

Rabindranath Tagore

[Gurudev](#)

Raveendranath Tagore

[FRAS](#)

Native name	Robindronath Thakur
Born	7 May 1861 <div>Calcutta, British India^[1]</div>
Died	7 August 1941 (aged 80) <div>Calcutta, British India^[1]</div>
Resting place	Cremated at Nimtala crematorium , Calcutta, British India; Ashes scattered in the Ganga River.
Pen name	Bhanu Singha Tagore
Occupation	Writer · composer · playwright · essayist · painter
Language	Bengali · English
Nationality	British Indian Bengali
Alma mater	University of Calcutta
Period	Bengal Renaissance
Literary movement	Contextual Modernism
Notable works	Gitanjali · Gora · Ghare-Baire · Jana Gana Mana · Rabindra Sangeet · Amar Shonar Bangla (other works)
Notable awards	Nobel Prize in Literature 1913
Spouse	Mrinalini Devi (m. 1883–1902)
Children	Renuka Tagore · Shamindranath Tagore · Meera Tagore · Rathindranath Tagore · Madhurilata Tagore
Relatives	Tagore family

Signature	Close-up on a Bengali word handwritten with angular, jaunty letters.
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[Locations of places associated with Rabindranath Tagore](#)
Santipur, Patisnera, Bishnupur, Kolkata, Bhabanipur, Koksinko.

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Locations of places associated with Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore ([/rəˈbɪndrənɑːθ tæˈɡɔːr/](#) ([audio speaker icon listen](#)) *rə-BIN-drə-nahth ta-GOR*; 7 May 1861 – 7 August 1941), known in [Bengali](#) as **Robindronath Thakur** ([\[roˈbindronatʰ ˈtʰakur\]](#)) and in [Hindi](#) as **Rabīndranāth Thākur** ([\[rəˈbiːndrənɑːtʰ ˈtʰaːkʊr\]](#)), was a poet, [philosopher](#), and [artist](#). He wrote many stories, [novels](#), [poems](#), and dramas. He is also popularly known around the world as **Kabiguru**. He is also very well known for [composing music](#). He wrote the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh. His writings greatly influenced Bengali [culture](#) during the late 19th century and early 20th century. In 1913, he became the first Asian to win the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#).

His major works include [Gitanjali](#) (*Song Offerings*), a world-famous poetry book; *Gora* (*Fair-Faced*); *Ghare-Baire* (*The Home and the World*); and many other works of [literature](#) and art. Tagore was also a cultural [reformer](#) and modernized Bengali art. He made it possible to make art using different forms and styles.

Tagore was born on 7 May in 1861, at Jorasanko in Calcutta. He was the youngest son of his parents. His father was Debendranath Tagore. His mother was Sharada Devi.

Rabindranath Tagore was admitted to school. But he did not like the still education. So he was educated at home He wrote his first poem when he was eight years old. In 1877, at the age of 16, Tagore published his first large poetry collection and wrote his first short story and dramas.

In February 1873, at age 11, Tagore went on a tour of India with his father. They visited many places like Amritsar in Punjab, and Dalhousie in the Himalayas. Tagore also visited his father's estate at Shantiniketan. There he read biographies and studied history, astronomy, modern science, and Sanskrit. He also read works of Kalidas.

During this time, Tagore also composed many literary works. Tagore wrote a poem in the style of Vidyapati, a famous poet who wrote in Maithili.

In 1878, Tagore went to [London](#). Because wanted to become a barrister. Later he studied at University College London. But in 1880, after Tagore did not do well in school, his father called him back from London. His father arranged a marriage for him with Mrinalini Devi, a girl of ten years. Child marriage was common during that time. They got married on 9 December 1883. Together they had five children.

Tagore died on 7 August 1941 ("Baishey Shrabon" in Bengali, 22nd Shrabon), at the age of 80, which was well beyond the average [life expectancy](#) of a [South Asian](#) male at the time.

