other than modesty

### **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

The key teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are that there is one God, the unity of humankind and all religions came from God being 'revealed' progressively to meet the needs of the age in which they are revealed. With these core teachings, it is no surprise that Bahá'ís are very active in areas of social cohesion despite their limited numbers and resources. The primary duty of the Bahá'ís is to search after truth.

### Place of Worship and Prayers

Bahá'ís meet to worship, consult on the affairs of the faith and have fellowship together.

Communal gatherings are held at private homes or at rented halls in locations where a Bahá'í centre is not established. Bahá'í Houses of Worship are at present limited to one on each continent and are open to the public for the worship of God.

The main practices are prayer, meditation and fasting. One is obliged to say prayers daily, including the recitation of 1 of 3 obligatory prayers, the shortest of which is to be said between noon and sunset, and other prayers prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh. These require washing of face and hands and the longest prayer requires prostrations. Exhortations are also required daily. Bahá'ís are encouraged to meditate upon a passage of scripture twice daily, in the morning and evening.

Apart from the daily prayers, which are said in private, communal activities are organised by local assemblies, the members of whom are elected annually. 'Feasts' are for Bahá'ís only.

Bahá'ís are forbidden in the strongest terms by the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of their Faith, to involve themselves in partisan politics and in any kind of action that would undermine the good order of the government under whose jurisdiction they reside and of the country in which they live. Extremism is wholly antithetical to the spirit and form of the Bahá'í Faith.

Pilgrimage to the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre (Israel) and the Báb in Haifa is encouraged.

### Festivals/Holy Days

The Bahá'í calendar comprises 19 months, each of 19 days. Bahá'í days run from sunset to sunset. The Festivals/Holy Days fall on the same date each year and for the majority, it is recommended that Bahá'ís suspend work.

- Feast of Ridvan (Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh 21 April – 2 May). It is recommended that work is suspended on the first (21st April), ninth (29th April) and 12th day of Ridvan (2nd May).

- Bahá'í Fast (2 March – 20 March) ending with the feast of Naw-Ruz (meaning New Day) on 21 March, also considered the start of the New Year.
- Naw-Ruz begins at sunset on 20 March and finishes at sunset on 21 March, but the date is always shown as 21 March).
- Anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb (23 May). This day also coincides with the Birth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- Birth of Bahá'u'lláh (12 November).
- Birth of the Báb (20 October).
- Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh (29 May).
- Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb (9 July).
- Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (28 November).

#### Historical Facts

The Bahá'í Faith began in Iran (Persia) in 1844 when a young merchant in Shiraz proclaimed himself to be the Báb (gate or door), a Messenger from God and also the herald of 'the Promised One', a messenger greater than himself. He and his followers were severely persecuted by the Persian authorities and the Báb was executed in 1850.

In 1863, a nobleman known as Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God) declared himself to be the one whose coming the Báb had foretold. He announced that he had come to help bring about a new age of global civilisation that would be characterised by unity and peace. Due to his personal influence and powerful teachings, Bahá'u'lláh was tortured, banished from Persia and later exiled to the prison fortress of Akka in Palestine. A prisoner until he passed away at a place called Bahji near Akka in 1892. Bahá'u'lláh's shrine in Bahji, Israel, is today the holiest shrine of the Bahá'í world and is both the spiritual and physical focus of the Bahá'í global community.

Bahá'u'lláh's son 'Abdu'l-Bahá succeeded him in promulgating the faith. After his passing in 1921, he nominated his grandson Shoghi Effendi (1899–1957), as 'Guardian' of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi was also instrumental in spreading the teachings of Baha'u'llah around the world and was responsible for translating his writings into English. The affairs of the Bahá'í faith are administered by 'Spiritual Assemblies' which consist of nine people elected by the Bahá'í community. These assemblies operate at local, national and international level. The international administrative body is known as the Universal House of Justice and is based on Mount Carmel in Israel.

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## **BUDDHISM**

### **Introduction**

The Buddhist Faith centres on the Buddha, who is revered not as God but as an example to us of a way of life. Buddhists do not acknowledge the existence of a God or Creator but neither do they deny it. Buddhism is sometimes described as a philosophy or a system or thought, rather than a religion.

There are approximately 376 million followers of the Buddhist way of life worldwide. According to the 2001 census, there are recorded 6800 Buddhists living in Scotland. The Buddha's quest was to discover the best way to live in a seemingly unsatisfactory world. The outcome of his quest is known as Enlightenment.

Samyé Ling monastery in Scotland, founded in 1967, includes the largest Buddhist temple in Western Europe.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

Many Buddhists will wear a necklace or chain with a Buddhist image or icon on it and chanting beads around their wrists. A sensitive approach should be taken if an individual is asked to remove any of these items.

Eye contact or lack of eye contact is often significant. For example, in some Asian Buddhist cultures, direct eye contact means confrontation. For religious reasons, monks and nuns from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Vietnam may not look directly at a member of the opposite sex.

Buddhist teachers may be monks or nuns, or they may be lay people. As a rule, monks and nuns should not be touched, but if necessary, caution and sensitivity should be used. Unless absolutely unavoidable, monks and nuns should never be touched on the head.

Some Buddhists may fast on New Moon and Full Moon Days. On such days believers usually eat before 12 noon and not afterwards until the next morning.

### **Communication Issues**

A common greeting gesture for many Buddhists is to place both palms together and then bow gently. However, some may place their hands folded over their heart in a greeting. Hand shaking with lay people is permitted.

### **Death Customs**

Wherever possible, friends and relatives should be consulted about the appropriate procedure after a death. In the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, it is best to leave a body undisturbed for at least eight hours. In the Theravadin tradition, the body may be handled in a respectful way immediately.

Buddhists will conform with the legal requirements of a post mortem when the need arises.

Buddhists can be either buried or cremated. There is usually no restriction as to who performs these tasks.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

Although their high valuation of life and their rejection of violence means that some Buddhists are vegetarian, this is not always the case. Individuals should be asked.

### **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

The term 'worship' is not really appropriate to Buddhism as there is no belief in a separate creator God. A Buddha is to be revered, not as a God, but as an example of how we should all aspire to live our lives.

#### Place of Worship and Prayer

Buddhist meeting places come in many shapes and names used for these in the different traditions include; temple, vihara, meditation hall, shrine room and Buddhist Centre. They vary in size from purpose-built complexes to a hired hall or a room in a practitioner's house. Many Buddhist meeting places contain statues of the Buddha and other images, though some may be relatively plain. Buddhists can also worship at home; it is not considered essential to go to a temple to worship with others.

There are as many forms of Buddhist worship as there are schools of Buddhism. Devotion is an important part of the practice of most Buddhists. Devotional practices include bowing, offerings, pilgrimage, chanting. Buddhist meditation is also common.

Unlike many religions, Buddhism has no single central text that is universally referred to by all traditions. A mantra is a word, a syllable, a phrase or a short prayer that is spoken once or repeated over and over again (either aloud or in a person's head) and that is thought to have a profound spiritual effect on the person.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Buddhists have many celebrations throughout the year. These generally commemorate particular events of the Buddha's life and include his birth and enlightenment (Wesak), the day of his first teaching (Dharma Day) and his death (Parinirvana). The dates of these events are generally expressed through the lunar calendar and there is some variation between the different traditions. Some Buddhists may also fast on New Moon and Full Moon Days.

### Historical Facts

Buddhism teaches that all life is interconnected, so compassion is natural and important. Buddhism is based on the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama) who lived in Northern India about 2500 years ago.

There are 3 main schools of Buddhism (Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana). There are numerous groupings within these schools, some of which celebrate a number of colourful festivals throughout the year. There are also growing numbers of people in Britain who, whilst identifying themselves as Buddhists, may not see themselves as belonging to any of the traditional schools.

At the heart of the Buddha's teachings lie the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path which lead the Buddhist towards the path of enlightenment.

### The Four Noble Truths

- Dukkha (suffering)
- The causes of dukkha
- The cessation of dukkha
- The path leading to the cessation of dukkha

### The Noble Eightfold Path

The 'Middle Way', avoiding the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, is the path which the Buddha taught in the Four Noble Truths that leads to the complete cessation of suffering (dukkha) and release from the cycle of existence (samsara). This is the realisation of Nirvana, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist.

The path comprises 8 categories or factors which aim at developing and perfecting the 3 essentials of Buddhist training and discipline: Virtue (Sila), Concentration (samadhi) and Wisdom (panna).

Virtue or Ethical conduct comprises Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, and Right Effort.

Concentration is the development of Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration through meditation.

Wisdom comprises Right Understanding and Right Thought.

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## **CHRISTIANITY**

### **Introduction**

Christianity is the largest religion in Britain, with around 30 million people regarding themselves as nominally Christian. About 6 million of these practise their faith. It is also the largest religion in Scotland with around 65 per cent of people stating their religion as Christian in the last census.

