

Most people have a daily schedule that tells them when and where they need to go during the day. At 17th-century San Luis, the Spanish and Apalachee residents had a more important schedule than just when to do things like picking the vegetables. One of the most important aspects of life at San Luis was the observance of spiritual traditions. Spiritual traditions are the beliefs and customs that communities have. Often these traditions are part of organized religions, which are particular systems of faith and worship, but they also are a part of daily life for many cultures. Some of these traditions are tied to specific buildings and locations and are performed during specific times of the day or year. Others can be done wherever someone is. These traditions help people remember or reflect on spiritual matters.



▲ **The Apalachee Ballgame** (Oil painting by Edward Jonas)

each team. The aim was to score points using a small mud ball that was wrapped in buck skin. The game ball needed to hit a central game post to score a point and whichever team scored eleven points first was proclaimed the winner.

The main way that the ball game was tied to Apalachee spiritual traditions was that the Apalachee believed that the team that won the game would have the favor of the god of lightning, ensuring rain for their crops. The game also had spiritual traditions intertwined with the raising of the goal post. It was noted that the goal post was never taken down after it was raised. The Apalachee let nature take down the post if nature saw it fit to do so. These goal posts were often struck by

The spiritual traditions of the Apalachee were developed hundreds of years before they began interacting with the Spanish in the 16th century. One of the most important spiritual traditions that the Apalachee had was called the ball game. While many southeastern native tribes had their own forms of a ball game, the Apalachee version was unique to their culture and spiritual beliefs. The ball game was played between two teams, consisting of up to one hundred players on

lightning as they were tall posts at the top of a hill. The first ball game was full of legends which are described in [this Facebook post](#) or at <https://missionsanluis.org/media/1788/the-origins-of-the-ball-game-at-mission-san-luis.pdf>. This account of the story was written down by a Spanish friar in order to understand the origin of the game for the Apalachee.



▲ **The Franciscan Church at Mission San Luis**
(Oil painting by Edward Jonas)

Many Apalachee spiritual traditions like the ball game continued to exist after the Spanish began arriving in Apalachee lands. However, when the Spanish began creating missions throughout North Florida in the 16th and 17th centuries, they began to share their own spiritual traditions with the Native peoples they interacted with. The main spiritual tradition that the Spanish shared with the Apalachee was their religion of Christianity. The main purpose of the missions such as San Luis was to teach the Native peoples of Florida about the Catholic Church and convert them (to have them change from one religion to another) to Christianity. As part of the process of

creating a mission, the Spanish introduced many of the spiritual traditions and beliefs -- that were a part of their daily life -- to Florida Native peoples, like the Apalachee.

One of the main spiritual traditions that the Spanish introduced was attending Mass, or the main service of the church. Catholic Mass at San Luis was held on Sundays inside the large church that was next to the central plaza. This service was conducted in Latin and the people attending followed various traditions and rituals. Mass was conducted by the friar, who was a type of priest that was responsible for creating missions, and was in charge of administering (or running) them.

Many of the spiritual traditions of the Catholic Church at San Luis were tied to a time of day, just like many of the Apalachee spiritual traditions were. Every day the villagers would awaken by, or at least hear, the ringing of the morning bell by the friar. This bell let them know that it was time for their morning prayers. The friar would continue to ring the bell at other times of the day and the people of San Luis would pray at those times as well.

The Spanish also introduced many calendar-related spiritual traditions such as feast days and religious celebrations like Christmas. Each of these traditions had many separate traditions associated with them. One spiritual tradition that was tied to the calendar was the Busk ceremony, or the Green Harvest tradition. This important community tradition was centered around the harvesting of crops and was likely celebrated by the Apalachee.

While certain spiritual traditions might continue, disappear, or change, most cultures have traditions. Think about your daily routine or schedule. Do you practice any spiritual traditions? Can you think of any spiritual traditions that you do not practice? While the specifics change, spiritual traditions continue to be just as important today as they were to the people of San Luis 350 years ago!

• ACTIVITIES •

Time Portal: Villagers through Video

Get ready to go back in time and experience a day in the spiritual life of one of the Mission San Luis' Spanish villagers! Check out the video link below.

Spiritual Traditions at Mission San Luis - Lesson Video Link:

<https://youtu.be/2MSu1Cw-eYc>

Ball Game Ball Craft

The ball game was a major spiritual tradition for the Apalachee at San Luis. To play the game, the Apalachee made a game ball using dried mud that was then covered with buck skin (male deer skin, usually from around the feet area). One record of the game explains why this part of the skin was used:

First of all the ball must be of deerskin taken from the area of the animal's hooves, because it was said that the deer has all of his strength in his feet and his hands. And when the ball is [made] from the hooves, it infused their vigor in the one who caught it.

Follow the instructions in the separate pdf at <https://missionsanluis.org/media/1796/instructions-for-crafting-apalachee-ball-game-ball.pdf> to create your own replica Apalachee ball game ball!

Bell Craft

Large bells were a crucial part of Catholic spiritual traditions for the Spanish at San Luis. Every big church that was in Florida more than 350 years ago had at least one large bell, and they were often made out of bronze.