Shantiniketan

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In 1901, Tagore left Sheildah. He went to [Shantiniketan](#) ([West Bengal](#)) to build an [ashram](#) (which is like a [monastery](#) in [Indian religions](#)). In [English](#), "Shantiniketan" means "an abode [place] of [peace](#)". He built a [prayer](#) hall, a school, and a [library](#). He planted many trees and built a garden.

Tagore's wife and two of his children died in Shantiniketan. On January 19, 1905, Tagore's father also died.

By this time, Tagore had started receiving monthly [income](#) as part of his [inheritance](#). He also started receiving some [royalties](#) for his literary works. He was very popular among readers of the Bengali language, as well as other people who knew his works through [translations](#) and reviews.^[2] Rabindranath's father bought a large parcel of land in Santiniketan, intending to establish a preparatory school.

On November 13, 1913, Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature. The [Swedish Academy](#) had selected him based on a small number of his translated works, and his 1912 work of poems named *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*.

The [British Crown](#) gave Tagore a [knighthood](#) in 1915. However, he gave back the title in 1919 to protest the [Jallianwala Bagh Massacre](#) in Amritsar. During this [massacre](#), [troops](#) of the [British Raj](#) killed people who had no weapons.

In 1921, Tagore and an [agricultural economist](#) named [Leonard K. Elmhirst](#) set up the Institute for Rural Reconstruction in a [village](#) named Surul, near Tagore's ashram at Shantiniketan. Tagore recruited many [scholars](#) and officials from many countries to help the institute. Its goal was to use schooling to "free village[s] from ... [helplessness](#) and [ignorance](#)".

In the early 1930s, Tagore also grew more concerned about India's "abnormal [caste](#) consciousness" and differences based on castes. He lectured on the evils of such practices and also wrote many poems and dramas on these themes. He also became an activist.

He also founded a school named "Sriniketan" for teaching agriculture and crafts at Surul at a distance of about three kilometers from Shantiniketan.^[3]

Last years (1932-1941)

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Even during the last [decade](#) of his life, Tagore continued his activism. He criticized [Mohandas Gandhi](#), one of India's leaders, for his comments about an [earthquake](#) on January 15, 1934 in [Bihar](#). Gandhi had said the earthquake had happened because [God](#) wanted to punish people for practicing [casteism](#).

Tagore also wrote a hundred-line poem about the poverty in Kolkata. Later on, [Satyajit Ray](#) based one of his [movies](#) on this poem.

During this period, Tagore wrote fifteen volumes of [prose](#)-poems. They covered many parts of human life. In his last years, Tagore took an interest in science and wrote a collection of [essays](#). These essays explored [biology](#), [physics](#), and astronomy.

Tagore spent the last four years of his life in poor health. In late 1937, he lost [consciousness](#). He was in a [coma](#) for a long time. Eventually, he woke up, but three years later, he went back into a coma. During these years, whenever he was conscious and felt well enough, he wrote poems. These poems talk about how he came close to [death](#). Tagore died on August 7, 1941 at the age of 80 in his childhood home in Kolkata.

Travels

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Between 1878 and 1932, Tagore visited thirty countries on five [continents](#). His goal was to make his literary works known to people who did not speak Bengali. He also spread his thoughts and ideas, including his [political](#) ideas.

In 1912, Tagore went to England. The [Anglo-Irish](#) poet [William Butler Yeats](#) wrote the [preface](#) to the English translation of Tagore's famous book *Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*). Tagore also met [Ezra Pound](#), [Robert Bridges](#), [Ernest Rhys](#), [Thomas Sturge Moore](#), and many others.

From May 1916 until April 1917, Tagore gave many lectures in [Japan](#). Shortly after returning to India, the 63-year-old Tagore visited [Peru](#) at the invitation of the Peruvian [government](#). At the same time, he also visited [Mexico](#). Both governments pledged donations of \$100,000 to Tagore's school at Shantiniketan.