Christians are people who believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God whom they have accepted as their Saviour. They follow his teachings and those of the Christian Churches that grew after his death.

There are many different Christian church denominations in Scotland, including:

- The Church of Scotland
- The Roman Catholic Church
- The Scottish Episcopal Church
- The Baptist Union of Scotland
- Congregational Church
- United Reformed Church
- Free Church of Scotland
- Pentecostal
- Christian Brethren
- Methodist

The above churches differ in terms of their opinions/beliefs about doctrine and sacrament and each has its own distinct place of worship.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

The Bible is the central religious text of Christianity. The exact composition of the Bible is dependent on the religious traditions of specific denominations.

The 40 days before Easter are known as Lent and it is common for many Christians to make some form of self sacrifice during this time such as fasting or going without something. It is unlikely that these rituals will interfere with court proceedings.

### **Communication Issues**

Christianity is a world wide religion and not associated with any particular nationality or language.

Many Christians will be offended by the use of 'God', 'God's sake', 'Jesus', 'Jesus Christ' and 'Christ' as expletives.

### **Death Customs**

It is very important for Roman Catholics to be given their last rites.

Christians believe that Jesus will return to earth to rule forever and that the dead will be resurrected to join in his glory. Because of this conviction, in the past most Christians believed that they should be buried and not cremated. Nowadays, however, cremation is acceptable to all Christian denominations.

Sensitivities around post mortem examinations are likely to be individual rather than common to the religion.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

At one time Roman Catholics would not eat meat on a Friday. More recently this restriction has been lifted. However, restrictions regarding eating meat still apply to all Roman Catholics on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Although restrictions on the diet of Roman Catholics on Friday have been relaxed, it is important to consider that older Roman Catholics may still wish to adhere strictly to these rules. It would be usual for them to eat fish on a Friday. Fish is also a suitable alternative to meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

### **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

All Christians commonly believe in one God and in Jesus Christ as the son of God whom they have accepted as their Saviour. God is worshipped in 3 forms: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (collectively, the Trinity).

### Place of Worship and Payers

Although Christians have built churches since the end of the third century, they can worship anywhere. The Christian holy day takes place on a Sunday.

The Christian holy book is called the Bible and it is in two parts. The first equates roughly to the Jewish Bible and is called the Old Testament. The second is the New Testament and includes the Gospels (records of Jesus' life and his teachings), the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of some of Jesus' apostles (e.g. Paul, Peter, John).

The most common strands of Christianity are described as follows:

### Roman Catholicism

About half of the world's Christians are Roman Catholics. The Pope leads the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholics believe that the Pope derives his authority in direct descent from St Peter, whom Jesus appointed as the leader of his Apostles. The emphasis of the faith is on prayer and the 7 sacraments (baptism, penance, confirmation, the Eucharist, holy orders, matrimony and the anointing of the sick). The Eucharist commemorates Christ's last supper by the consecration of bread and wine.

The spiritual leader of a Roman Catholic Church is called a priest – often referred to as 'Father' and his surname.

### Protestantism

Protestantism grew out of a movement to reform the catholic, or universal, church in the 1500's. It emphasised ways in which Christians should communicate with God, by reducing ritual and placing less importance on the role of the priest.

The Church of Scotland is the predominant protestant or Presbyterian Church in Scotland and services are led by Ministers appointed by the congregation.

### The Scottish Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church

These have similar roots and although Protestant, they are considered by some to be the middle path between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism due to their beliefs and practices.

### The Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church has no single leader analogous to the Pope, although it is led in each country by a senior archbishop called a Patriarch. The Orthodox Church exists in Greek and Russian forms and places great emphasis on tradition.

### Other

Some other Christian groups, such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses reject Protestantism as having deviated from true Christianity and see themselves as restorationists.

### Festivals/Holy Days

- Christmas, the celebration of Jesus' birth (25th December).
- Easter, commemorates the death (Good Friday) and resurrection (Easter Sunday) of Jesus. Exact dates vary each year but are usually around the end of March or beginning of April. The 40 days before Easter are known as Lent and it is common for many Christians to make some form of self sacrifice during this time such as fasting or going without something.
- Pentecost, which celebrates the coming of God's Spirit and is thought of as the birth of the Church, is also an important festival, celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

### Historical Facts

Christianity was founded around 2000 years ago in what is now modern-day Israel and Palestine. It is based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, known as Christ. This means 'the anointed one' and Christians believe Jesus to be the Son of God, whom they have

accepted as their Saviour. They follow his teachings and those of the Christian churches that grew after his death.

At the centre of Christian belief is Jesus who is regarded as the revelation of God. For many Christians, this revelation is such that he is understood to be the very incarnation of God. In Jesus, Christians come to know something of the nature of God who is seen as loving, just and forgiving. Jesus is regarded as the one who has transformed human nature so that it need no longer follow its sinful inclinations but rather lead a life of love and service. Their experience of God in Jesus led them to see God as a community of 3 persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is called the Trinity. Christians believe that the world was created by God and will be brought to its fulfilment at the end of time. In the mean time, they believe in the presence and support of God's spirit among all.

Individuals are admitted into the Christian Church through baptism which can take place in childhood or adulthood. The central ritual of much Christian worship is Holy Communion or Eucharist which is a sharing of bread and wine in memory of Jesus' last supper with his disciples.

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## **HINDUISM**

### **Introduction**

The word 'Hinduism' is used to describe a way of life which is shaped by the many ancient religious traditions of India. Like most religions, Hindus worship only one God, the Supreme Spirit, however, unlike most religions, they do this through many forms. Language, culture and the emphasis on certain aspects of Hinduism as a religion vary tremendously.

Most Scottish Hindus are of Indian origin, including Gujrat, Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal, or from neighbouring countries, such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Many are from the Punjab; many fled from Uganda in the 1970s, and some also came from South Africa. There are also a few of Indonesian origin. It is estimated that there are about 750,000 Hindus in the UK

Common languages amongst the Hindu communities, other than English, include Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati.

There are several Hindu temples (Mandirs) across the country. A temple in the West End of Glasgow opened in 2006. The ISKCON aka 'Hare Krishna' also operates out of Lesmahagow in South Lanarkshire. There are also temples in Edinburgh and Dundee.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

Traditionally, Hindus do not like to discuss family problems with outsiders. Family elders are expected to resolve issues.

Hindu women may require to have a male relative with them when dealing with figures of authority, particularly, males.

Many Hindus fast on a regular basis. These periods of fasting are not necessarily associated with religious festivals but are decided on a personal basis and should not interfere with court proceedings.

### **Communication Issues**

The majority of Hindus in the UK will speak English. The main spoken languages by Hindus are Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali.

There is a strong sense of modesty, particularly amongst women. In some cases, Hindu women will require to have a male relative with them when dealing with figures of authority,

particularly, males. The majority of Hindu women do not object to formal handshakes although it may be wise to wait until one is offered.

The traditional accepted way of greeting Hindus is by bringing the hands together in a gesture of reverence. This is accompanied by saying 'Namaste' which is symbolic of saying that I bow down to that which is the Spirit in you that is the same in me.

The pattern of Hindu names is a personal (first) name that usually indicates sex, followed by a middle name (commonly either the father's or husband's name). The last name is the family name, which is shared by all the members of one division of a caste (class). It therefore gives information about the social status and traditional occupation of the family. A typically constructed male name is Anand Kumar Gupta. An equivalent female name is Bimla Ram Desai. There is sometimes a reluctance to disclose the family name, as a form of rejection of the caste system and not as a means of avoiding identification.

### **Death Customs**

Hindus believe that a body without a soul is a carcass that should be returned to nature and so is cremated. A dying person may ask to be placed on the ground during their final breaths so they can be closer to nature. Children under the age of 5 are generally buried.

A Hindu family may want the body at home at some stage before cremation, usually between the funeral parlour and the crematorium.

Post-mortem examinations are considered extremely objectionable and are deeply disrespectful to the dead and the deceased's family and Hindus will be anxious that all organs are returned to the body before cremation. The preference is not to have a post mortem unless required by law.

A Hindu priest must be called to give his blessings to the deceased. He may tie a thread around the neck or wrist of the dead person and this thread should not be removed. The body should not be touched until relatives arrive.

Relatives will wish to wash the body and to clothe it before the funeral rites. It is customary for the eldest son of the deceased to take a leading part in this (however young he may be) including dispatching the coffin at the crematorium.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

Hindus are generally vegetarian: most do not eat beef and many orthodox Hindus will not eat fish or eggs. Those Hindus who are non-vegetarian usually restrict their diet to chicken, mutton or fish. Pork is rarely eaten. There are so many variations in custom that it is best, when offering food to a Hindu, simply to ask first what can be eaten.

