KEY VOCABULARY

There are 2 types of religions:

1. Universalizing - religions that attempt to be global and appeal to all people. The 3 main universalizing religions are: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.
2. Ethnic - religion that primarily appeals to one group of people living in one place. Some notable ethnic religions are Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Confucianism and Animism which can be used to describe many traditional African religions that focus on the animate qualities of normally considered inanimate objects, like stones, water, etc. Animism is a sort of all-encompassing term rather than a specific religion

Pilgrimage – a journey to a holy place.

Missionaries - individuals who help to transmit a universalizing religion through relocation diffusion.

Pagans - followers of polytheistic religions in ancient times.

Cosmogony - creation story of how the world was created, e.g. God created the world in 7 days.

Solstice - day when sun is at highest or lowest point in the sky.

Why do religions have different distributions?

As a general rule, universalizing religions have origins based on a specific individual’s life in the past (e.g. Jesus), ethnic religions typically have either no origin or an unclear one at best.

For example Christianity is based on the life of Jesus and Islam is based on the life of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Hinduism did not originate with a specific founder, its beginnings date back to before recorded history.

Diffusion of Religions

* Christianity spread mainly through the work of missionaries, and also by some conquest and colonization.
* Islam spread mainly through conquest and some missionary activity.
* Buddhism spread mainly through missionariesand trade merchants.

Ethnic religions rarely diffuse, and when they do, it is to a small extent. Thus, the universalizing religions diffuse mainly at the expense of the smaller ethnic religions, and often a semi-hybrid religion will result with concepts from both the ethnic religion and the universalizing religion intertwined. Judaism is an exception in that it has diffused widely throughout the years, mainly because its people have had to flee persecution from many areas in the world.

Islam is a universalizing religion that places the most emphasis on identifying shrines/holy places. In universalizing religions, the holy places are generally locations at which memorable events happened in the founder’s life, such as Mecca is in Islam because it is Muhammad’s birthplace. Holy places in ethnic religions are often physical features that are closely tied to the religion. For example, in Hindu one of the most important rituals is the bathing of oneself in the Ganges River.

Cosmogony and calendars also differ between universalizing religions and ethnic religions. Ethnic religious creation stories tend to deal with the physical environment and natural events, whereas universalizing religion stories often attempt to explain the mystical. Ethnic religions typically organize their calendars around the seasons, other natural events, or the physical geography. Universalizing religions’ main purpose in calendars is to commemorate events in the founder’s life, thus the seasons or weather are not central to the structure.

How did religions affect the cultural landscape?

The distribution of religious elements on the landscape reflects the importance of religion in people’s values.

In Christianity, the landscape is dominated by a high density of churches. They are critical because of the emphasis placed on regularly attending worship. In Islam, mosques are the places for general assembly. They are not viewed as a sanctified place but rather a convening point for the community. A mosque normally has a central courtyard surrounded by classrooms. In Hinduism, temples are built within the home or individual community. They have a central room to house a spirit, with rooms for rituals, and outer purifying pools. In both Buddhism and Shinto, **pagodas** are the common architecture. They are typically built to enshrine sacred religious artifacts.

The disposing of the dead differs from religion to religion. Some prefer to bury while others choose to cremate. Religion often influences the place-names of certain regions. Ex. The vast amount of places named for saints in predominantly Roman Catholic Quebec.

Why do territorial conflicts arise among religious groups?

RELIGION IS ARGUABLY THE MOST VOLITALE OF ALL HUMAN RELATIONS AND THE SOURCE OF MOST VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT HISTORY.

Fundamentalism - the literal interpretation and strict intense adherence to one’s religious principles. Fundamentalists try to return society to its religious ways. The most obvious example is the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Religion is nearly always suppressed in communist countries. Leaders believe that religion has a tendency to upset stability and therefore ban it altogether, though often they just concrete the people’s religious adherence instead of destroying it.

Other times, when people of different religions live in close proximity to one another, engage in contact often, or share interests in a particular location, especially violent interaction will occur. Ex. The Middle East. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have fought for over 2,000 years to control the same small strip of land in the East Mediterranean. Historically the Crusades between Christians and Muslims played out as each fought to control the Holy Lands. Hostilities continue in the modern era over these same lands. Attempting to summate the issue in a few sentences would not be sufficient, see pgs. 213-220.

