**THE GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGION**

Like language, religion is a foundation block of cultures. Religion confers identity on people and influences dress, language, house types, and major community buildings. It is difficult to provide a comprehensive definition for religion. Religions have sets of doctrines and beliefs, which relate to the supernatural. They generally have rituals, which are used to express these beliefs. These rituals occur at major points in individual's lives. Religions of the expansive type have an extensive literature such as the Bible, Qur’an, or Veddic texts. They have also developed a vast bureaucracy of individuals specialized in carrying out religious activities and preserving religious beliefs.

Scholars have divided religions into two general categories: universalizing religions and ethnic religions. *Universalizing religions* are those, which seek converts all around the world regardless of previous cultures. *Ethnic religions* are those that do not choose to missionize or evangelize; their practitioners are content to stay within their original group.

There are four general universalizing religions; Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

· Christianity and Islam both rose in the Levant . Arabic culture was the context of both, and they trace their ancestry to the ethnic religion, Judaism. Christianity and Islam have spread from their core areas all over the world.

· Hinduism, a major religion of the world, has remained concentrated in South Asia and some parts of south-east Asia . In recent decades, however, practitioners of Hindu beliefs have spread all over the world.

· Buddhism arose in northeastern India and spread out from its original area into south and east Asia. It has disappeared in large measure from its original area.

In addition to the fascinating process through which religions diffuse, geographers have focused on the impact of religions on the cultural landscape. Religions have places of worship — temples, churches, shrines, and mosques. They also have sacred groves and landscapes where the dead are buried.

Religions have had a long history of expansion, and over the years, this spread has engendered tremendous conflict among adherents of different views. For example, there is a major transition zone in Africa that runs from east to west which divides the largely Muslim north from Christianity and indigenous religions in sub-Saharan Africa . Many conflicts have occurred along this transition zone. It is difficult to discuss religious conflicts, since all issues are not simply religious, but also involve questions of social class and colonialism.

A. Religion and language lie at the foundation of culture

1. Religion is the great binding force in societies less dominated by technology

2. Religions change continually with the times

3. The great religions have been adopted across cultural barriers and language boundaries

4. Map of religions, like languages, continues to change

II. Geography of religion

A. Religion's role in society

1. In some countries it practically constitutes culture

2. Religion is difficult to define

3. It manifests itself in so many different ways

a) Worship of souls of ancestors in living natural objects

b) Belief that certain living persons possess capacities granted by a supernatural power

c) Belief in a deity or deities

4. In Western, industrialized, urbanized societies religion has become subordinate

5. In Africa and Asia , religious doctrine may exert tight control over behavior

6. Each religion has sets of doctrines, beliefs, and complex rituals

7. Major world-scale faiths have produced vast and complex organizational structures

8. How religion's doctrines and beliefs can affect culture

a) The ideas that a "good" life has rewards and "bad" behavior risks punishment

b) Modes of dress

c) Kinds of food a person can or cannot eat

d) Commercial practices

e) Location and structure of houses

f) Slogan on our money "In God We Trust"

9. Religion has had powerful positive as well as deep negative effects on human societies

10. Large-scale organized religions have often been unable to adjust to the needs of the times

B. Sources and distribution

1. Spatial distribution the world's major religions (Figure 11-1)

a) Because of scale, it cannot reveal the intricate mosaic existing in many countries

b) Dominance of Christian religions

c) Wide distribution of Islam

d) Table 11-1 reports the latest data on religious affiliation

(1) Information must be used cautiously

(2) Data are not always reliable

(3) Should be viewed as a rough estimate

2. Christianity–a divided religion

3. Islam

a) Fastest growing of the world's major religions

b) Focus on: America 's Black Muslims

c) Main division within Islam is between Sunni and the Shiah or Shiite cluster concentrated in Iran

4. Hinduism

a) Ranks after Islam in number of adherents

b) Has holy men representing literally thousands of gods

c) Fragmented by numerous cults

d) Does not have a holy book

e) Lacks the kind of bureaucracy familiar to Christians and Muslims

f) Concentrated in a single geographic realm

5. Buddhism and Shintoism

a) Buddhism originated in India

b) Shintoism–Japanese ethnic religion closely related to Buddhism

6. The Chinese religions

a) Confucianism was mainly a philosophy of life

b) Taoism held human happiness lies in maintaining proper relationship with nature