The cow is the most sacred animal to Hindus and to kill a cow is one of the greatest religious crimes.

### **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

#### Place of Worship and Prayers

Hindu worship may take place in either the home or the Mandir (temple). The heart of the temple is the central shrine of Hindu deities. In the Mandir, women usually sit separate from the men.

Hindus are encouraged to pray at dawn and dusk, but the actual time is not critical. Hindus must wash thoroughly and change their clothes before praying.

Like most religions, Hindus worship only one God, the Supreme Spirit, however unlike most religions they do this through many forms all stemming from the one Supreme Spirit. Although there are hundreds of Hindu Gods, the 3 most important are:

- Brahma - the Creator
- Vishnu - the Protector
- Shiva - the Destroyer

When entering the Mandir, all should remove their shoes and women should cover their heads. The part of a home set aside for worship should not be entered without an invitation. When leaving, a visitor may be offered a piece of fruit or a few sweets. It is good manners to accept.

#### Pujari

The Hindu priest is called the 'pujari' and often addressed as pandit (or pandit-ji), out of respect for their learning.

#### Holy Books and Scriptures

There are 2 kinds of scripture in Hinduism, the holiest texts, called the Vedas together with the Upanishads, and the great epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The Bhagavad Gita which is part of the Mahabharata is a very popular text in the West and can be called a 'handbook' for Man's spiritual unfoldment.

#### Festivals/Holy Days

- Diwali, the Festival of Lights (New Year in Oct/Nov).
- Holi, the Festival of Colours (Spring Festival).
- Maha Shivaratri, the Great Night of Shiva (Feb).

#### Historical Facts

Hinduism is the dominant religion of India, where approximately 80% of the population is Hindu. It is about 4000 years old.

Variations in Hindu religious practice depend on the various religious traditions which have developed over the millennia. The main approaches are based on the concept of one's relationship to God: Dualistic traditions which believe in separate identities for the devotee and God, the qualified Non-dualistic traditions which believe that the devotee is part of the God principle and the Non-dualistic tradition which emphasises the oneness of the individual with the God.

Hindus believe that religion is a sanctified and disciplined path one should follow to become a better person and to achieve the real purpose of life: Liberation and Self Realisation. This can only be done by following the path of Dharma. This is at the heart of Hinduism and means the ancient law which underlies the order of the Universe and is reflected in a moral and ethical life. Hindus believe in the law of Karma (action) which is a law of cause and effect. They also believe in the divine nature of the soul which is indestructible and immortal. It moves from body to body depending on the merits and sins of one's actions. In the end, one's karma determines their future reincarnation.

The Hindu caste system was originally based upon occupation but is now understood to be hereditary. This system was based on innate tendencies of each individual and their function in society was defined by this temperament. However, in the west, it has been modified and is not as strict as it used to be. The same can also be said of marriages. Generally, marriages are only allowed within a caste, however, this rule has become liberalised to a degree in recent years. Many marriages are still arranged by parents who still seek to form matrimonial alliances within the same caste. Even in more liberal homes, young people are generally influenced to choose friends from those of equivalent circles.

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## **ISLAM**

### **Introduction**

Islam originated in Arabia and the Arabic word means 'submission to God'. Islam is not only a religion; it is a way of life. Islamic culture deals with all aspects of human life, social, moral, intellectual and political. Followers of Islam are called Muslims.

The Muslim community at present in the UK is predominantly Asian with most who originally came to live in Scotland in the early 1940's coming from Pakistan and India. Others have since followed from Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

In Scotland Muslims represent 0.84% of the population (42,557), with 20,000 in Glasgow. Muslims are the largest non-Christian group, other than atheists and agnostics.

The Mosque is the centre of religious and community life. Many Mosques are converted buildings where religious services and classes are held.

Two important mosques in Scotland are Glasgow Central Mosque and Edinburgh Central Mosque, which took more than six years to complete and has a main hall that can hold over one thousand worshippers.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

When carrying out investigative work, it may sometimes be helpful to involve an elder from the family or the Imam (Spiritual Leader) of the local Mosque where the suspect or potential witness worships.

The principles of Islam by which mankind should live are recorded in the Holy Book of Islam, the Koran (also written Qur'an). A witness may ask for the Koran to be available in court – others will not want this and you should always check.

### **Communication Issues**

Today, most Scottish Muslims speak English; however the first language of any Muslim will depend on their country of origin: Punjabi, Urdu and Bangladeshi are common in Scotland.

Islam prescribes quite precise rules for conduct between the sexes, requiring that men and women do not mix together in ways that compromise their modesty and integrity. Communication may be more effective if figures of authority are of the same gender as the person they are dealing with.

Generally, Muslim men and women do not shake hands with someone from the opposite sex. When meeting a Muslim, shake their hand only if they extend it to you. Some Muslims, especially when they are about to go for prayers, may also wish to avoid shaking hands.

The naming system used by Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India is complex with many variations. Males and females have different naming systems. This, and the fact that women do not always adopt the husband's name on marriage, can mean that members of the one family may have different names.

Men usually have two or more names, the first being a religious title with origins in the Koran. Followed by a personal name and then a family name. It may be disrespectful to address a Muslim by his religious name alone. The personal name can be used alone but the full name is the polite and formal mode of address.

As with men, some women may have a single name with no title and some may have a family name. If doubt exists always ask as to the preferred form of address.

## **Death Customs**

Muslims are always buried as they believe in the resurrection of the body after death. Burial should take place as soon as possible after death with a strong emphasis on it being done the same day. Delay in burial can cause families great distress.

The family will want to wash the body as part of the burial rites and Muslims will express their emotion freely in bereavement.

We must be sensitive to the potential religious and cultural concerns around the requirement for a post mortem. Interference with the corpse is deeply resented. Muslim families will do their utmost to avoid a post mortem. If aware of this, medical staff can usually ensure that medical records have enough information to avoid the need for a post mortem. It may be prudent to involve an elder or the local Imam (Spiritual Leader) at an early stage to explain the circumstances and necessity for the procedure.

For identification purposes prior to post mortem the body should, where possible, have the eyes closed and the limbs straight, with the head turned towards the right shoulder.

Rules concerning separation of the sexes apply to the corpse therefore the same gender as the deceased should be used to deal with the body.

## **Dietary/Special Requirements**

Muslims differentiate between food which is allowed (halal) and food which is forbidden (haram). Pork, any other part of the pig, carnivorous animals and blood are haram. Meat or meat product from an animal must also be slaughtered in a particular manner, called halal meat. Alcohol is also strictly forbidden.

## **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

### Place of Worship and Prayers

Prayer can take place anywhere although a place of worship for Muslims is a Masjid, in English, commonly known as Mosque. The main fundamental requirement for a Masjid is that it is 'religiously' clean i.e. free from contaminants whose presence require ritual purification eg human or animal blood, urine, faeces and alcohol. Nearly all Masjids have facilities for ritual washing called 'Wudhu' to prepare for prayers.

Prayers are said on a clean surface and mat facing towards the Ka'ba in Mecca which is in a south easterly direction from the UK.

Friday is the Muslim Holy day and congregational midday prayer for men are required to be performed at the Masjid which will be especially busy at this time.

Due to strict rules about cleanliness, shoes must be removed when entering the Masjid so as not to bring anything off the street. There is usually a rack and/or notice at the point where shoes should be taken off. Plastic sandals are generally provided for the toilets to ensure that no contaminants are taken from the toilets back into the prayer area.

Inside the Masjid, men and women are kept separate due to rules of conduct in relation to the sexes. Men and women should dress in a modest way and as far as possible, respect Islamic dress code which states that men's bodies must be covered at least from navel to the knee and women's bodies entirely covered except for the face and hands. In addition, some Muslims will cover the head with a cap.

The principles of Islam by which mankind should live are recorded in the Holy Book of Islam, the Koran (also written Qur'an).

### Imam

An Imam is an Islamic leadership position; often the leader of a mosque and the community. Similar to spiritual leaders, the imam is the one who leads the prayer during Islamic gatherings. More often the community turns to the mosque imam, if they have an Islamic question. In smaller communities an imam could be the community leader based on the community setting.

### Five Pillars of Islam

The religious duties of Muslims are described in the 5 Pillars of Islam detailed as follows:

#### 1. Declaration of Faith (Shahadah)

This is the defining tenet of the faith and must be declared in order to be a Muslim. The declaration is 'I witness that there is no God but the one true God and that Mohammed is his messenger'. Reciting this with intention makes someone a Muslim.