On May 30, 1926, Tagore reached [Naples, Italy](#). The next day, he met [fascist dictator Benito Mussolini](#) in [Rome](#). On 20 July 1926, Tagore criticized and spoke out against Mussolini.

In July 1927, Tagore and two friends went on a four-month tour of [Southeast Asia](#). They visited [Bali](#), [Java \(island\)](#), [Kuala Lumpur](#), [Malacca](#), [Penang](#), [Siam](#), and [Singapore](#). Later on, Tagore wrote a book named *Jatri* (*The Traveler*) about his experiences during these trips.

In early 1930, Tagore left Bengal for a nearly year-long tour of [Europe](#) and the [United States](#). In [Paris](#) and London, there were displays of his [paintings](#). During this period, Tagore wrote his [Hibbert Lectures](#) for the [University of Oxford](#). He also met [Aga Khan III](#).

From June to mid-September 1930, Tagore toured [Denmark](#), [Switzerland](#), and [Germany](#). Next, he toured the [Soviet Union](#).

Tagore's travels gave him the opportunity to talk with many notable persons of his time. They included [Henri Bergson](#), [Albert Einstein](#), [Robert Frost](#), [Mahatma Gandhi](#), [Thomas Mann](#), [George Bernard Shaw](#), [H.G. Wells](#), [Subhas Chandra Bose](#), and [Romain Rolland](#).

Tagore's last trips abroad were his visits to [Iran](#) and [Iraq](#) in 1932, and to [Ceylon](#) in 1933. He visited Iran as a personal guest of [Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi](#).

Works

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Tagore was mainly a poet, but his other writing includes essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. He was also an expert painter.

Many movies also have [soundtracks](#) featuring selections from Tagore's songs, the [Rabindra Sangeet](#).

Tagore also wrote many [non-fiction](#) books. These covered many subjects, including the [history of India](#), [linguistics](#), essays and lectures, details of his travels, and other [autobiographical](#) things.

One of his famous dramas is 2 plays by Tagore and Dipashri In 1917, Tagore published a book called [My Reminiscences](#). In this book, Tagore gives credit to his friend and [mentor](#), Akshay Chowdhury,^[4] for influencing him in literature since he was a child. Akshay was the youngest son of Mihir Chandra Chowdhury, whose [ancestry](#) was linked with the Dutta Chowdhury (Chowdhuries) family of Andul. Rabindranath used to call Akshay *Akshay Babu*.

Akshay Chowdhury, Romesh Chandra Dutt, and Jyotiridranath Tagore were classmates at Hindu School in Kolkata. Because of this, Akshay developed a strong, friendly relationship with the Tagore family.

Rabindranath wrote that he loved to discuss high-level literature in detail with "Akshay Babu". At times, Akshay and his wife, Sarat Kumari Chaudhurani,^[5] used to participate in long talks about literature in a garden at *Thakur Bari*.

Music and artwork

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Tagore was also a musician and painter. He wrote around 2,230 songs. People call these songs "Rabindra Sangeet" (which means "Tagore Song" in English). These songs are now a part of modern Bengali culture. Tagore's many poems and songs are parts of his novels and stories.

His songs and music cover many aspects of human emotion, devotional hymns, and love songs. In most Bengali-speaking families, people sing *Rabindra Sangeet*.

Music critic Arther Strangeways of [The Observer](#) first introduced Tagore's songs to non-Bengalis through his book *The Music of Hindustan*. The book describes Tagore Song as a "vehicle of a personality ... [that goes] behind

this or that system of music to that beauty of sound which all systems put out their hands to seize." Rabindra Sangeet has two great works, which are now [national anthems](#) of two countries: India and Bangladesh. This makes Tagore the only person in the world to have written the national anthems of two nations. They are Bangladesh's *Amar Sonaar Baanglaa* and India's *Jana Gana Mana. Rabindrasangit*. They are also influenced by musicians like [Vilayat Khan](#), Buddhadev Dasgupta, and composer [Amjad Ali Khan](#).