7. Judaism

a) One of the world's great religions

b) Outside of Israel is scattered across much of the world

c) Three main branches–Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform

8. Shamanism and traditional religions

a) Community faith in which people their *shaman*–religious leader, teacher, healer, and visionary

b) Shamanist faiths are small and comparatively isolated

c) Traditional African religions involve beliefs in a god as creator and provider

C. Source areas

1. Judaism and Christianity began in what is today the Israel-Jordan area

2. Islam arose through the teaching of Muhammad, a resident of Mecca in Western Arabia

3. Hinduism originated in the Indus region of Pakistan

4. Buddhism arose in northeast India

5. Religious source areas coincide quite strongly with culture hearths (Figure 2-4)

III. The rise of secularism

A. Hundreds of millions of people practice no religions at all

1. Religion membership figures do not accurately reflect the number of active members

2. In North America the church plays a declining role in culture and society

3. Communist influence in China and the former Soviet Union promoted an antireligious effort

4. Secularism is not new

a) After the fall of the Roman Empire all spheres of life were dominated by the Catholic church

b) Following the Protestant challenge, erosion of clerical power accelerated

c) The state took over functions of the church

d) Separation of church and state

e) Freedom to choose meant many people chose to abandoned organized religion

5. Weakening of traditions

a) Businesses and shops were closed on Sundays

b) Today shopping centers are open on Sundays

c) Business and personal affairs are handled on Sundays, fewer attend church

6. The Mormon culture still observes the cultural tradition of closing everything on Sunday

7. Western Europe shows decline in religion as a cultural force

a) Even Catholic countries show more secularization

b) Religious prescriptions relating to birth control serve to fuel disaffection

8. The Muslim world shows a strengthening of Islam's position

a) New-found power based on oil revenues

b) A resurgence of revolutionary fervor

c) Several governments have committed funds to support the faith and its followers

9. In more tradition-bound societies, the strength of the faiths is sustained

IV. Global and regional religions

A. Reach

1. The true global religions today are Christianity, Islam, and various forms of Buddhism

2. Cultural religions are those that primarily dominate a national culture

3. Focus on: Shintoism

4. Judaism is a special case because of its global dispersal

5. Local religions are traditional religions such as those found in Africa and elsewhere

B. Focus

1. Monotheistic religions

2. Polytheistic religions

3. Animistic religions–involve the belief that inanimate objects possess souls and should be revered

4. Universal religions

5. Regional religions–Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism

6. Traditional religions prevail where the impact of external forces is weakest

7. Review of Figure 11-1

A. All the great faiths arose within a few thousand years

1. All arose within a few thousand kilometers of each other

2. All started in South and Southwest Asia (Figure 12-1)

II. Hinduism

A. Chronologically, the oldest of the major religions

1. Appears to have begun in the region of the Indus Valley

2. May have arisen 4,000 years ago

3. Has no evolving bureaucratic structures comparable with those of the Christian religions

4. Fundamental doctrine is the *karma*–transferability of the soul

5. The ideal is to escape from the eternal cycle through union with the *Brahman*

6. *Reincarnation* is a cornerstone of the faith

7. Doctrines are closely bound to India 's *caste system*

8. The *untouchables* are the lowest in the caste system

9. Hinduism spread eastward across India into Southeast Asia before the advent of Christianity

10. In new areas, Hindu thinkers sought to assimilate certain of the new teachings of other religions into their own religion

a) Confrontation with other faiths led to the formulation of a compromise religion