#### 2. Prayer – 5 Times Daily (Salah)

Prayer is obligatory 5 times daily at set times of the day; dawn, midday, late afternoon, after sunset and late evening. Muslims recite prayers whilst facing towards Mecca (from the UK this is south east). Men are expected to perform Salah in the Masjid (mosque). There are facilities in some Masjids for women, however a lesser number of women attend the Masjid as they are not obliged to pray there like men. They can carry out their prayers at home. Prior to Salah, Muslims must perform a ritual washing known as Wudhu which involves washing the face, arms and feet.

#### 3. Welfare Due to the Needy (Zakah)

Every Muslim who owns more than a certain amount of property, commercial assets or savings is required to pay 2.5% of their wealth to the poor each year. It also applies to agricultural produce and animals at different rates.

#### 4. Fasting (Sawm)

Muslims must fast during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. This varies each year according to the lunar cycle. Fasting means a Muslim must abstain from food, drink and sexual acts from dawn to sunset. The ill, old and travellers are exempt.

#### 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)

If economically and physically possible/practical, Muslims must perform Hajj (pilgrimage) once in their life to the Holy city of Mecca. They visit Mecca to perform prayers at the Ka'ba, the House of God built by Abraham about 4 thousand years ago. Hajj occurs during the second week of the month of the Dhul-Hijjah, twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Over 2 million Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca annually.

### Festivals/Holy Days

- **Rahazam:** Muslims must fast during the month of Ramazam (sometimes spelt and pronounced Ramadhan). This is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and fasting is usually imposed from one and a half hours before sunrise until dusk.
- **Eid-ul-Fitr:** The end of Ramazan is marked by one of the main religious festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr. It is a time of sharing and feasting and the occasion when the least fortunate are particularly remembered and given gifts of food and money known as a zakat-ul Fitr.
- **Eid-Al Adha:** is a three day festival celebrated at the end of the Hajj, an Ibrahamic tradition. Hajj is compulsory for Muslims once in their lifetime if they are fit to do so and can afford it. Anyone who has made the pilgrimage is entitled to add Hajji, Hadji or Al Hajj to his name and also to great respect in the community.

### Historical Facts

At the heart of Islam is the belief in the one God. The Arabic word Allah means the One God. Muslims also recognise the prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Jesus, the last prophet being Mohammed. Muslims believe in the angels as the servants of God who

bring His message to the Prophets and who obey and implement His commands. The belief in Allah permeates every aspect of a Muslim's life.

Prophethood came to an end with the Prophet Mohammed who is seen as having completed the religion of Islam. Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 C.E. He received the Holy revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years until he died. The Qur'an (holy book) is the record of all these words exactly as conveyed and arranged by the Prophet himself. Muslims are taught to recite the Qur'an in Arabic as any translation of the Holy Book is seen as inadequate. The books of 'Hadith' are the records of the Prophet's life and sayings and are utilised alongside the Qur'an to provide explanatory text and guidance.

In terms of the principle factions of Islam, 90% of Muslims worldwide are Sunni and 10% Shi'a. Other factions are mostly sub divisions of these.

### Jihad

Jihad or mujahada in Arabic means 'struggle', 'the act of struggling'. This is a common term associated with Muslims and it is often misrepresented. It has precisely the same range of direct and abstract associations as the English word 'struggle', e.g. to apply oneself and his best to overcome any difficulty, whether internally with oneself or externally with others. Within Islamic practice, jihad means both to struggle against the personal and spiritual obstacles that hold one back from the fullest practise of Islam or to fight for Islam and country etc. The Arabic word for fighting is 'qitaal'.

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## **JUDAISM**

### **Introduction**

The Scottish Jewish community comprises 6,580 people as identified in the 2001 census. This is an underestimate as the question was optional and, for historical reasons, many Jewish people hesitate to identify themselves as such on official forms. A number of academic analyses have put the true figure as around 10,000.

Jews are also recognised as a 'racial group' under the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended. They are therefore afforded protection under this legislation as well as criminal legislation.

There are about 10 synagogues in Scotland. Edinburgh has an Orthodox synagogue, and a Liberal community which does not have its own building. There are small synagogues in Aberdeen and Dundee, while in Glasgow there are 5 Orthodox synagogues, organised in a Council of Synagogues and one Reform synagogue, while Lubavitch (a Chassidic sect) provides regular religious services in one of the community care homes. The synagogues provide a wide range of social, educational and cultural activities expanding the religious life of their congregations. There are also small groups and individuals living throughout the whole of Scotland, quite literally from the Borders to the Shetlands, many belonging to the informal Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands.

The vast majority of the UK Jewish community are Ashkenazim.

There is evidence that Scotland has historically welcomed and supported Jewish immigrants and that the feeling in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was one of religious tolerance. Immigration coincided with persecution and the Russian revolution in the early 1900s. There was another influx during the Nazi persecution of Jews in the 1930s. Jewish servicemen and women fought alongside Scottish men and women during the First and Second World Wars and because of this they were quickly absorbed and accepted into Scottish communities.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

The legal and medical professions are treated with great respect by the Jewish community and they have no inhibitions about seeking the advice or assistance of the police and other criminal justice services as and when the need arises.

If called as a witness or juror, a Jewish person might ask for consideration to be given to their religious traditions at the start of Sabbath which begins before nightfall every Friday. In winter, therefore, Sabbath begins before the end of the normal court day or fiscal office hours and anything that interferes with this tradition is likely to be extremely distressing. This would apply to all religious festivals which also begin at nightfall.

An orthodox religious Jew will not travel on the Sabbath or festivals and will not carry anything on the Sabbath.

There are several minor fasts in the religious calendar but the prominent fast, which almost every Jew observes is, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Observance means a twenty five hour fast, usually falling in late September/October according to the lunar calendar. A Jew prefers to keep that day and also to pray and to be quiet and penitential. It is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, and one that is considered to set the path for the year to follow.

While modes of dress normally reflect current fashion in society, in some cases men wear head coverings at all times. This is usually in the form of a small skullcap (kippah). Jewish men wear a head covering during prayer. During morning prayers a prayer shawl (tallit) is worn and tephilin (phylacteries) are worn on the arm and forehead. As there are restrictions about shaving, many Jews will be bearded and some religious groups grow side curls.

### **Communication Issues**

The majority of Jews in the UK will speak English.

Orthodox Jewish men and women may not shake hands with people of the opposite sex, and any offer to do so will be politely refused. However, no offence will be taken.

### **Death Customs**

Death has its own customs in Judaism. Some Jews will wish to sit with the deceased until burial has taken place, and, where possible, a room where family may be present should be made available.

Jewish funerals are held speedily, usually on the same or following day after death. No impediments should be put in the way of these arrangements as the formal week of mourning only begins with the burial, and delay can cause anguish for the family.

When there are clear indications for a post-mortem, these should be discussed with the family and their rabbi, but in general these should only be done where legally mandatory or where compelling medical reasons pertain, because of the imperative to bury the body intact. In some places the medical and legal authorities have approved non-invasive post-mortems using scanning technologies that are preferred by the Jewish community.

The expectation is that the body should be buried intact and that no organs will be retained without due reason, information, and prior consent.

Invasive post mortems or any delay necessitated by a post mortem causes immense distress but can be alleviated to some extent by ensuring the body is treated with absolute respect, this means covering all parts of the body as each stage of the examination proceeds.

During the family mourning period of 7 days, known as shivah, the immediate family will not leave the house except on a Saturday when they will visit the Synagogue for prayer. During this period friends and relatives will visit the bereaved family, usually in the mornings and evenings for prayers.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

Jewish dietary laws, kashrut, dictate what constitutes kosher food. According to the Torah, meat is only kosher if it is from an animal that chews the cud and has cloven hooves.

Domestic poultry and fish with fins and scales are also permitted. Meat and poultry must be killed in accordance with the Jewish Laws of shechitah.

Fully observant Jews may request food in a sealed container clearly labelled as kosher and with a seal of certification by a rabbinical authority.

Vegetarian food may be broadly acceptable to some Jewish people where no kosher facilities exist, but not all vegetarian food meets kosher dietary rules. Guides to foodstuffs available to the general market which meet most kosher standards can be found in the Kashrut Guide produced annually by the Kashrut Division of the London Beth Din (the Court of the Chief Rabbi), and more detailed information is available on their website at [www.kosher.org.uk](http://www.kosher.org.uk).

## **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

### Place of Worship and Prayers

The Synagogue is the traditional Jewish place of worship and practice depends on the denomination of the worshipper. In Orthodox synagogues traditional dress code is observed and the sexes sit separately, whereas in Reform and Liberal synagogues men and women may sit together.

Shabbat (Sabbath) is observed from sundown Friday until the appearance of three stars in the sky Saturday night. The exact time, therefore, differs from week to week and from place to place, depending on the time of sunset at each location. Shabbat services involve prayers, reading from the Torah, and generally a sermon. Orthodox Jews pray in Hebrew (with some Aramaic – the language of the Talmud), while Reform and Liberal Jews use varying amounts of English.

