

## Chapter 8 – The Geography of Religion

AP HUG – Mrs. Petras

### Overview:

- Few things have the ability to motivate humans more, for good or for bad, than religious ideas
- The Crusades of the Middle Ages, the sacrifice of thousands by the Aztecs, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US were all motivated, in part, by religious beliefs
- Religion is perhaps the most influential component of human culture on our daily lives
- Conversely, charity groups at the local, national, and international levels help suffering people every day in the name of the same religions
- Naturally, there is a geography of religion
- At the most basic level, religions flourish in some places and not in others
- Religions also change the landscape by creating buildings and other human-made features, or by declaring certain spaces as sacred
- In addition, religions can change a culture or cultural landscape by introducing or influencing social or political ideas

### Module 8A – Classifying Religions:

- Classification allows us to take a very complex set of things and group them together into manageable units by finding some commonalities among the items
- **Religion** is a cultural system of beliefs, traditions, and practices often centered around the worship of a deity or deities
- Religions that seek to convert nonbelievers to their ranks are known as **universalizing religions**
- These religions often use missionaries to actively seek out new members
- Christianity and Islam are both universalizing religions, and both continue to grow rapidly around the world
- Followers of other religions view themselves differently and feel that their beliefs are unique to their people or region of the world
- To be a member, you must be born into the religion
- Often, these types of religions are associated with a particular ethnic group, so they are classified as **ethnic religions**
- A subset of ethnic religions is what can be called **traditional religions**
- These faiths are practiced by small groups of people who largely live in isolated or developing areas of the globe
  - Examples: parts of Africa or the Amazon
    - In the US – Native American religions
- Religions can also be classified based on other characteristics. Some religions are **monotheistic** b/c they worship one god.
  - Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam are examples
- Other religions are **polytheistic**
- Many traditional religions are also polytheistic b/c they are what is known as animistic.

- **Animism** is the belief that souls and gods inhabit all or most objects – especially natural objects, such as trees, stones, and bodies of water.
  - Shinto, the traditional religion of the Japanese people, is animistic

### Module 8C – Hinduism:

- **Hinduism** is at least 4,000-5,000 years old, making it the oldest of the major world religions
- Hindu is derived from the Persian word for the Indus River
- Its origins are in what is now Pakistan along the Indus River
- According to the 2001 Census of India, over 827 million Indians, about 81% of the population, were Hindu
- Commonly referred to as **reincarnation**, this cycle of repeated birth and death is called samsara by Hindus
- **Karma** – the notion that every action a person takes has consequence at some point in the future
- The release from the cycle of birth and death is known as **moksha**
- **Dharma** – translated as “duty” – it means that every Hindu, every member of a society, has certain obligations that he or she should respect and fulfill
- **Hindu Worship:**
  - Hinduism is polytheistic, and most Hindus worship one or more of the religion’s thousands of gods and goddesses
  - A trinity of gods that stand above the others
    - Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the destroyer
  - Holy text - **Vedas**
  - Hindu worship is centered on prayer and homage for a particular god or goddess
  - Hindus may take flowers, sweets, or rice to a temple or shrine devoted to the god

### Module 8D – Buddhism:

- **Buddhism** is an important world religion practiced by about 400 million people worldwide
- Its roots are in Hindu India during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- Founder is **Siddhartha** from Nepal
- **Buddha**, meaning “one who awake” or the Enlightened
- Four Noble Truths:
  - Life is suffering
  - Suffering is by desire
  - Suffering can end
  - To end suffering follow **eightfold path**
- **Nirvana** – enlightenment
- Holy texts – Pali Cannon or Tripitaka
- In 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, Ashoka became Buddhist and sent missionaries to southeast Asia
- Two branches
  - Theravada Buddhism
  - Mahayana Buddhism
- Buddhist houses of worship are known as temples
- A common element is the presence of **stupa**, an often-bell-shaped structure that has origins before Buddhism began

### Module 8E – Judaism:

- **Judaism** is a much smaller faith
- Worldwide, only about 14-15 million people practice the religion
- As the spiritual foundation of Christianity and Islam, Judaism has changed the world in indescribable ways
- Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people
- Ethnic religion
- History of Judaism is largely tied with their story (**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> covenants**)
- **Diaspora** – scattering of the Jewish people
- Hebrews, the ancestors of the Jews, were a small, tribal group that lived in the Middle East in what now Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel
- **Jewish Worship:**
  - Judaism is a monotheistic religion
  - Jews believe that God gave humans his law through the **Torah**
  - Holy days and festivals are a central part of Jewish life. Because they are based on a lunar calendar; the holy days fall at different times each year
  - The Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday evening and lasts until Saturday evening
    - Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, Purim, and Chanukah
  - Eat food that is **kosher**
  - Place of worship is the **synagogue**