b) Monotheism of Islam stimulated the rise of the *Sikhism*

11. Hinduism has not been widely disseminated

12. Focus on: Hindu Bali

B. Diffusion

1. Hinduism has not spread by expansion diffusion in modern times

2. Has remained a cultural region of South Asia

3. Relocation diffusion did not form the foci of growing Hindu regions

C. Cultural landscape

1. Hinduism is a way of life

a) Meals are religious rites

b) Pilgrimages follow prescribed routes

c) Rituals are attended by millions

d) Festivals and feasts are frequent, colorful, and noisy

2. Hindus believe erection of a temple bestows merit on the builder

3. Location of shrines is important because there should be minimal disruption of the natural landscape

4. The faith is a visual as well as an emotional experience

III. Buddhism

A. Appeared in India during the sixth century B.C. as a reaction to less desirable features of Hinduism

1. Buddha was perhaps the first prominent Indian religious leader to speak out against Hinduism's caste system

2. Founded by Prince Siddhartha, known to his followers as Gautama

B. Diffusion

1. The faith grew slowly after Buddha died in 489 B.C. at age 80

2. Emperor Asoka carried the faith across India and to the outside world

3. As Buddhism spread, it declined in India

4. Today Buddhism is fragmented into numerous branches

5. Buddhism is experiencing a revival that started 200 years ago

6. Appeal of Buddhism's principals has ensured its continued diffusion, notably in the Western world

C. Cultural landscape

1. The Bodhi tree has diffused as far as China and Japan as a symbol of the faith

2. Buddhism's architecture style is famous for its pagodas

a) Its shape is derived from the relic mounds of old

b) Every fragment of its construction is a meaningful representation of Buddhist philosophy

IV. Chinese religions

A. Taoism

1. Its beginnings are unclear

2. Teachings focuses on the oneness of humanity and nature

3. Focus on: Feng Shui

4. Taoist virtues were simplicity and spontaneity, tenderness and tranquility

5. It advocated against competition, possession, and the pursuit of knowledge

6. War, punishment, taxation, and ceremonial ostentation were viewed as evils

7. Became a cult of the masses

B. Confucianism

1. Confucius was appalled at suffering of ordinary people at the hands of feudal lords

2. Argued human virtues and abilities, not heritage, should determine a person's position

3. After his death in 479 B.C. his teachings diffused throughout East and Southeast Asia

4. His texts the *Confucian Classics,* became the focus of education in China for 2,000 years

5. Elements of Taoism and Buddhism also formed part of the belief system

6. During the twentieth century political upheavals in China saw a decline in Confucianism

V. Judaism

A. The oldest major religion to emerge west of the Indus Valley

1. Grew from the belief system of one of the Semitic tribes, the Jews, about 2000 b.c.

2. With their holy city destroyed by the Romans, the Jews scattered over the region

a) Those who went north into Central Europe were known as *Ashkenazim*

b) Those who scattered across North Africa and into the Iberian Peninsula were called *Sephardim*

c) Both were denied citizenship, driven into ghettos, and massacred

3. Roots of Jewish tradition lie in the teachings of Abraham

4. Modern times have seen a division of Judaism into many branches

5. *Zionism*

6. Israel , the Jewish state, was created in 1948

VI. Christianity

A. Had its beginning in the Jews' search for deliverance from Roman oppression, and the appearance of Jesus

1. Paul played a central role in organizing the Christian church

2. Became the Roman state religion with the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312

3. Eastern Roman Empire , centered on Constantinople , became focus of the empire

4. Today, the Eastern or Orthodox Church still forms one of the three major branches

5. The papacy, established in Rome , was the center for Roman Catholics, the second branch of the church

6. In the Middle Ages, the power of the church was at its zenith

7. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Protestant movement arose

B. Diffusion

1. Occurred as a combination of expansion and relocation diffusion during the era of European colonialism in the sixteenth century

2. Today, Christianity is the most widespread and largest of the global religions

3. Characterized by aggressive and persistent proselytism of its proponents

C. Cultural landscape

1. In Medieval Europe , the cathedral, church, or monastery was the focus of life

a) Other buildings clustered around the tallest tower, steeple, and spire of the church

b) Crowds gathered for ceremonies and festivals in the square in front of the church

2. Cathedrals still rising above European townscapes are reminders of the Roman Catholic—dominated history

3. In Protestant regions, churches tend to blend into the local architecture

4. Today the skyscraper dominates the cultural landscape in cities

5. Imprint of death on the landscape

a) Christianity uses more land for the disposition of the departed than any other faith

b) Many other faiths cremate the dead

c) Cemeteries often resemble parks in their layout

d) Cemeteries and funeral-related establishments represent a significant economic enterprise

