

GEOG 247 Cultural Geography

## The Geography of Religion

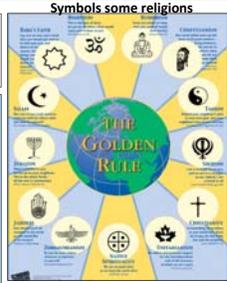
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## Religion and Geography

**Religion:** A social system involving a set of beliefs and practices through which people seek harmony with the universe and attempt to influence the forces of nature, life, and death through prayers, incantations, actions, and works of charity and sacrifice.

**Secularism:** the indifference to or rejection of religion; worldly.



**Religions set standards** for how people should behave.

**Religions prepare people for the unknown**, both in the present and in the afterlife, including the rationalization of the unexplainable.

## Religion and Geography

**Geography of Religion:**  
The spatial study of religions and religious beliefs and practices including their:

- ✓ distribution on the earth,
- ✓ source areas and paths of diffusion over time,
- ✓ affect on the landscape
- ✓ associated images, sounds, rituals and food
- ✓ affect of interaction both within and outside the religion's sphere on people and areas who share and do not share the same beliefs.

## Religion and Geography

**Religions are studied by geographers to:**

- ✓ Ascertain their origin on earth (hearth)
- ✓ Look for their interrelationships with the physical environment (ecology, space, region)
- ✓ Study their movement and distribution (diffusion)
- ✓ Analyze their affect on the landscape (visual record, creation of place)
- ✓ Document the relationships between religions and their adherents (interaction)

## Religion and Geography

❖ **Geographers are not theologians so they focus on those elements of religions that are geographically significant.**

- They recognize that religions are derived in part from people's observation and interaction with elements of the physical environment and that religions and their adherents, in turn, modify the landscape.
- They identify the processes by which a religion diffuses across the landscape and know that the movement may be in conflict with the movement, distribution and existence of others.
- Using visual clues, they map religions and religious practices at all levels, identify and locate sacred sites, and look into the religious organization of space.

## Religion, Geography and Culture

- Religion is an integral part of any culture group.
- Religion regions overlap both ethnic and language regions.
- People usually have deep feelings about religion:
  - Religious values are important in how people identify themselves and the ways they organize the landscape
  - The appeal of religions vary from worldwide to geographically limited areas
  - While migrants typically learn the language of the new location, they usually retain their religion and recreate a landscape that may be similar to from where they came.
  - In spite of its deep roots the essence of religion experiences stimulus diffusion and time-distance decay.

## Religion and Culture

**Cultural innovation**

- Joins adherents into a single moral community through a value system that involves formal or informal worship and faith in the sacred and divine
- May intimately affect all facets of a culture
- May affect interaction between culture groups
- Varies in its cultural role – dominating in some societies, unimportant or even repressed in others

## Adherents Worldwide by Religious Group

- Christianity 33%
- Islam 21%
- Nonreligion (sectarian) 16%
- Hinduism 14%
- Buddhism 6%
- Taoic religions 6%
- Animism/shamanism 6%
- Sikhism 0.36%
- Judaism 0.22%

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## Classifying Religions

- **Animism**
  - Belief system based on place with sacredness associated with specific sites and inanimate objects; considered the first religious system
- **Polytheism**
  - The worship of many gods, usually earth-based gods.
- **Monotheism**
  - The worship of only one God; a sky-centered god looking down upon world's people.
- **Orthodox**
  - Strands within a major religion that emphasize purity of faith.
- **Fundamentalism**
  - A movement to return to the founding principles of a religion, which can include literal interpretation of sacred texts, or the attempt to follow the ways of a religious founder as closely as possible.

## Classifying Religions

- **Universalizing (proselytic) religions**
  - Claim applicability to all persons and seek conversion of all
  - Have precise places of origin, based on historic events in the life of a man.
    - Christianity, Islam, Buddhism
- **Ethnic religions**
  - Identified with a particular ethnic group; clustered distribution; does not seek converts
  - Have unknown or unclear origins, not tied to single historical individuals.
    - Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto
- **Tribal (traditional) religions**
  - Ethnic (indigenous, community) religions specific to small, preindustrial cultures having close ties to nature
    - Animism, Shamanism
- **Syncretic religions**
  - Religions, or strands within religions, that combine elements of two or more belief systems.
- **Secularism**
  - Indifference to or rejection of religion and religious belief

## World Distribution of Major Religions

Legend:

- Christianity: Mixed, Catholic, Protestant, Eastern, Mormons
- Islam: Sunni, Shia (Shiite)
- Buddhism: Theravada, Chinese Mahayana, Japanese Mahayana, Tantrayana
- Hinduism, Judaism, Animism, Taoism

## Religious Regions of the US

A generalized map of the religious regions of the United States shows concentrations of the major religions.