The synagogue also operates as a community and education centre, and one of its roles is generally the teaching of Hebrew and Torah studies to children.

### Rabbi

The Rabbi (Hebrew for 'my master') is a person trained in Jewish law, ritual, and tradition and ordained for leadership of a Jewish congregation, especially one serving as chief religious official of a synagogue.

### Home and family

Home and family are central to Jewish life and are frequently regarded as being more significant than the synagogue. Traditionally women play an important role in raising children, giving them a religious education and creating a kosher domestic environment, but they often also have responsibility outside the home in both community activities and paid employment. Orthodox girls and women generally dress modestly, with sleeves covering the elbows and skirts reaching well below the knees. Nudity may be an issue for orthodox and conservative Jews, for example, where public changing and showering is required.

### Festivals

The principal festivals are also observed from dusk to nightfall, and are generally subject to the same rules and policing issues as Shabbat. The main festivals are detailed below along with some practical policing considerations:

- Rosh Hashanah (New Year usually in September). Most Jewish people attend the synagogue, and may gather outside during and after services. On the afternoon of the first day (or the second day if the first falls on Shabbat), many Jewish people will walk to a river to symbolically 'cast away' their sins. This is followed by a 10 day period of repentance culminating in Yom Kippur.
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) marked by an entire day in worship and fasting. Synagogues are open all day and are extremely busy, especially for the evening services. Many people will walk home during the day for a short break from prayers. There is likely to be a continuous flow of people on the streets throughout the day.

- Sukkot (Tabernacles) autumn festival, 5 days after Yom Kippur, that lasts 9 days (8 in Israel and for non-orthodox groups). Orthodox Jews build a sukkah, a temporary hut roofed with vegetation, in which to eat during the festival, to commemorate the nomadic lives of the Israelites after leaving Egypt. The final days include Simchat Torah (Celebration of the Torah), when the annual cycle of readings from the Torah is concluded and immediately recommenced. Some people carry long cases containing palm tree leaves to and from synagogue. This is a tradition of the holiday.
- Pesach (Passover) – spring festival (March–April) lasting 8 days (7 in Israel and for non-orthodox groups) that commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. The Seder (ceremonial meal) eaten in the home on the first night includes many elements symbolising the escape from slavery and the foundation of the Jewish Nation. Matzah (unleavened bread) replaces bread for the entire week, and orthodox Jews are meticulous about avoiding any leavened food.
- Shavuot (Pentecost) - takes place 7 weeks after Pesach (usually around late May/early June) and celebrates the Jewish people receiving the Torah. The festival lasts for 2 days and it is traditional to eat dairy products. It is traditional to study all night on the first evening of this festival, so larger synagogues are open all night, and some people may be walking home late at night and in the very early morning.

Other festivals on which the prohibitions of Shabbat do not apply include:

- Chanukah – winter festival of lights, commemorating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees, following its desecration by the Greeks, marked by some by the exchange of gifts. It is traditional for families to display lit candelabra in their front windows. Some communities hold Chanukah ceremonies in public places.
- Purim – in early spring, marks the deliverance of the Jews in ancient Persia following the intervention of Queen Esther; celebrations include fancy dress, charitable giving, and exchange of gifts. It is traditional for young children, often in fancy dress, to walk through the local neighbourhood distributing charity and delivering gifts. Purim is one of the few occasions in the year when the consumption of alcohol is encouraged.
- Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel Independence Day), and Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day). These are now established as festivals marking the anniversaries of these important events in modern Jewish history, in 1948 and 1967 respectively.
- Yom HaShoah – Holocaust memorial day.
- Tisha B'Av – a mid-summer fast day commemorating the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem, the first by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and the second by the Romans in 70 CE. Services at the beginning and end of Tisha B'Av take place late in the evening, so larger synagogues will be open later than normal, with people arriving and leaving very late at night.

#### Historical Facts

The earliest of the three major monotheistic religions, Judaism believes in an incorporeal God who is the universal creator of all that exists. The Jewish Bible, written in Hebrew, consists of 3 parts of which the Torah (the 5 Books of Moses) is the most important. The others are the Prophets, and the Holy Writings. The word “Tanach” is an acronym for the Hebrew names of these 3. It is inappropriate to refer to the Tanach as the ‘Old Testament’ since this suggests that it is seen not in its own right, but merely in the context of the Christian ‘New Testament’. The Talmud, which was compiled in its present form between 100 and 400 CE in Babylon and Israel, is in many ways the central text of Judaism, as it is based on oral traditions ascribed to Moses. It is mainly a record of rabbinic debates on Jewish law and the interpretation of the bible and forms the basis of traditional Jewish law.

Despite their shared belief, the ethnic origins of Jews are diverse. The principal groups are:

- Ashkenazim – whose ancestry is in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia.
- Sephardim – properly of Iberian origin, although the term is often used to include those of other Mediterranean, Arabian and North African origin.

### Denominations

Cutting across these ethnic groups there are distinct denominations which have different understandings of the status of the Torah and of Jewish law:

- Orthodox – The principles of Orthodox Judaism have not changed significantly since Biblical times, since they presuppose that the Torah as interpreted in the Talmud was given directly by God. Within Orthodox Judaism there are 2 main groupings: the Charedim, or so-called “Ultra-Orthodox” and the Modern Orthodox. The latter participate more in secular activities than do Charedi Jews, but are nevertheless faithful to traditional religious practices. The Charedim are one of the largest and most conservative movements, with several subsections including various groups of Chassidim. They tend to reject many aspects of modern life, for example, generally wearing traditional clothing, whereas the Modern Orthodox engage more with the modern world, for example by entering secular employment.
- Reform – The Reform movement rejects much of orthodox practice while retaining many of the underlying teachings of Judaism. Unlike Orthodox movements it allows women to be ordained as rabbis, permits men and women to sit together in the synagogue and regards cremation as acceptable.
- Conservative – known in Britain as Masorti (Traditional): This movement began as a reaction to Reform Judaism in the United State and although based on a more liberal understanding of traditional texts, it still retains many orthodox practices. There are currently no Conservative communities in Scotland.
- Liberal – Liberal Judaism views the Torah as a product of its time rather than as the literal word of God, and therefore subject to change. Liberal Jews do not attach great significance to traditional codes for dress and diet but regard them as a matter of choice.

In addition there are a number of Jews who regard Judaism as having less to do with faith than with cultural identity, but may still identify very closely with the Jewish community and observe its cultural traditions.

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## **SIKHISM**

### **Introduction**

Sikh means disciple. With its geographic origins in the state of Punjab in Northern India, Sikhism has spread out to all corners of the world since it was founded in the 15th century by Guru Nanak. One such corner of the world is the U.K where approximately 500,000 Sikhs live today.

The 2001 Census recorded 6,600 Sikhs living in Scotland. The first Sikhs settled in Glasgow in the early 1920s and the first Gurdwara (the Sikh place of worship) was established in South Portland Street. There are currently six Gurdwaras in Scotland, four in Glasgow, one in Edinburgh and Dundee.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

In Sikhism, the turban is regarded as a spiritual article, denoting faith (partly to cover their uncut hair which has religious significance as one of the 5 Ks). It is held in the highest regard due to the fact that all the Guru's wore a turban, it acts as a visible form of uniform/identification and acts as a means of protecting ones head. There is a specific exemption for Sikhs wearing turbans whilst riding a motorcycle or attending court.

The turban also symbolises authority and responsibility and so if it is necessary to require the removal of a turban, a clean, preferably white, handkerchief or something similar should be provided to assist in tying up the hair. The colour of the material in a turban may indicate the standing of that person in the community.

A Sikh woman may feel more comfortable if she is spoken to in the presence of a member of her family and by a female.

Sikh women are unlikely to agree to being examined by a male doctor.

### **Communication Issues**

The traditional language of Sikhs is Punjabi (derived from the words punj ab, meaning the '5 rivers' which are located in the North West of the subcontinent), however English may be the first language of members of the Sikh community living in Scotland.

Be mindful that the name Singh and Kaur is common to all Sikhs. The Sikh name is usually in 3 parts: the first names are sometimes common to both sexes; the second name will either be Singh for a man or Kaur for a woman; a third or family name may not be used.

The most common distinguishing feature of Sikhs is the turban (dastar), kirpan and uncut hair. The degree of practice will vary amongst Sikhs, but even the majority of the least practicing can be identified by the kara or metallic bangle which they wear on the wrist.

### **Death Customs**

Sikhs view death as a separation of the soul from the body and is considered part of God's will. It is viewed as a metamorphosis. All Sikhs are cremated, not buried, except for children under five.