The controversy in Ireland occurred when predominantly Catholic South Ireland wished to secede from predominantly Protestant Great Britain. However, the northernmost six counties of Ireland are overwhelmingly Protestant and wished to remain part of the U.K. When the split occurred a small number of Roman Catholics in both N. Ireland and the Republic of Ireland joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a militant organization devoted to achieving Irish unity by whatever means necessary. A Protestant organization has formed in return. Violence continues as extremists from both sides disrupt the lives of peaceful civilians.

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| Religion | Founder /  Significant Individuals | Location of Orig. | Location today. | Beliefs / Customs | How it was diffused? |
| Christianity | Jesus Christ | Jerusalem /  The Roman Empire | 2 billion followers in N. and S. America, Europe, Australia, and some Asian and African countries. | * Believe in the Judeo – Christian God * Jesus was the son of God * Church on Sunday’s * Confession * Celebrating Xmas and Easter | * By soldiers during the Roman Empire. * Missionary activity. * Along trade routes. * Imperialism and conquest of European powers 1600’s – 1900’s |
| Judaism | Abraham  Moses | Jerusalem / modern day Israel | 6 million followers in U.S., 4 million in Israel, 2 million in Russia, 2 million elsewhere | * First religion to support *monotheism- the belief in only 1 god,* as opposed to *polytheism- the belief in many gods* * Believe in the Judeo – Christian God * Jesus was a prophet * Messiah hasn’t come yet * Worship in Synagogues * Food taboo: Pork | * Migrant diffusion / Forced migration * Banished from the Holy Land (Israel) by the Roman Empire * Suffered persecution throughout Europe and Russia. * Holocaust led to mass migrations to the United States and the set up of the state of Israel. |
| Shinto | No single founder | Ethnic religion indigenous to Japan. Closely associated with Buddhism’s, upon arrival in Japan via trade routes Buddhism mixed with the native religion to form modern Shintoism | Mainly in Japan, before WWII was the state religion and emperor was regarded as divine. | * Some consider it to be a way of life as there is no god, but many practices. * In Shinto purity and cleanliness is very important. * People must wash their hands and mouths before praying in a shrine. * Walking under the torii gates was part of the purification process. * People must have respect for nature and their behaviour must be respectful. * Why is nature so important? The ancients believed that everything in nature had a spirit. | Local religion to Japan  But, what is appealing about Shinto? It’s a religion that helps people deal with common, everyday problems. Shintoists can also practice other religions. You don’t have to give up other religions. You can be Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim, or anything, and a Shintoist at the same time! |
| Islam | Mohammad | The Arabian Peninsula | 1.3 billion followers in Middle East, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh | * Believe in the Judeo – Christian God * Jesus was a prophet * Mohammad was the last messenger of God. | Missionary activity and conquest of early Islamic empires |
| Hinduism | No single founder | Developed from the literature/oral traditions of the Aryans in present-day India |  | Polytheistic: many gods, principle gods were Vishnu (provider) and Shiva (destroyer)  Karma = a person’s good and bad deeds; determines form of reincarnation  orship of cattle as sacred (housing reincarnated souls); consumption of beef forbidden  Significance: religious beliefs reinforced caste system, strengthened patriarchy by stressing obligations to community and family; beliefs continue to influence Indian society today  Spread: Hindu beliefs spread along the Silk Roads and to Southeast Asia via Indian Ocean trade | Spread: Hindu beliefs spread along the Silk Roads and to Southeast Asia via Indian Ocean trade |
| Buddhism | Developed by Sidartha Gautama and his followers in in the mid 500’s BCE; “Buddha” = the enlightened one, but NOT a deity | Northeastern India | 365 million followers in China and S.E. Asia mainly | Buddhists meditate and believe in karma and reincarnation  Based on the 4 Noble Truths:   1. All living beings must endure suffering. 2. Suffering, which is caused by a desire to live, leads to reincarnation. 3. The goal of all existence is to escape from suffering and the endless cycle of **reincarnation** into Nirvana. 4. Nirvana is attained through an Eightfold Path that stresses rightness of belief, resolve, speech, action, livelihood, effort, thought, and meditation. | Spread: Buddhist monasteries established along trade routes; monks and nuns hosted travelers and spread beliefs; some emperors promoted Buddhism after they converted.  Buddhism achieved widespread popularity, especially in East and Southeast Asia, although it lost popularity in India itself; offered an alternative to Hinduism for those in the lower castes, providing these people with hope for a better life in the future |