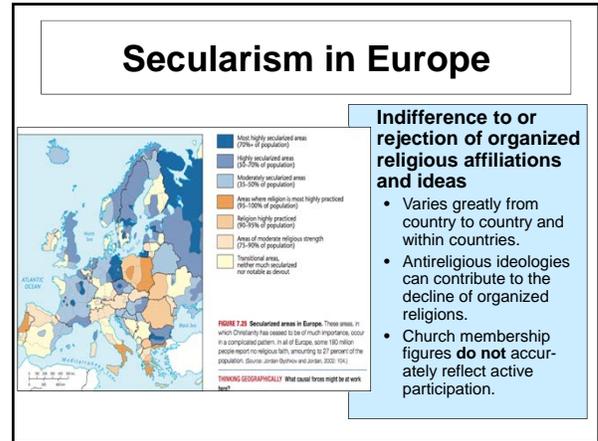
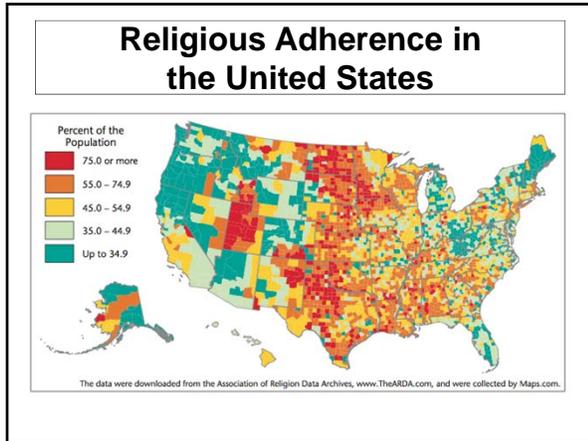
*Adapted with permission from: W. Zelinsky, The Cultural Geography of the United States, rev. ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 96.*

**New England:** Catholic  
**South:** Baptist  
**Upper Midwest:** Lutheran  
**Southwest:** Spanish Catholic  
**West, Midlands:** no dominant denomination

Legend:

- New England (Catholic), Pennsylvania German (Lutheran), Midland (Mixed), Upper Midwest (Lutheran)
- Southern (Baptist), Peninsular Florida (Mixed), French Catholic, Southwest (Spanish Catholic)
- Mormon, Western (Mixed), C (Catholic Concentrations)

Figure 7.18 © John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved. Adapted with permission from: W. Zelinsky, The Cultural Geography of the United States, rev. ed.



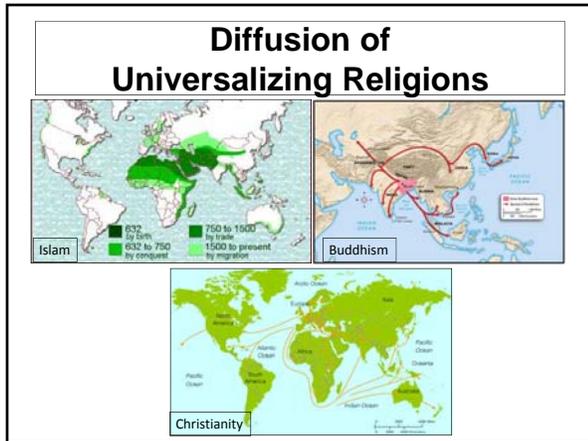
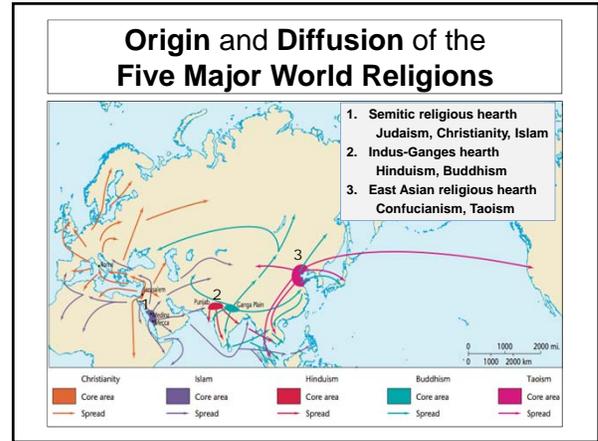
### Hearth and Diffusion

**Religious hearth**

- A focused geographic area where important spiritual innovations are born and from which they spread.

**Religious diffusion**

- The spread of spiritual innovations (religion) from the hearth to other areas (near and far) by spread from the core (expansion diffusion/contagious diffusion) or by the migration of adherents to distant lands (relocation diffusion).