Sikhs give no objection to autopsies as long as no body hair is removed in the process.

The 5 Ks (Kesh, Kanga, Kara, Kacherra, Kirpan) of a practicing Sikh must not be removed even after death. The five symbols are as follows:

- Kesh – hair remains uncut and bear not shaved or trimmed, the turban must be worn
- Kanga – comb which is quite small and is used to fasten the knot of hair under the turban
- Kirpan – sword or dagger is carried, but often in a symbolic fashion nowadays, for example, a small replica of a dagger (in metal) inlaid in the comb will suffice
- Kacha – shorts specially made which are worn as underclothing
- Kara – steel bracelet of varying styles and sizes which is worn on the wrist.

Hymns are sung in preparation for the cremation of the body. The family read from Guru Granth Sahib Scriptures continuously for 48 hours or in stages, which is completed by the day of the funeral. When a body is laid out in a room, the light must remain on until the body is removed. The family washes the body and dresses it in new clothes before it is taken for cremation which is the accepted form of disposal of the body.

It is cultural practice that the family of the deceased will clean and clear a room of furniture in the house and put white sheets on the floor, in anticipation of visitors coming to pay their respects.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

Sikhs must not eat meat that has been killed in a ritual manner. This prohibits the eating of halal and kosher meat. Other than that, some Sikhs eat meat, others do not. Alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants are forbidden within Sikhism.

## **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

Sikhs worship in a Gurdwara which is usually visible a long way off because of its tall flagpoles, fully draped in yellow cloth and flying a saffron coloured or yellow flag with the Sikh symbol (quoit and dagger in the centre and two curved swords with their handles crossing underneath).

A large room in the Gurdwara containing the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is used for prayer and worship (Divan Hall). There are no days more important than others; however, attendance usually takes place on Sunday, as this is the day when most Sikhs will be able to attend.

When entering the main prayer hall, shoes should be removed in the designated area outside, hands washed and head coverings worn.

All members of the Sangat (congregation) should sit on the floor within a Gurdwara, on the same level in order to promote equality and humility. When seated on the floor in the main Prayer Hall, feet should not be pointed towards Guru Granth Sahib as this is viewed as extremely disrespectful. Some priests and members of the congregation may not speak English at all or as a first language.

Although men and women are regarded as equal in every way, often within Gurdwaras men and women will sit separately.

Free vegetarian food is available in all Gurdwaras and this is available for anyone to eat in the langar hall.

### Festivals

Some of the most notable events of the Sikh calendar are detailed below. Sikhs will mark these events in different ways, usually by offering prayers, voluntary service or other activities.

- Vaisakhi - always takes place on 14 April each year.
- Bandi Chorr (also known as Diwali) - usually takes place within October or November each year.
- Birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev - generally falls in November/December.
- Birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh - falls in 5 January each year.
- Martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur - falls 25 November each year.
- Martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjun Dev - commemorated on 16 June each year.

### Historical Facts

#### Guru Nanak Dev

Sikhism was founded by Guru (Spiritual Enlightener/Prophet) Nanak Dev, the first of 10 Sikh Gurus each of whom added a valuable component to this relatively young path. The living Guru today is Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the scriptural embodiment of teachings of the previous 10 Gurus'.

Throughout the 70 years of His life Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), taught the basic fundamental beliefs of Sikhism as ordained to him by God which include:

- To worship continually on One God.
- To respect and love everybody by seeing God in everyone and everything.
- To treat everybody as equal regardless of race, colour, gender, etc.
- The inception of feeding the needy and distributing a tenth of ones income to the needy and overall compassion towards humankind.

#### Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh instructed initiated (baptised) Sikhs to wear the 5 Ks, so called as they all begin with the letter K in order to help them achieve the ideals of Sikhism. These are Kesh, Kanga, Kara, Kacherra, Kirpan.

- Kesh (uncut/unremoved hair all over the body), which is kept untampered with so as to symbolise a Sikh's acceptance of God's gift of hair and the subsequent saintly appearance which it brings. Hair has deep rooted spiritual significance.
- Kara (Iron/steel bangle), which should only be made from iron or steel. The significance of the bangle is to remind the wearer of his/her commitment to God, to be devoted to God, much like a wedding ring is a sign of a man or woman's commitment to their spouse. Furthermore, a Kara is symbolic of God as it has no beginning or end, as Sikhs believe God has no beginning or end.
- Kanga (a small wooden comb), which is worn within the hair and is used by Sikhs in order to comb the hair twice daily, so as to help keep it clean and tidy. A reminder of the need for physical/spiritual cleanliness.
- Kacherra (cotton underwear, which is just above knee length). This garment is worn in order to promote a sense of modesty and chastity, restricting sexual relationships to marriage only. The Kacherra also proved invaluable in providing manoeuvrability and comfort whilst engaged in everyday life and to be ever ready to act for righteousness.
- Kirpan (which literally means hand of mercy). The Kirpan has been given to Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh through the ceremony of initiation, so as to equip a Sikh with an article of faith which shall continually remind the wearer of his/her duty to pursue righteousness. The Kirpan does not denote offensive action, but the duty to act through appropriate means, to be merciful and not turn a blind eye to oppression or injustice. It should not be referred to as a dagger or sword as the Kirpan is seen as a representation of God and God's power on Earth and his mercy. It should only be referred to as a Kirpan. It is revered by Sikhs and with it comes a strict code of conduct dictating that it can only be used for defence of righteousness.

#### Guru Granth Sahib

Prior to Guru Gobind Singh's passing in 1708 he conferred Guruship to Guru Granth Sahib, the written and final form of the Holy Sikh Scriptures containing the teachings of the Gurus and the hymns and teachings of Hindu and Muslim saints that were accepted by the Gurus. As a result of this the utmost respect is afforded to Guru Granth Sahib by Sikhs. No Sikh is permitted to follow any living Guru thereafter and must only worship the Guru Granth Sahib as Guru absolute. The reference to Guru Granth Sahib as a book or bible is viewed as disrespectful. The term Guruji or Guru Granth Sahib should be used.

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## **RACE AND ASYLUM**

### **African/African Caribbean**

#### Language

The most common African language spoken is Swahili, which is used by a large number of East Africans, although both English and French are widely spoken.

#### Traditions

The African continent and the Caribbean have a huge diversity of cultures and traditions, but are unified in a number of areas. The communities are bonded by their commonality in traditional music and diet and many communities possess common cultural and behavioural traits. For instance, culturally it is considered impolite to look directly at the face or maintain prolonged eye contact; looking down and a lowered tone of voice are mannerisms used to show respect.

Many African communities operate within an extended family system with particular relations playing important roles in the lives of other relatives. Respect for elders is an important aspect of the culture and children are taught to address adults who are family friends as aunt or uncle.

African/African Caribbean family values may dictate that children are protected from adult issues. Matters which may be discussed by mainstream society in the presence of children may not be deemed appropriate for children in the African/African Caribbean community and they will be routinely ushered elsewhere.

### Religion

Although most major religions of the world are to be found in the Caribbean islands, Christianity is the predominant religion among the UK African/African Caribbean community.

### Death

Customs relating to death vary according to religious beliefs and traditions.

### Diet

There are no particular common issues in relation to diet.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Apart from religious festivals, the Independence Day of the country of origin is usually celebrated.

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## **Arab**

### Language

Arabic is the dominant language although English and Hebrew are widely spoken.

### Traditions

The Arab community is a distinctive community. This distinctiveness comes about not through differences in colour, looks or attitudes, but mainly through an ingrained subtlety in language, social and cultural values.

The family is the key social unit to an Arab. This loyalty influences all aspects of an Arab's life. Honour is very important amongst Arabs. Honour will be protected and defended at all costs. Men stand when women enter a room. They respect the different living 'areas' for men and women. They do not expect women to eat or socialise in the same room as men. Men should not shake hands with an Arab woman unless she offers her hand first.

### Religion

Arab communities are religiously and ethnically diverse with Islam being the dominant religion. They also follow Christianity.

### Death

Arabs commonly follow Christian and Islamic death customs, according to their religion.

### Diet

Arabs are mostly restricted by Islamic conventions from eating food that is not Halal. Alcohol is forbidden.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Arabs follow Christian and Muslim holy days according to their beliefs.

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## **Bangladeshi**

### Language

The official language is Bangla, also known as Bengali. Many people also speak English and Urdu.

### Traditions

Bangladesh has a hierarchical society. People are respected because of their age and position. Older people are naturally viewed as wise and are granted respect. Bangladeshis expect the most senior male, by age or position, to make decisions that are in the best interests of the group. This is also valid in businesses, the majority of which will be family owned/run.