D. Religions and culture regions in the United States

1. Wilbur Zelinsky's map of religious regions

2. Christian denomination culture regions in the United States are better known and understood

VII. Islam

A. The youngest of the major faiths

1. Born of the teachings of Muhammad, who was born in A.D. 571

2. Came at a time when the Arab world was in religious and social disarray

3. Islam brought to the Arab world a unifying religious faith and a whole new set of values

4. The five pillars of Islam

5. Mosques were used not only for the Friday prayer, but also served as social gathering places to bring communities closer together

6. Mecca became the spiritual center

7. The new faith spread like wildfire

8. Arab armies formed, invaded, and conquered

9. Islam was carried throughout North Africa

11. Arabs established institutions of higher learning in many cities

12. The faith is still the heart of the Arab culture today

B. Regions and sects

1. A divided faith

a) Orthodox Sunni Muslims

b) Shiite Muslims

2. Division has produced conflict between the two sects

C. Diffusion

1. Classical example of expansion diffusion from its source area

2. Relocation diffusion has resulted in Islam becoming a world religion (Figure 12-4)

3. Attracted converts wherever it took hold

D. Cultural landscape

1. Mosques dominate the urban landscapes

a) They are the focus of life where the faithful are called to prayer

b) Often constitute the most carefully maintained building in a town

2. Muslim architects combined their skills with Roman blueprints of an earlier age

a) Spain 's Alhambra Palace in Granada

b) The Great Mosque of Cordoba

3. During the eleventh century, the glazing of tiles became common

4. In architecture, Islam achieved its greatest artistic expression, its most distinctive visible element

a) It symbolizes the power of the faith and its role in the community

b) A confirmation that religion and culture are one

I. Introduction

II. Interfaith boundaries

A. Boundaries between the world's major faiths

B. Nigeria

1. Miltilingual country with about 110 million inhabitants

2. Religious differences began to threaten the state in the 1990s

3. The north is a Muslim zone

a) In the north, Muslim preachers are calling for an Islamic Republic

b) Christian communities do exist there

4. The south is a domain where Christianity prevails, along with local domestic religion

5. Muslim dominance of national affairs has become an issue

6. Secession is being called for in the south as well

7. Aggressive expansion of Islam among smaller population groups adds to the problem

8. Potential for fracture along religious lines is growing

9. In the late 1990s, Nigeria was OPEC's fourth largest oil producer

10. Breakup of Nigeria would have far-reaching implications

C. Sudan

1. Muslim north and Christian south

2. Constant conflict between the two

3. Sharia religious laws were being imposed over the entire country

4. The war has devastated the south

a) Millions have been dislocated

b) Hundreds of thousands have starved

c) The Khartoum regime has interfered with relief supplies

5. In the late 1990s, the war raged on

D. The African Horn

1. Religious map of Ethiopia is more complicated than that of Nigeria or Sudan (Figure 11-1)

a) Heart of the former mountain kingdom contains the cultural core area of Amharic (Coptic) Christians

b) Islam won some adherents at base of mountains, but Christian rulers maintain control

c) Military dictatorship was overthrown in 1991

d) In 1995 the Muslim state of Eritrea was formed, land-locking Ethiopia

e) Problems still continue between the different religions

E. South Asia

1. End of British colonialization

a) Political border established between Islamic Pakistan and multicultural India

b) Muslims crossed into Pakistan and Hindus moved into India

2. India proclaimed itself a secular federation and sporadic religious conflict followed for 30 years

3. In India during the 1980s, several events occurred that led to more intense conflict

a) The Sikhs campaigned for greater or outright independence

(1) Demanded a separate state in the Punjab (Figure 13-2)

(2) Indian army raided the Sikhs' holiest shrine causing more than 1000 deaths

(3) India’s prime minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated by Sikh members of her bodyguard

b) Second development occurred during the late 1980s when the site of a holy shrine claimed by both Muslims and Hindus became a battleground

c) Hinduism began to exhibit the sort of fundamentalism and militancy that had been associated with other faiths