### Ethnic Religions

**Most ethnic religions have limited, if any, diffusion.**

- These religions lack missionaries.
- Diffusion of universalizing religions, especially Christianity and Islam, typically comes at the expense of ethnic religions.

## Mingling of Ethnic and Universalizing Religions

**Universalizing religions may supplant ethnic religions or mingle with them** (assimilation/acculturation).

Equatorial Guinea, a former Spanish colony, is mostly Roman Catholic, whereas Namibia, a former German colony, is heavily Lutheran.

This relationship can also be seen in former French and British colonies and is similar to language and legal systems in use.

Elsewhere, traditional African religious ideas and practices have been merged with Christianity.



## Religious Ecology

**Special relationship with nature:**  
Belief that the earth and its elements were created especially for the use of its people.

**Appeasing the forces of nature:**

- Religion as adaptive strategy to prevent natural hazards and survive the elements
- The wrath of god comes in the form of severe natural events

**Religious rituals and holidays are observed when they coincide with astronomical (celestial) events:**

- Lunar cycles
- Equinoxes and solstices
- Appearance of constellations

## Religious Ecology

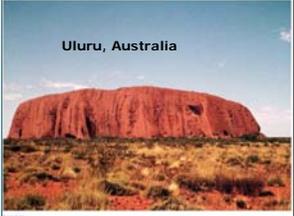
**Certain physical features become sacred places in world religions:**

- Rivers: Ganges, Jordan
- Mountains: Mt. Fuji, Denali, various volcanoes
- Trees: various "Trees of Life"
- Forests: Sacred forests of India
- Rock formations: Shiprock (NM), Uluru (Australia)

## ULURU

**Uluru, called Ayers Rock by the English in 1870, is a monolith rising 1,100 ft. over the Australian desert. It is a sacred place to local Aboriginal peoples.**

The Australian government returned it to Aboriginal ownership in 1993 and changed its name back to its original.



Throughout the day changing sun angle alters its colors until it turns red and orange as the sun sets.

## Cultural Interaction in Religion

**Religion and economy**  
Religious beliefs affect crop and livestock choices, as well as dietary habits.

- Muslim prohibition of pork
- Hinduism's sacred cows
- Catholic meatless Fridays (past)

**Religious pilgrimage**

- Journeys to sacred spaces have strong impacts on local economies.
- Major destinations: Israel, Rome, Mecca
- Important locations: sites of an individual religious event or special structure (miracle, birth place, battle)

## Religious Landscapes

**Religion is displayed on the landscape through the works of people or the designation of natural sites as being sacred.**

- Structures: churches, mosques, temples, pagodas
- Faithful details – styles, colors and ornamentation associated with religion
- Landscapes of the dead – religious burial practices
- Sacred space – areas recognized as having spiritual significance; may be claimed by more than one group
- Names on the land – religious toponymy designating, honoring, and commemorating aspects of religiosity

## Religion and the Cultural Landscape

### Sacred Sites

- ❖ Places or spaces people infuse with religious meaning
- ❖ Pilgrimage: Adherents voluntarily travel to a religious site to pay respects or participate in a ritual at the site

Includes structures associated with religion

- Buildings, shrines, altars, monuments
- Statues, cemeteries, art work from plain to ornate. message boards

## Holy Places

- ❖ Religions may elevate places to a holy position.
- For an ethnic religion holy places derive from the distinctive physical environment of its hearth, such as mountains, rivers, or rock formations.
- A universalizing religion endows with holiness cities and other places associated with the founder's life.
- ❖ Making a pilgrimage to these holy places is incorporated into the rituals of some universalizing and ethnic religions.

## Sacred Site

### Western Wall of ancient Jewish temple and the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem

## Jerusalem

The Old City of Jerusalem contains holy sites for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

## Sacred Sites

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, France

Hill Cumorah, Palmyra, N.Y

Temple of Emerald Buddha, Bangkok

Great Mosque, Senegal

## Pilgrimages to the Holy Land

Welcome To The Holy Land

## Pilgrimages to India

**Pilgrimage Places**

*India Pilgrimage Tours make you closer to God*  
Country of religion provide you opportunity to know about yourself

**Religious Tours**

## Islamic Pilgrimages

**Hajj & Umrah Packages 2015**

**The Importance of Islamic Pilgrimage and Hajj Packages**

**Muslim Holy Sites**

Hebron, Karbala, Mecca, Medina, Masjid, Dome of the Rock, Saudi Arabia, Qom

**Mecca & Medina**  
The Holy Cities of Islam

*Religion... the Heart of the Holy Land*

## Pilgrimages to Rome

**In the Footsteps of the Saints**  
*A Pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi, and the Great Churches of Italy*  
November 11-21, 2015