Men greet each other with a handshake upon arriving and departing. Do not shake hands with a Bangladeshi woman unless she extends her hand.

#### Religion

The majority of Bangladeshis are Muslim however some follow Hinduism.

#### Death

Bangladeshis mostly follow Islamic death customs.

#### Diet

Many people eat with their hands and many share food from a common dish. Fish is the dominant kind of meat.

#### Festivals/Holy Days

Islam defines many of the festivals for the Bangladeshi communities, along with Hindu festivals.

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### **Chinese**

#### Language

The official language of China is Mandarin. Cantonese is the business and principal spoken language in Hong Kong and is the principal language used by the majority of the British Chinese population. There are two forms of written Chinese – simplified and traditional.

#### Traditions

Respect for elders is widely shown. Chinese people value integrity very highly. When visiting socially, Chinese people usually bring a gift. Opening presents in front of the guest is considered ill mannered. Astrology plays a lead role in Chinese history and is integrated with religious beliefs.

Gender sensitivities apply when dealing with traditional Chinese women (e.g. shaking hands, or a male being in the same room when a female is unaccompanied). It is best to wait for the offer to shake hands to be made to you rather than cause embarrassment.

The importance of the family is reflected in the fact that the surname, or family name, is traditionally written first. Surnames often relate to a particular village or area where the family's ancestors came from and it is not unusual for all the males from this village to have the same surname. Many people called Man, for example, originated from a single village in the New Territories and can trace their ancestors back for 600 years. After the surname comes usually two personal names – eg Man Ah Choi would be addressed formally as Mr Man. His wife and children would take the family name. Some Chinese people have adopted the British system and will have a forename followed by the family name, eg Michael Chan.

The Chinese tend to be a self-contained group who will often try to sort out their problems in their own community and only as a last resort seek the advice of outside agencies.

#### Religion

Chinese religion is not an organised, unified system. It has no leadership, no headquarters and no founder. 'Chinese Religion' is a general term used to describe different religions and is primarily composed of four main traditions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity.

#### Death

Funeral and mourning customs vary very widely in the Chinese tradition, making it very difficult to generalise.

It is important to Chinese people that they bury the deceased as soon as possible because they believe that a body left above the ground allows its spirit to interfere with the living. In the event of a child it would not be the parent's choice to identify the body prior to a post

mortem. Arrangements, where possible, should be made for a close family member to carry this out. Muslim Chinese are most likely to object to post mortems.

The vast majority of the Chinese population respect both the legal and medical professions.

#### Diet

Diet may be influenced by Chinese cultural beliefs about health being related to a balance of physical elements in the body. A Chinese person may feel that a sick person should not eat cold food, or that a certain condition indicates a need to alter diet in a particular way.

#### Festivals/Holy Days

The Chinese festivals occur throughout the Lunar year. As our calendar year and the Lunar year is different, the festivals fall on different dates each year. The Chinese New Year is the most important of all the festivals. The date of the Chinese New Year falls somewhere between late January and late February.

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### **Congolese**

#### Language

Although 700 local languages and dialects are spoken, the linguistic variety is bridged both by the use of French as the official language and the intermediary languages Kongo, Tshiluba, Swahili, and Lingala.

#### Religion

Christianity is the majority religion followed. Most Congolese follow indigenous beliefs and belief in witchcraft may be evident.

#### Death

There are no particular issues of concern in relation to death customs.

#### Diet

There are no particular issues in relation to diet.

#### Festivals/Holy Days

Christian/holy days are followed by the majority of Congolese people.

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### **Indian**

#### Language

There are more than 15 major languages used throughout India and more than 500 different dialects. The most common languages are Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati.

#### Traditions

Namaskar/Namaste is the most popular form of greeting. It is a general salutation that is used to welcome somebody and also for bidding farewell. The palms of both hands are placed together and raised below the face to greet a person. Tilak is a ritual mark on the forehead. It can be put in many forms as a sign of blessing, greeting or auspiciousness. Indians often refer to family friends as 'uncle' or 'aunt'.

#### Religion

Hinduism is the religion followed by the majority of Indians, followed by Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity.

#### Death

Death customs will vary according to the religion followed.

#### Diet

Dietary requirements will vary according to the religion followed.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Hinduism defines many of the religious festivals for the Indian community, however, this will be dependent on the religion followed.

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## **Kosovars**

### Language

The official language in Kosovo is Albanian. The Albanian language has 2 main dialects – Tosk and Gheg.

### Traditions

Discipline at school is probably seen as being stricter in the Kosovan communities than in many other European countries. Some may be wary of figures of authority because of their past experiences of torture and brutality in their own country.

### Religion

The majority of Kosovars are Muslim, although may not be strict. The older generations tend to be more orthodox.

### Death

There are no particular issues in relation to death customs, however these may be dictated by Muslim beliefs.

### Diet

Many younger Muslim Kosovars are not strict about their diet and will eat meat that is not Halal.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Festivals and holy days will largely be dictated by Islamic beliefs.

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## **Pakistani**

### Language

The official language of Pakistan is Urdu, although Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi are also spoken. The majority of people from Pakistan will, however, speak Urdu or Punjabi.

### Traditions

Older people are given a position of prestige, honour and respect. Social life is simple with most customs and traditions reflecting their Islamic faith.

### Religion

Pakistan was created for the majority followers of Islam (Muslims) who inhabited the area. To that extent, Islam plays a major part in the life and culture of Pakistani people.

There may be certain gender issues based on Islamic beliefs. A Muslim woman may not wish to shake hands with a man. As a rule allow the woman to offer her hand first. This may also mean members of the opposite sex may not be welcome to enter the home if there is not another male present.

### Death

Pakistanis generally follow Islamic death customs.

### Diet

Muslims only eat with the right hand. Pork is totally forbidden. Meat is eaten as long as it's Halal.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Islam defines many of the festivals for the Pakistani communities.

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## **Polish**

### Language

Polish is the official language of Poland. Many new migrant Poles living in Scotland do not speak English and require interpreters.

### Traditions

Polish people have traditionally assimilated very quickly into new communities, and there appear to be few cultural clashes. They are seen as a nation who enjoy traditional festivities, and centuries-old customs.

Since 2004, when Poland joined the EU, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Polish people making a new home in Scotland. In fact, over 22,000 have come to make Scotland their home. The latest statistics show there are approximately 70,000 Poles now living in Scotland. This is the largest influx of migrants to Scotland for 300 years.

Polish bars, delicatessens and restaurants have opened in many cities since 2005 and are often a focus for the vibrant Polish community in Scotland. There are also many clubs and societies such as the Sikorski Polish Club in Glasgow, the Scottish Polish Cultural Association in Edinburgh and the Inverness Polish Association.

### Religion

Religion in Poland has changed throughout centuries of history. Currently most Poles adhere to the Christian faith; more than 90% are Roman Catholic. The rest of the population consists mainly of Eastern Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestant.

### Death

There are no particular issues in relation to death customs although it is very important for Roman Catholics to be given their last rites,

### Diet

There are no particular issues in relation to dietary requirements.

### Festivals/Holy Days

The Polish community mostly follow Christian festivals and holy days.

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## **Russian**

### Language

The Russian language is the only official state language, but the individual republics have often made their native language co-official next to Russian.

### Traditions

It is impolite to point with your finger. But if you must point, it's better to use your entire hand instead of your finger. Sometimes, simply showing the soles of your shoes is considered rude. It is often considered taboo to step over people, or parts of their body, which are on the ground. It is often said that it will prevent the person from growing. It is better to politely ask the person to move or to find a way around them.

### Religion

Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism are Russia's traditional religions. Members of these traditional churches have lived in Russia peacefully side by side for centuries. Over two thirds of worshippers consider themselves Russian Orthodox.

### Diet

There are no particular issues in relation to diet.

### Festivals/Holy Days

A Russian festival occurs nearly every month of the year. Festivals are often unique and enjoyable. One of the main Russian festivals is a week-long event called Maslenitsa - the equivalent of a Russian Mardi Gras. The event usually features travelling choirs dressed in traditional costumes and various folk games. Most Russians consider New Year to be their favourite holiday. The Russian New Year usually consists of decorating trees and hiding presents beneath them, fireworks and cooking meals consisting of meat and potato dishes.

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## **Somali**

### Language

The predominant language of the Somali people is Somali. This had no written form until an official script was introduced in 1973. Because of this, many older people in the Somali community are unable to read and write, particularly those originating from the rural communities.

### Traditions

Historically Somalis have demonstrated an unwillingness to submit to authority and have a strong sense of independence. Despite sharing the same language, religion and customs Somalis have developed a clear clan consciousness. This has led to conflict between different clans and sub-clans.

Refugees who have had limited contact with figures of authority in the UK may be afraid because of their past experience of brutality and torture in Somalia.