### Module 8F – Christianity:

- The largest religion, with over 2B adherents, Christianity is an important religious force in the world today
- The prehistory of Christianity is the history of Judaism
- Christianity is monotheistic
- God is an all-powerful, perfect being who loves everyone unconditionally
- Christians also believe that Jesus, by allowing himself to be crucified, gave humans the opportunity to be forgiven by God for their sins
- Belief in trinity – God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit
- Christianity has two major branches (first split was 1054 – the **Great Schism** and 2<sup>nd</sup> split was the **Protestant Reformation**)
- It is a universalizing religion
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- **Christian Worship:**
  - Prayer can be formal, conducted in a group or an organized religious service, or personal
  - Christians worship as a community on Sunday
  - Celebrations: Easter, Christmas, and days for honoring saints

### Module 8G – The Spread and Distribution of Christianity:

- Missionary effort
- Eastern Europe is Eastern Orthodox
- Western Europe was Roman Catholic until the Protestant Reformation
- Spread through colonization

### Module 8H – Islam:

- Given the global situation today, perhaps no religion is more misunderstood by nonbelievers than Islam
- Islam has quickly grown to become the second largest religion on the planet
- Started with **Muhammed** in the city of Mecca, now in Saudi Arabia
- Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last, and therefore greatest, prophet of God or Allah
- In 622, he preached to a group of pilgrims from the town of **Yathrib** located about 250 miles north of Mecca
- The move of Muhammad and his followers to **Yathrib, renamed Medina**, is the start of the Islamic calendar and is known as the **Hijra**
- Muhammad died suddenly in 632
- Holy text is the **Qur'an**
- Muslims believe that the Qur'an must be read in Arabic
- **Islam** – to accept God's laws and to submit
- **Muslim** – that which submits – Humans, given free will by God, must choose to surrender to his laws
- Place of worship – **Mosque**
- Muslims must follow the **5 pillars of Islam**
- Sharia law must be followed in all aspects of life
- Two branches – **Sunni and Shi'ites**
- Islam was spread through conquest and trade
- Modesty is important

### Module 8I – Other Large Religious Groups:

- Confucianism and Taoism
  - Practiced in East Asia
  - Founded in China
  - **Important ideas:**
    - Humility
    - Nature
    - Order
    - Respect
    - education
- African Traditional Religions (I will go over in class)
  - animism
- Sikhism (I will go over in class)
- Baha'i (I will go over in class)
- Jainism (I will go over class)
- Shinto
  - Founded in Japan

### Module 8J – Landscapes of Religion:

- Religion, as a primary component of many cultures, is certainly present on the landscape
- The most obvious examples of this are basic religious structures, be they churches, temples, shrines, mosques, or synagogues

- A traditional Protestant church in New England generally looks different from a catholic church
- Mosques have a minaret, a place for a muezzin, or caller, to make a call for prayer
- Hindu temples vary in shape and form based on the primary deity that the temple honed
- Japanese Shinto shrines are immediately identifiable by the presence of a torii, or gate
- Religion can also be seen in the way some societies organize their cities
- Spanish Catholic settlements of Middle and South America, the main square nearly always has a large church
- Mormon communities also have the local temple in the middle of the town
- The surrounding town was laid out in a grid like pattern, as envisioned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saint's founder Joseph Smith
- Many Indian Hindu villages also have a temple in the middle of the community
- The plain agricultural landscapes of the Amish are also inspired by their religious belief that a simple life brings them closer to God
- Another type of religious landscape is the geography of religious administrative areas
  - For example, the Catholic Church, which is very hierarchical, regions of a country are divided into dioceses
  - A diocese is then further subdivided into parishes, or local church communities
  - Orthodox and Episcopalian Churches use similar hierarchical structures with defined territories
- Many religions believe that certain places hold special religious significance
- As geographers, we can study not only the location and distribution of these holy/sacred places but also their meaning
- In general, this is a dichotomous distinction between **sacred and profane landscapes**
- **Profane means "unconsecrated" or "ordinary" – comes from Latin "before the Temple"**
- Many sacred spaces seem to have qualities that make them different from other places
- Sacred spaces have order and are whole, self-contained environments that radiate power
- 3 categories:
  - Some places are sacred b/c they are historical sites important to a religion
    - Example, Jerusalem's Western Wall
    - In US, South Royalton, Vermont, is not considered sacred space by most, but for Mormons it is revered as the birthplace of the religion's founder
    - For Shi'ite Muslims, the city of Karbala in Iraq is sacred b/c it is the site where the Shi'ite leader and Muhammad's grandson, was killed in 680 CE
    - For many Christians, Jerusalem is sacred
  - Some places are sacred b/c they are a homeland, the origin area of a particular religion or set
    - The Chaco Canyon area of New Mexico was home to the ancient Pueblo Indian
  - Some places are sacred b/c they are **mystico-religious** sites – a place of connection between the mystical universe and the human world
    - For Muslims – Dome of the Rock, Mecca, and Medina
    - For Buddhists – the site of the Bodhi Tree where Buddha achieved enlightenment
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