**St. Peter's Basilica in Rome**

**Spiritual & Religious Tours**

**Protestant church, Southern U.S.**

**Hindu Temple, India**

**In many cases the unique shape of a structure gives an indication of the religious practices associated with it.**

## Religious Structures

**St. Basil's, Moscow**

**Protestant church, Southern U.S.**

**Hindu Temple, India**

**In many cases the unique shape of a structure gives an indication of the religious practices associated with it.**

## Structures Associated with a Religion

## Catalog of Religious Buildings found in New Delhi, India

**Hindu Temple**

**Masjid**

**Church**

**Sikh Sahib**

## Burial Practices

**All cultures deal with dying and death.**

- Promise of an eternal afterlife helps to ease the anguish of death for the living.
- Concepts of heaven and hell in some form exist in all religions with "instructions" of how to get there or avoid it.
- Rituals associated with death as well as preferred means to deal with dead bodies have developed over time and have become part of the cultural landscape.

[http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb41/nrb41\\_5.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb41/nrb41_5.htm)  
<http://www.thefuneralsource.org/tfs001.html>

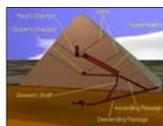
## Landscapes of the Dead



Necropolis, Egypt



Taj Mahal, India



Pyramids of Egypt



Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico

## Landscapes of the Dead







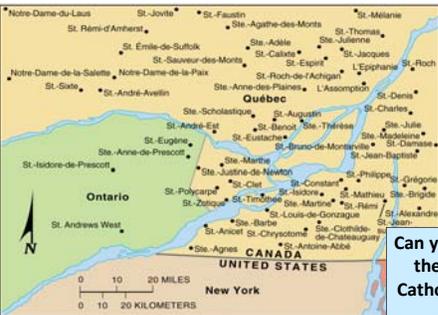
## Landscapes of the Dead







## Religious Toponymy



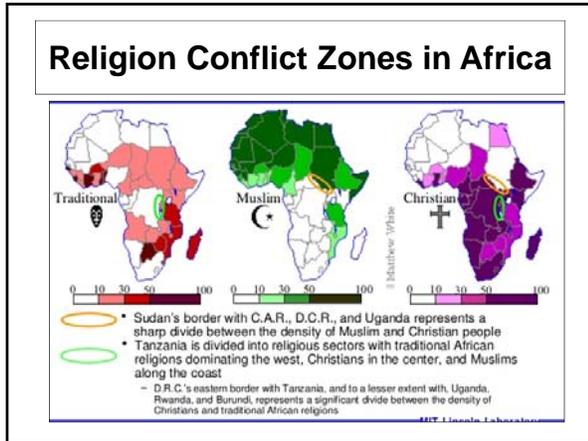
Can you identify the French-Catholic settled area?

## Role of Religion in Political Conflict

**Conflicts along Religious Borders**

- **Interfaith boundaries:** boundaries between the world's major faiths
  - Christian-Muslim boundaries in Africa
- **Intrafaith boundaries:** boundaries within a single major faith
  - Christian Protestants and Catholics,
  - Muslim Sunni and Shi'ite





### Religion and Political Conflict

This block contains four maps and a list of bullet points. The top-left map shows Israel and Palestine with religious affiliations: Jewish majority (yellow), Muslim majority (green), and Christian majority (red). The top-right map shows Nigeria with Muslim majority (green) and Christian majority (red). The bottom-left map shows the Balkan Peninsula with Roman Catholic (red) and Eastern Orthodox (green) churches. The bottom-right map shows Northern Ireland with Catholic (red) and Protestant (green) populations. The text on the left side of the block lists the following:

- Israel and Palestine**
  - WWII, 1967 Arab-Israeli War, West Bank, Hamas
- Nigeria**
  - Muslim North/Christian South
- The Former Yugoslavia**
  - Balkan Peninsula separates the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church
- Northern Ireland**
  - Catholics and Protestants in the North

### Religious Fundamentalism and Extremism

<p><b>Religious fundamentalism</b> Beliefs are nonnegotiable and uncompromising</p> <p><b>Religious extremism</b> Fundamentalism carried to the point of violence Fundamentalists can be extremists but this does not mean that all fundamentalists (of any faith) are extremists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural aspects can be identified and mapped.</li> <li>• Core/source areas can be located.</li> <li>• Means of diffusion can be studied.</li> <li>• Movement's influence on an area can be profound including many aspects of landscape.</li> </ul>
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**NEXT**

**AGRICULTURE**

God willing!

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