

The Geography of Religion

Distribution, Diffusion, Place

Key Questions

- Where are various religions located?
- How did this distribution developed?
- Why do some religions cover large areas, while others are localized?
- What impact to religions make on the landscape?

Distribution of Religions

- Universalizing Religions
 - Designed to appeal to all people everywhere
 - Founded by teachings & actions of one individual
 - Christianity, Islam, Buddhism
 - branch, denomination, sect
- Ethnic religions
 - Limited to one particular group
 - Hinduism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shintoism, Judaism, Animism

Distribution of Buddhism

- 350 million adherents
- Three major branches
 - Mahayana – 56%
 - China, Japan, Korea
 - Theravada – 38%
 - Sri Lanka & Southeast Asia
 - Tantrayana – 6%
 - Tibet & Mongolia

Origins of Buddhism

- Siddhartha Gautama: c. 563-490 B.C.
 - Left a life of luxury to live in forest & meditate
 - Emerged as the Buddha – Enlightened One
 - Preached, taught monks
 - Buddhists follow his teachings regarding suffering & release

Diffusion of Buddhism

- Originated in northeastern India
- Emperor Asoka
 - Converted to Buddhism: 257 B.C.
 - Sent missionaries to surrounding territories
 - Sri Lanka converted
- 1st-4th centuries A.D.: Merchants & missionaries took Buddhism to China & Southeast Asia

Buddhist Teaching

- Four Noble Truths
 - Life is suffering
 - Suffering is caused by desire: reincarnation
 - Goal of all beings is to escape from suffering & reincarnation
 - Eightfold Path leads to Nirvana

Theravada Buddhism

- Claims to be original teaching of the Buddha
- Concentration on meditation & spiritual discipline
- Requires enormous commitment of time
- Practiced primarily by monks
- Common people effectively excluded

Mahayana Buddhism

- Concentration on generosity & good works
- Open to all
- Goal is to become bodhisattva
- Vow to choose reincarnation until all beings achieve nirvana

Distribution of Christianity

- 2 billion adherents
- Three major branches
 - Roman Catholic -- 50%
 - Eastern Orthodox -- 10%
 - Protestant -- 25%

Christian Origin

- Jesus of Nazareth: c. 4 B.C.-30 A.D.
 - Jewish rabbi, preached about the Kingdom of God
 - Executed on a cross by Romans
 - His tomb found empty on the third day
 - Christians believe God raised him from the dead
 - His death atones for sin, his resurrection promises eternal life
 - New Testament written by his followers over 70 years

Diffusion of Christianity

- During first century Christianity spread throughout Mediterranean by missionary efforts
 - St. Paul principal missionary & theologian
- A.D. 300: Christianity made official religion of Roman Empire
- A.D. 600: Practically entire empire Christian
- A.D. 1100: Europe entirely Christian except Iberia
 - Middle East & North Africa Muslim
- European missionaries & colonists: worldwide diffusion

Roman Catholicism

- Bible plus church teaching is authoritative
- Pope heads the church
- God's grace conveyed through sacraments

Easter Orthodoxy

- Split from Catholicism 5th through 11th centuries
- Bible plus church fathers is authoritative
- Share Catholic belief regarding sacraments
- Reject later Catholic theological innovation

Protestant Reformation – 16th C.

- Reaction to Catholic abuses & traditions
 - Martin Luther – Germany
 - Jean Calvin – France, Switzerland
 - *sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christus, sola scriptura, soli Deo gloria*
- God's grace conveyed through faith in Jesus
- Sacraments reduced to baptism & communion

Distribution of Islam

- 1.2 billion adherents
 - 50% in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India
 - Most of remainder in Middle East & North Africa
- Two major branches
 - Sunni – 83%
 - Shia – 16%
 - 90% of Iranians & Azerbaijanis

Origins of Islam

- Mohammed of Mecca: c. 570-632 A.D.
 - Received words of Koran from angel Gabriel
 - Holy book of Islam
 - Strongly monotheistic
 - Core of Islamic teaching
 - Written in Arabic
 - » Became lingua franca of Middle East
 - His preaching aroused persecution
 - Fled to Medina in 622 – Hijira

Diffusion of Islam

- By 750 Muslim armies conquered North Africa, Persian Empire, Iberian Peninsula & western India
- 13th century: Missionaries & traders extended Islam into Central & Southeast Asia
- 15th century: Muslim armies captured all of Turkey & much of Eastern Europe
- Spanish expelled Muslims from Iberia by 1492

