

Class 7b:
Geographies of
Religion

Religion and culture

- Everyone has values and morals
- Religion means worship, faith in the sacred or divine
- Mentifacts: individuals' beliefs
- Sociofacts: relationships based on those beliefs

Religion and geography

- Spatial distribution of religions
- Diffusion of religious beliefs and practices
- Impact on the landscape
- Territorial conflicts over religion

Distribution of religions

- Universalizing religions
 - Christianity, Islam, Buddhism
- Ethnic religions
 - More than a statement of faith
 - Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto
- Tribal or traditional religions
 - Animism, shamanism

Distribution of Christianity

- Largest religion (2 billion)
- Three major branches
 - Roman Catholic 50%
 - Protestant 25%
 - Eastern Orthodox 10%
- Others: Pentecostal, Mormon, Armenian, Coptic, Maronites

Diffusion of Christianity

- Began in Jerusalem
- Official religion of Rome by 313
- Split Roman Empire and Christian church
 - Roman Catholicism in West
 - Eastern Orthodox in East
- Protestant Reformation second split
 - Catholicism in South
 - Protestantism in North

Diffusion of Christianity

- Spread to New World by colonizers, settlers

Christianity and the landscape

- Church as center of settlement
 - Collective worship important
 - Architecture, layout symbolic
- Cemeteries as land use
- Hierarchy of spatial organization

Christianity and territory: Ireland

- English colony
- Independence in 1937
- 6 counties voted to stay
- North discriminated against Catholics
- IRA: terrorism for unity
- 1966-1999: 3000 dead

Distribution of Islam

- Fastest growing religion (1.2 billion)
- Two major branches
 - Sunni 85%
 - Shiite 15%
- North Africa, SW Asia, Indonesia

Five pillars of Islam

- There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet
- Pray 5 times daily, facing Mecca
- Give to charity
- Fast daily during Ramadan
- Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once (*hajj*)

Other practices of Islam

- Qur'an or Koran: sacred text
 - Revealed to Muhammad
 - Should be read in Arabic
- *Hadith*: sayings and actions of Muhammad
 - “Chain of reporters”
 - Open to interpretation (e.g., veiling)

Other beliefs of Islam

- Tolerance of People of the Book
 - Jews, Christians
 - Descendants of Ishmael
- More egalitarian than Christianity
 - No intermediaries
 - Worshippers are equals

Diffusion of Islam

- Began in Mecca and Medina in 622
- Spread rapidly to east and west
- Conquered North Africa, Spain, SE Europe within 200 years
- Traders spread to SE Asia, Africa

Diffusion of Islam

- Split over succession
 - Shiites insist on hereditary leaders
 - Sunnis do not
- Iran, Bahrain, southern Iraq: Shiite
- Iraq civil war?

Islam and the landscape

- Sacred cities: Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem
 - Muhammad's birthplace, Ka'ba
 - Muhammad's first "conquest"
 - Muhammad's ascent to Heaven
- Mosques for community gathering, worship
 - *Mihrab* points to Mecca
 - Minaret: tower for call to prayer

Islamic art

- Images of God (Allah) forbidden
- Images of people, animals discouraged
- Importance of words
- Geometric patterns, flowers

Islam and territory: Spain

- Muslims reached as far as France and Vienna
- Ruled much of Spain for 300 years
- Driven out by 1492
- Forced conversion sent Muslims, Jews east

Religion and fundamentalism

- Ultraconservative beliefs
- Reaction to modernism
- Want to institutionalize their values
- “Us against the world”