At age 60, Tagore took an interest in drawing and painting. He used many styles from different parts of the world. His styles included craftwork by the Malanggan people of northern [New Ireland](#), [Haida carvings](#) from the [Pacific Northwest](#) region of [North America](#), and woodcuts by [Max Pechstein](#). Sometimes, Tagore used his [handwriting](#) in artistic styles on his [manuscripts](#). His drawings and paintings were displayed in France and London. These varied artistic influences were further enriched by his extensive travels. Tagore's travels to Europe, Japan, and the U.S. exposed him to diverse cultures and artistic movements, significantly influencing his work. His visit to the 1913 Armory Show in Chicago, which featured Fauvist painters like Matisse and Derain, notably impacted his art. Tagore's painting of [women in a field](#) reflects Fauvist traits such as bold colours and expressive brushwork. This experience exemplifies his openness to experimenting with new styles and techniques, showcasing a blend of global influences in his art. ^[6]

Theatrical pieces

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When he was 16 years old, he performed in a drama organized by his brother, Jyotirindranath Tagore. When Tagore was 20 years old, he wrote a drama named *Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki)*. This described the life of [Valmiki](#), a man who stopped being a robber and became a learned person, his blessing from the goddess Saraswati, and his writing of the Ramayana.

Another notable play by him is *Dak Ghar (The Post Office)*, which describes how a child tries to escape from his confinement and falls asleep. This sleeping is suggestive of death. This play received reviews in many parts of Europe. In 1890, he wrote *Visarjan (Sacrifice)*. Many scholars believe this to be his finest drama. The Bangla-language original versions included intricate [sub-plots](#) and extended [monologues](#). He wrote many other dramas on a variety of themes. In Tagore's own words, he wrote them as "the play of feeling and not of action". Furthermore, Tagore's "[The King of the Dark Chamber](#)" presents readers with a fascinating and enigmatic protagonist in the form of the King, an unseen monarch, even to his queen Sudarshana. Tagore portrays him as a powerful yet reclusive ruler, whose secluded existence in a dark chamber symbolizes his internal struggles and dissatisfaction with his appearance. Despite his regal facade and the power he wields, the King exhibits remarkable selflessness and forgiveness, as seen when he responds with understanding to Sudarshana's fear and repulsion upon seeing his true form, and spares the life of the King of Kanchi who caused great mischief. This complex character invites readers to

reflect on internal conflicts and selflessness within themselves. ^[7] Another important aspect is Tagore's [Rabindra Nritya Natya](#), dance dramas based on Tagore's plays.

Short stories

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Tagore wrote many stories. *Galpaguchchha* (Bunch of Stories) is a three-volume collection of eighty-four of his stories. Tagore wrote about half of these stories during the period from 1891 to 1895. This collection continues to be very popular work of Bangla literature. These stories have been used for many movies and theatrical plays.

Tagore drew inspiration and ideas for writing his stories from his surroundings, from the village life of India. He saw the poor people very closely during travels to manage his family's large landholdings. Sometimes he used different themes to test the depth of his intellect.

Poetry

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Tagore's poetry is very varied and covers many styles. He drew inspiration from 15th and 16th century poets and from ancient writers like Vasa. Bengal's Baul folk singers were also influenced by his style of poetry. He wrote many poems when he was at Shelidah managing his family's estates. Many of his poems have a lyrical quality. These poems tell about the "man within the heart" and the "living God within". Over the next 70 years, he repeatedly revised his style of writing poetry. In 1930s, he wrote many experimental works of poetry, and also used modernism and realism in his works.

One of his poems reads "all I had achieved was carried off on the golden boat; only I was left behind". Tagore is known around the world for his *Gitanjali* ("Song Offerings"), his best-known collection, which won him his Nobel Prize. A freeverse translation by Tagore of a verse of *Gitanjali* reads as follows:

"My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers."

"My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at the feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music."