Islamic Teaching

- Five Pillars of Islam
 - There is no God but Allah.
 - Pray 5x/day facing Mecca
 - Charity toward the poor (alms)
 - Fast of Ramadan
 - Pilgrimage to Mecca (haj)

Branches of Islam

- Shia
 - Only direct male descendants of Mohammed can serve as successor to the prophet (caliph)
 - Strictly interpret literal words of Koran
- Sunni
 - Any Muslim male can serve as caliph
 - Interpret the Koran according to its spirit

Distribution of Hinduism

- Ethnic religion
 - 97% in India
 - Remainder in Nepal, Bali, Sri Lanka, & elsewhere

Origins of Hinduism

- Religion of Aryan invaders from Central Asia – 1500 B.C.
 - No single founder
 - No single holy Scripture
- Earliest writings c. 1500 B.C.
- Intermingled with native Dravidians

Hindu Teaching & Practice

- Polytheistic
 - Vishnu – 70% of adherents
 - Benevolent savior
 - Shiva (Siva) – 25% of adherents
 - Protector & destroyer
- Caste system
 - Determines identity
 - Occupation, marriage partner, economic & social status
- Reincarnation
- Law of Karma

Chinese Religion

- Confucianism
 - Teachings of Confucius – 551-479 B.C.
 - Minor government counselor
 - Emphasized *li* (ritual propriety) & *ren* (authoritative conduct)
 - Benevolence required both of rulers & subjects
- Daoism
 - Teaching of Lao Tzu
 - Emphasized *wuwei* (nonassertive action, non-coercive action)

Holy Places

- Buddhism
 - Places in northeastern India associated with the Buddha's important acts
- Islam
 - Mecca – Mohammed's birthplace
 - Medina – first converts
 - Jerusalem – Mohammed ascended to heaven

More Holy Places

- Hinduism
 - Mt. Kailas – home of Shiva & source of the Ganges River
 - Ganges River – bathing brings purification
- Judaism – Jerusalem: City of David, Jewish capital

Place Names & Cultural Landscape

- California toponyms
 - Religious names
 - San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Diego
 - Other religious associations
 - Los Angeles, Sacramento

Religions Organize Space

- Seventh-day Adventists
 - World divided into divisions – North American
 - Canada & United States
 - Divisions divided into union conferences – Pacific Union
 - California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona
 - Union conferences divided into local conferences – Northern, Central, Southern, & Southeastern California; Arizona; Nevada-Utah
 - Local churches look to local conferences for leadership

Religious Expansion & Conflict

Religion Confronts Government

- The fall of Communism in Eastern Europe
 - Christian churches in East Germany & Romania played crucial role in confronting government
- The fall of apartheid in South Africa
 - Individual Christians were at the center of the struggle
 - Nelson Mandela
 - Desmond Tutu

The Case of China

- House church movement
 - 50-100 million Christians in China
 - Some in government-sanctioned churches
 - Majority meet without government permission
 - Brutally persecuted by torture & imprisonment
- Falun Gang
 - Traditional Chinese practice – Chi Gang
 - Physical/spiritual exercise – concentrates Chi
- Government fears these group's ability to gather large numbers of adherents in one place

Religion Confronts Religion

- Jews, Christians, Muslims
 - Common heritage
 - Descendants of Abraham – Genesis 12ff
 - Jews claim descent from Isaac
 - Arabs claim descent from Ishmael
 - Christians claim that they are the true spiritual heirs of Abraham

Jews & Arabs in Palestine

- Jews occupied Palestine until A.D. 70 – diaspora
- Palestine primarily Christian until late 7th century
- Muslims captured Jerusalem & built Dome of the Rock – 691
- 1516-1917: Turkish colonialism (Ottoman Empire)
- British control until 1948
 - State of Israel established by United Nations
- Arab-Israeli wars: 1956, 1967, 1973

Current Conflict

- Arab irritants
 - Continued terrorism against Jewish civilians
 - Refusal to recognize Israel
 - Refusal to prepare Palestinian people for coexistence with Israel
- Israeli irritants
 - Occupation of Golan Heights
 - Israeli settlements on West Bank & Gaza Strip
 - Curfews & checkpoints
 - Vigorous retaliation against Arab violence

Mutual Irritants

- Status of Jerusalem
- Status of refugees & right to return to Israel