F. The former Soviet Union

1. Makeup of the Soviet Union when it was first formed

a) Fifteen Soviet Republics and other territories of lesser rank

b) Russia , the largest republic, was divided into 70 territories

c) Soviets inherited more than one hundred ethnic groups plus their:

(1) Languages, beliefs, and lifeways

(2) Parts of two great religious realms–the Eastern Orthodox Church and Islam

2. The Soviets discouraged religious practice throughout the country

3. Created a boundary to separate Christian and Muslim ethnic domains in Armenia and Azerbaijan

4. When the USSR collapsed, Soviet Republics became independent states, and ethnic strife broke out almost immediately

a) Christians and Muslims fought

b) Islam quickly revived in the central Asian republics

c) The Russian Orthodox Church is experiencing a resurrection

5. Kazakhstan poses the most serious potential spatial problem

a) Islamic-Christian interfaith boundary runs right across the state

b) Virtually all Christians live in the north

c) Almost all Muslims live in the south

d) Unless the interfaith border becomes a political border a major problem could arise

G. Europe

1. Yugoslavia

a) When the political system failed, the Muslims were attacked by Christians

b) "Ethnic cleansing" was also undertaken between the Christian factions

c) All Yugoslavians are of Slavic ancestry; what divides them is culture

2. Europe 's failure to prevent Yugoslavia 's war casts doubt on its ability to become a real European Union

H. Other interfaith boundaries

1. Bangladesh–growing unrest between Muslims and Hindus

2. Sri Lanka

3. Southeast Asia , the Philippines–Catholics and Muslims

4. Southwest Asia and Israel 's conflict with its neighbors

III. Intrafaith boundaries

A. The case of Switzerland , which has regional expression (Figure 13-4)

1. In Western Europe , religion or ethnic factors do not usually cause strife

2. In Eastern Europe , factors other than religious ones usually lay at the root of strife

B. Northern Ireland

1. Catholic and Protestant conflict

2. Ireland was partitioned by the British (Figure 13-5)

3. Also a conflict over access to opportunities, civil rights, and political influence

C. In the Islamic realm

1. Conflict between Sunni and Shiite branches

2. The Iran-Iraq conflict of the 1980s

3. After the Gulf War, the Sunni-controlled army of defeated Iraq moved against the Shiite communities of the south

4. Conflict in Lebanon

IV. Religious fundamentalism

A. A worldwide drive by millions back to the basics of religious faith

1. Often born out of frustration seen as:

a) Breakdown of society's mores and values

b) The loss of religious authority

c) Failure to achieve economic goals

d) The corruption of political systems

2. People in one society see it and fear it in other societies without recognizing it in their own

3. Fundamentalism and extremism are closely related

4. Today, all religions are affected by modernization of the world

a) Some churches have changed with the times

b) Other churches have reaffirmed fundamental dogma and obstructed the influences of modernization

5. This drive toward fundamentalism is creating a climate of mistrust

B. Christian fundamentalism

1. The Catholic church

a) Issues giving rise to disputes–birth control and family planning

b) Few women have managed to enter the hierarchy

c) Sought to ally itself with Islamic countries against advocates of population control

2. Major religions tend to be male-dominated

C. The Islamic world

1. The strict laws of Islam are not equally applied throughout the Muslim religious realm

2. Affected by the modernization of the world

3. Inconsistency leads to reaction among the masses of believers

4. Even in "moderate" wings of Islam, fundamentalism is raising its head

5. When the former Shah of Iran tried to modernize the state he provoked a religious movement that eventually overthrew his throne

6. Events in Iran during the 1970s and 1980s were perhaps the most significant manifestation of the fundamentalist trend in organized religion

D. Like religion generally, fundamentalism can constitute both a unifying and a divisive force

1. As a unifying force

a) When revered shrines of a faith are imperiled or damaged

b) When excesses of a modernizing society become repugnant to those who prefer established ways

c) When ethnic conflict arises over other issues

2. Fundamentalist preachers and their massive following in the United States have divided the Protestant churches

3. Problems in Algeria

4. When the rise of fundamentalism is added to divisions created by interfaith and intrafaith boundaries, religion can plunge entire societies into conflict