Anthems

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Tagore is the only person to have written anthems for three countries.^[8]

- [Jana Gana Mana](#), the national anthem of India^{[9][10][11]}

^{[12][13][14][15][16]}

- [Amar Shonar Bangla](#), the national anthem of [Bangladesh](#)^[8]
- [Sri Lanka Matha](#), the national anthem of [Sri Lanka](#); Tagore wrote the Bengali version and [Ananda Samarakoon](#), his student, translated it into Sinhala^[17]

Political views

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Tagore's political views were complicated. He criticized European [colonialism](#) and supported Indian [nationalists](#). But he also criticized the [Swadeshi movement](#) that many nationalist leaders in India liked. He liked self-help and learning. He asked Indians to accept "there can be no question of blind revolution, but of steady and purposeful education". Many people did not like his thinking. In late 1916, some Indians plotted to kill him when he was staying in a hotel in [San Francisco](#), USA. When they saw him face-to-face, however, they instead started arguing with Tagore and changed their minds about killing him. Tagore also wrote many songs praising the [Indian independence movement](#). He also returned the British honor of Knighthood as a protest against the 1919 [Amritsar massacre](#). In Amritsar, troops of the British Raj had opened fire on unarmed civilians, killing many. Despite his unfriendly relations with Gandhi, Tagore played a key role in resolving a Gandhi-[B. R. Ambedkar](#) dispute which was about separate electorates for untouchables. Untouchables were people considered lowest in the social order. Rabindranath Tagore helped the freedom of India. He was first to identify the theme of "[Globalization](#)".^[18] Insert non-formatted text here

Educational views

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Tagore was also critical about the traditional style of education. While on a visit to [Santa Barbara, California](#) on October 11, 1917, he thought of a new type of education: a new type of university which he wanted to set up at Shantiniketan. On December 22, 1918, work for building the new university began. It opened on December 22, 1921. He named the university [Visva-Bharati University](#). Tagore worked hard to raise funds for the university, and he toured many parts of Europe and the United States for this purpose. He gave all his Nobel Prize money to this university. The university gave personal guidance to all students. Students lived close to nature, and the teacher-student relationship followed a pattern of the gurukul system of ancient India. In his own words, he wanted this university to become "a

world center for the study of humanity ... somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography".

He also had a dream for the future India. He wanted India's freedom from the British rule. He dreamt of an India "where the mind is without fear it is".

Legacy

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Even many decades after his death, people hold festivals in his honor in many parts of the world. Examples include the following:

- The annual Bengali festival/celebration of *Kabipranam* - Tagore's birthday anniversary - held in [Urbana, Illinois](#) in the United States.
- The *Rabindra Path Parikrama* is held in Shantinketan and many places in Kolkata and West Bengal. Even cultural institutions and families in private households organise programmes to celebrate his birthday.

Nobel laureate [Amartya Sen](#), who is also a Bengali, once noted that even for modern Bengalis, Tagore was a "towering figure", being a "deeply relevant and many-sided contemporary thinker".

Tagore's collected 1939 Bangla-language writings (Rabīndra Rachanāvalī) are one of Bengal's greatest cultural treasures, and Tagore himself has been proclaimed "the greatest poet India has produced".

He was also famous in much of Europe, North America, and East Asia. Translations of his works are available in many languages, including Russian, English, Dutch, German, and Spanish. In the United States, Tagore gave many lectures during 1916 and 1917. Many people attended those lectures.

Between 1914 and 1922, the Jiménez-Camprubí spouses translated at least twenty-two of Tagore's books from English into Spanish. These Spanish translations influenced many leading figures of Spanish literature, including [Pablo Neruda](#) and [Gabriela Mistral](#) of [Chile](#); [Octavio Paz](#) of [Mexico](#); and [José Ortega y Gasset](#), [Zenobia Camprubí](#), and [Juan Ramón Jiménez](#) of [Spain](#)

Various composers, including classical composer Arthur Shepherd's, have set Tagore's poetry to music.