### Religion

Somalis are generally Sunni Muslims, and follow Islamic requirements.

### Death

Somalis generally follow Islamic death customs.

### Diet

Westernisation appears to have influenced some aspects of Somali immigrants' diet; however, most Muslim Somalis will only consume Halal food.

### Festivals/Holy Days

Muslim Somalis follow Islamic holy days and festivals.

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## **Turkish**

### Language

The official language is Turkish. Other languages such as Arabic and Circassian are also spoken.

### Traditions

It is common for Turkish women not to work outside the home.

When meeting always shake hands; when departing it is not always customary to shake hands. When entering a room, if not met by someone, greet the most elderly and senior first.

### Religion

The majority of Turks are Muslims (mostly Sunni), followed by Christians and Jews.

### Death

Most Turks follow Islamic death customs.

### Diet

Most Turks will eat Halal food in accordance with Muslim beliefs.

### Festivals/Holy Days

New Year is a big celebration for the Turkish community. Most families gather at home for a large celebratory dinner. Gathering in public is a relatively new thing that is mainly done in the bigger cities by the younger generation.

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## **SCOTTISH TRAVELLING COMMUNITY**

### **Introduction**

The term 'Gypsy/Traveller' is an official term, used by the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government and refers to distinct groups who regard the travelling lifestyle as being part of their ethnic identity:

- Roma or Romany Gypsies
- Scottish Travellers
- Irish Travellers

In the past, people comprising these communities were known as travelling people or Travellers, some of whom called themselves Nawkens or Nachins, or more famously 'tinklers' or 'tinkers'. The term 'tinker' is no longer an acceptable term as it is frequently used as a term of abuse.

There are also other types of traveller who do not regard themselves as Gypsies/Travellers, such as:

- Occupational Travellers - fairground and circus families
- New Age Travellers

The Travelling Community in Scotland is a small group. According to a report in July 2004, there are a total of 259 households on council sites, 146 on privately owned sites and 178 using unauthorised locations. This brings the *estimated* total of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland to 583 households, approximately 1,960 people. Because of the nomadic existence of most travelling people, information is difficult to obtain, and Scottish Gypsies/Travellers estimate that their community actually includes more than 15,000 people.

### Roma or Romany

The term Romany is defined as, "A person of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin". Many aspects of Traveller culture are related to those of the Roma which was recognised as an ethnic group in its own right by the United Nations in 1979 and are protected by the Race Relations Act 1976. Roma are thought initially to have originated in what is now Northern India, they fled persecution between the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries and travelled west into Europe and eventually North America. These travellings are reflected by the presence of loan words, taken from Persian, Kurdish and Greek, in their own language, Romaani.

Gypsies were later invited to Scotland by James VI, their loyalty to his dynasty later linked them to the Scottish Travellers. Indeed there are strong links between English, Scottish and Welsh Travellers and the Roma.

### Scottish Travellers

Scottish Travellers are distinct: some trace their heritage back to Celtic times; others link their origin with the Highland Clearances in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

### Irish Travellers

Irish Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group. Around 1850, the Gypsy/Traveller population in Britain began to increase with many Irish Travellers working on the canals and railways, fleeing from the effects of the famine. Many also arrived after the Second World War due to difficult economic conditions in Ireland.

### Occupational Travellers

Occupational Travellers do not seek ethnic status under the law. These communities, who define themselves as business communities, include Scottish travelling show and fairground families, Circus communities, and Bargees and other waterway family businesses. Occupational Travellers travel for work, across Scotland, the rest of the UK and frequently across Europe. Many Scottish travelling show and fairground families live in yards, mainly in Glasgow's East End, and have a strong cultural identity as 'Scottish showpeople', and long histories within these communities.

### New Travellers

Formerly referred to as New Age Travellers, New Travellers trace their origins to 'settled' communities, i.e. they were not born into a Traveller family, and made a choice to reject a 'settled' life-style for a range of reasons. Often borrowing from traditional Traveller life-styles, New Travellers make up diverse communities that typically draw upon different political and philosophical views about society. Some New Traveller families can now trace their family's choice of life-style back two and three generations.

### **Accused/Witness Issues**

Discussions of an intimate nature will not normally take place with a woman, in the presence of a man, even if he is her husband, or, in the presence of any child. Gypsy/Travellers do not normally discuss issues of a sexual nature with their children, nor do they want outsiders to.

It is also not uncommon for children to live with members of the extended family for relatively long periods – even in different locations. This should be borne in mind as apparent siblings may in fact be cousins. Ensure that you clarify the nature of any relationships and do not make assumptions.

Cleanliness is very important, in terms of personal hygiene and within the environment of the home. All areas outside the trailer are viewed as unclean.

### **Communication Issues**

Another unifying force amongst Gypsy/Travellers is the language Romaani, sometimes known as Cant, which consists of a number of dialects related to the Indo-Iranian group of languages (of which English and German are also part). It is thought that the Romany language originates from Sanskrit, which evolved in the Indian subcontinent. Scottish Traveller cant also contains Gaelic and old Scots words.

Most Roma speak some form of Romaani. Others speak dialects of local languages with extensive Romaani borrowings. Because the language is primarily spoken, and education is difficult to deliver to those with a nomadic lifestyle, illiteracy is high amongst Roma and other traveller communities.

Communication with any travelling community may sometimes be difficult as they may have experience of being shunned by society or of direct discrimination and persecution leading to a mistrust of authority. Both the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland do have clergy who spend time working with travelling people and you may find it worthwhile to enlist their support should you require the co-operation of the community.

Each community will be composed of a number of extended families and headed by an elder who has shown leadership qualities. The senior woman will also have a position of influence, especially for women and children.

Whilst in his or her parent's household, the young person will accept the authority of the head of the unit to an extent which may appear unusual to outsiders. This factor may be of use to you in your contact with young people.

Within most Gypsy/Traveller communities, un-chaperoned contact between an unmarried man and woman is likely to be difficult.

### **Death Customs**

When dealing with sudden death, there are no anticipated problem areas arising from any requirement for a post-mortem.

In most Traveller communities, burial, rather than cremation is the preferred option. The funeral and procession is seen as a celebration of the deceased's life. It is not uncommon for a site to be vacated after a death and on occasions for the van of the deceased to be burned.

### **Dietary/Special Requirements**

There are no particular issues in relation to diet.

### **Religious/Cultural Traditions**

The culture of most Gypsy/Travellers is very similar, with families from all groups travelling around the country. Some Gypsy/Traveller families travel all the time, living in caravans or trailers, on local authority or privately owned sites and by the roadside. Others may live on the same site for most of the year. Many Gypsy/Traveller families live in houses for part of the year. Others live in house for all of the year, but may move from one house to another.

Whether living a mobile lifestyle or living in a house, Gypsy/Traveller families still have a strong sense of their Traveller identity and of belonging to a community of traditional Travellers. Many Gypsy/Traveller families have a strong commitment to the maintenance of their Traveller identity, life styles and cultures.

Scottish Travellers share many cultural features with European Roma communities such as a belief in the importance of family and family descent, a strong valuing and involvement with extended family and family events, a preference for self-employment, and a strong commitment to a nomadic lifestyle; even when living in a house.

Scottish Gypsies/Travellers oral tradition has given rise to a rich source of storytelling and songs.

Responsibility for the management of unauthorised or roadside sites lies with the Local Authority Housing Department. Most Local Authorities have Gypsy/Traveller site managers.

The religion of most Gypsy/Travellers is loosely based on the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christian faiths, In general terms, the Roma have adopted the religion of the regions in which they have settled and European Roma will include Muslims, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant adherents. Two factors, however, remain constant. These are the deeply superstitious beliefs of many Roma and the importance of the home in religious practice. In Scotland many travellers are nominally members of the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland, although in recent years other Christian denominations have established a following amongst travelling people. In practice attendance at Church is often limited to Christmas, confirmation, first communion, weddings and funerals. Both the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland do have clergy who spend time working with travelling people and you may find it worthwhile to enlist their support should you require the co-operation of the community.

In each country where Roma are to be found they have traditionally congregated at several times each year at regional livestock and agricultural fairs, including Musselburgh, Epsom, Brough and Doncaster. These occasions provide opportunities to trade, arrange marriage

contracts and settle differences. Religious celebrations will incorporate some traditional Roma festivals and rituals.

Roma form tight family bonds, where large extended families usually live together, including married sons and their wives, children and grandchildren. Each family works as a unit and the work is divided equally. Elders are deemed wiser and carry great respect, so will have some influence on the family groups. Their culture stresses the sacredness of traditions in opposition to those of the outside world. Contact with non-Roma, called Gawges, is regarded as potentially polluting, a belief probably derived from the Roma's Hindu ancestors.

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