Why were these bells so important? The ringing of the bells would let the people in the village know when it was time to pray, come to church, or even let them know that a wedding was happening at the church!

Think of all the times that you hear a bell during your day. Do you wake up to a bell? Do you do certain things when you hear a bell? Are these bell sounds from a real bell or are they electronic?



When the villagers left San Luis in 1704, they left behind the main church bells. But the bells were so important to the community, that they were buried to hide them so that they could be found later! Although archaeologists have found small bells and some fragments of larger bells, complete large bells have not been recovered.

You can follow the instructions on the next page to make your own bell!

▲ **Small bell (left) and large bell fragment (right) excavated from San Luis religious complex**

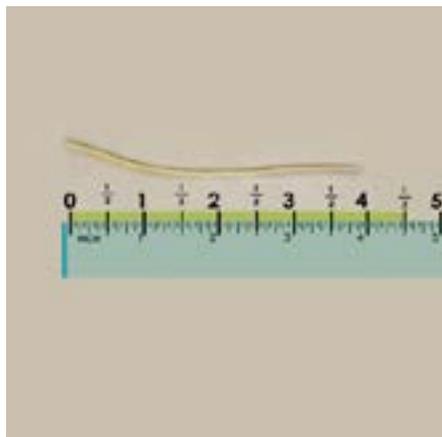
Bell Craft Directions

SUPPLIES

- One paper or styrofoam cup
- One short piece of string or yarn
 - One small bell or bead
 - One pipe cleaner
 - Scissors
 - Tape or clay



Step 1. Use the scissors to carefully poke a hole in the bottom of the cup. Make the hole just big enough for your string (ask an adult for help with the scissors, if needed).



Step 2. Use the scissors to cut your string or yarn about 3 or 4 inches long.



Step 3. Attach your small bell or bead to one end of the string or yarn. Either push the string through the bead and make a knot at the end, or tie the string to the loop of the bell.



Step 4. Fold the pipe cleaner in half to form a loop, and twist the two ends together so that they do not separate.



Step 5. Tie the loose end of the string or yarn to the newly tied part of the pipe cleaner.



Step 6. Push the top of the loop on the pipe cleaner through the hole in the bottom of the cup. Just the string with the bell or bead should be inside the cup, while the rest of the pipe cleaner is outside of the cup.



Step 7. Secure the pipe cleaner to the cup using the tape or clay so that it does not come out easily when moved.

Step 8. Now ring your bell like the friars of San Luis do!

Friar's Daily Routine Quiz

The friars of San Luis were responsible for leading many spiritual traditions at the mission. They (or their helpers) rang their bell throughout the day to let the village know what time of day it was and what spiritual traditions needed to be performed. They also taught lessons to the village children and held church services for the Catholic population.

While we do not have a full account of the daily lives of the friars at San Luis, we do have documents from other friars from missions throughout North America. Read the description of a friar's daily routine written in 1630 by Fray Alonso de Benavides when he was in New Mexico

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-spanish-missionary.htm> and then answer the following questions about the day in the life of a Spanish friar.

1. How many times a day did the friar (or his helpers) ring the bell?

2. How did the friar and his helpers feed the sick?

3. On what occasions did the friar write down the names of people in the villages?

4. Who did the American Indians in New Mexico talk to when they had troubles?

Additional Resources

Your time travel adventure doesn't stop here! If you want to learn more about these subjects, here are some suggested resources:

Florida/Southeastern Native American Spiritual Traditions:

- *"Creation Myths and Legends of the Creek Indians"* by Bill Grantham (University of Florida Digital Collections)
<https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00011679/00001>
- *"Exploring Muscogee Culture Through Shell Carving"* by Rob Diaz de Villegas (WFSU Public Media – Ecology Blog)
<https://blog.wfsu.org/blog-coastal-health/2018/01/exploring-muscogee-culture-shell-carving/>
- *"The Storyteller", Muscogee Creek Storytelling Traditions* (WFSU Education)
<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-storyteller-oriq wz/>
- *Songs of the Seminole Indians of Florida: Various Artists, 1931-1933* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings)
<https://folkways.si.edu/songs-of-the-seminole-indians-of-florida/american-indian/music/album/smithsonian>
- *Seminole Stomp Dance, "Circle of Dance" Virtual Exhibit* (Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian)
<https://americanindian.si.edu/static/exhibitions/circleofdance/seminole.html>

Spanish Catholic Spiritual Traditions:

- *Mission San Luis Website – History: Crown and Church*
<https://missionsanluis.org/learn/history/crown-and-church/>
- *"Mysterious 17th century building being uncovered at Mission"* by Travis Gibson (St. Augustine.com)
<https://www.staugustine.com/news/20181009/mysterious-17th-century-building-being-uncovered-at-mission>
- *St. Augustine: America's Ancient City - The Church and the Missions* (Florida Museum of Natural History)
<https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/staugustine/timeline/the-church-and-the-missions/>
- *Podcast – Spanish Mission Bell* (University of Central Florida)
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ahistoryofcentralfloridapodcast/7/>