Related pages

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- [List of Nobel Prize winners by country](#)

Notes and references

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

1. ↑ [1.0 1.1 "Rabindranath Tagore - Facts". NobelPrize.](#)
2. ↑ ["In 1901 He started ashram in "santiniketan" ". Indore \[M.P.\] India. 11 February 2020. Archived from \[the original\]\(#\) on 15 February 2020. Retrieved 21 February 2020.](#)
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Other websites

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

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- [Rabindranath Tagore poetry](#) (in Russian)

v · t · e	Winners of Nobel Prize in Literature
1901 - 1925	Prudhomme (1901) · Mommson (1902) · Bjørnson (1903) · E. Mistral / Echegaray (1904) · Sienkiewicz (1905) · Carducci (1906) · Kipling (1907) · Eucken (1908) · Lagerlöf (1909) · Heyse (1910) · Maeterlinck (1911) · Hauptmann (1912) · Tagore (1913) · <i>No award</i> (1914) · Rolland (1915) · Heidenstam (1916) · Gjellerup / Pontoppidan (1917) · <i>No award</i> (1918) · Spitteler (1919) · Hamsun (1920) · France (1921) · Benavente (1922) · Yeats (1923) · Reymont (1924) · Shaw (1925)
1926 - 1950	Deledda (1926) · Bergson (1927) · Undset (1928) · Mann (1929) · Lewis (1930) · Karlfeldt (1931) · Galsworthy (1932) · Bunin (1933) · Pirandello (1934) · <i>No award</i> (1935) · O'Neill (1936) · Martin du Gard (1937) · Buck (1938) · Sillanpää (1939) · <i>No awards</i> (World War II) · Jensen (1944) · G. Mistral (1945) · Hesse (1946) · Gide (1947) · Eliot (1948) · Faulkner (1949) · Russell (1950)
1951 - 1975	Lagerkvist (1951) · Mauriac (1952) · Churchill (1953) · Hemingway (1954) · Laxness (1955) · Jiménez (1956) · Camus (1957) · Pasternak (1958) · Quasimodo (1959) · Perse (1960) · Andrić (1961) · Steinbeck (1962) · Seferis (1963) · Sartre (1964) · Sholokhov (1965) · Agnon / Sachs (1966) · Asturias (1967) · Kawabata (1968) · Beckett (1969) · Solzhenitsyn (1970) · Neruda (1971) · Böll (1972) · White (1973) · Johnson / Martinson (1974) · Montale (1975)
1976 - 2000	Bellow (1976) · Aleixandre (1977) · Singer (1978) · Elytis (1979) · Miłosz (1980) · Canetti (1981) · García Márquez (1982) · Golding (1983) · Seifert (1984) · Simon (1985) · Soyinka (1986) · Brodsky (1987) · Mahfouz (1988) · Cela (1989) · Paz (1990) · Gordimer (1991) · Walcott (1992) · Morrison (1993) · Ôe (1994) · Heaney (1995) · Szymborska (1996) · Fo (1997) · Saramago (1998) · Grass (1999) · Gao (2000)
2001 - present	Naipaul (2001) · Kertész (2002) · Coetzee (2003) · Jelinek (2004) · Pinter (2005) · Pamuk (2006) · Lessing (2007) · Le Clézio (2008) · Müller (2009) · Vargas Llosa (2010) · Tranströmer (2011) · Mo (2012) · Munro (2013) · Modiano

	(2014) • Alexievich (2015) • Dylan (2016) • Ishiguro (2017) • <i>No formal award</i> Condé (New Academy Prize) (2018) • Tokarczuk (2018) • Handke (2019) • Glück (2020) • Gurnah (2021) • Ernaux (2022) • Fosse (2023) • Kang (2024)
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Academics	CiNii
Artists	KulturNav (2) • MusicBrainz artist • RKD Artists • Te Papa (New Zealand) • ULAN
People	Germany • Trove
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