

Cultural Realms

A cultural realm is a geographical region where cultural traits maintain homogeneity. The cultural traits are supposed to be the product of regional geographical circumstances. It is, thus, regional geography which has become the basis of the delineation of cultural realms in the world. Ratzel's concept of cultural landscape provided encouragement to geographers for culture regionalization.

Blache and Spencer are other geographers who considered the study of cultural realms as an important part of human geography. Apart from the geographers, historians, anthropologists and sociologists have also tried to regionalize the world into cultural realms. The variables of culture include the economic organization, social customs, traditional values, dietary habits, dress patterns, language and uniformity in physical characteristics. On the basis of these variables, various cultural realms can be identified.

Brock Webb tried to establish the dominance of a particular phenomenon over the evolution of cultural landscape. He found that the impact of religious values is tremendous over the entire cultural system. All over the world, human beliefs, day-to-day activities and even dress patterns, food habits and social values are influenced by religious messages. To many geographers, religious messages are also influenced by regional geography. A cultural religious investigation reveals that the culture of a particular region becomes ineffective once the religious impact is withdrawn. Considering these phenomena, Brock Webb divided the

world into four major and two minor cultural realms. The major cultural realms are Occidental Realm, Islamic Realm, Indian Realm, East Indian Realm and the minor cultural realms are South-East Asian Realm, Meso-African or Negro African Realm

Major Cultural Realms of the World

1. Occidental Culture
 - a) West European
 - b) Continental European
 - c) Mediterranean
 - d) Anglo American
 - e) Australian
 - f) Latin American
2. Islamic Culture
3. Indic Culture
4. South East Asian Culture

1. Occidental Realm

Occidental culture is the culture of the European society. It is influenced to a great extent by Christianity. It has regional modifications on the basis of varying levels of industrialisation, political and economic thought, colonisation, commercialisation, urbanisation, and development of transport system, land development of social, political and economic institutions.

In many parts of the occidental culture, the impact of non-religious factors, particularly the effect of modernisation, is so great that the religious values are sidelined. Post-industrial Europe is fast emerging as a

society where traditional values are nearly abandoned. The occidental culture covers a vast area. It is further divided into six sub-regions considering the impact of regional environment.

- (i) West European is the most industrialized and urbanized culture.
- (ii) Continental European culture is influenced by different political and economic thoughts, while Christianity remains an important influence
- (iii) Mediterranean Europe includes countries lying to the south of the Alps. It is the region of dominance of Christianity. To many geographers, the deep-rooted traditional social system is the principal cause of limited economic development in countries like Spain, Portugal and southern Italy, compared to countries of northern and western Europe which adopted necessary changes in their social systems.
- (iv) Anglo-American and
- (v) Australian cultural realms are practically the offspring's of west European culture. Both are inhabited by migrants from west Europe. There are only some regional differences.
- (vi) Latin American culture is very similar to the Mediterranean culture. It is the only region of occidental culture which lies in the tropics and is underdeveloped. It became a part of the occidental culture as a result of conversion of tribes into Christianity. The colonial languages, Spanish and Portuguese, have become the state languages. Regional architecture has been influenced by the Spanish and Portuguese styles.

Practically all countries maintain economic, cultural and social ties with the Mediterranean countries.

2. Islamic Cultural Realm

The culture here is influenced by Islamic values. It covers a vast geographical area from Morocco in the west to Pakistan in the east. The population is sparsely distributed due to inhospitable environment. The coasts, river basins and oases have been the cradles of Arabian culture in this realm. The British call it the Middle-East while the Germans call it a "*region of oriental culture*". This cultural realm lies between the traditional Indian culture in the east and the modernized European culture in the west.

Islamic culture is highly orthodox and based on traditional beliefs, the impact of which can be seen in high female illiteracy rates. These countries have very high per capita incomes, but the level of modernization is very low.

3. Indic Cultural Realm

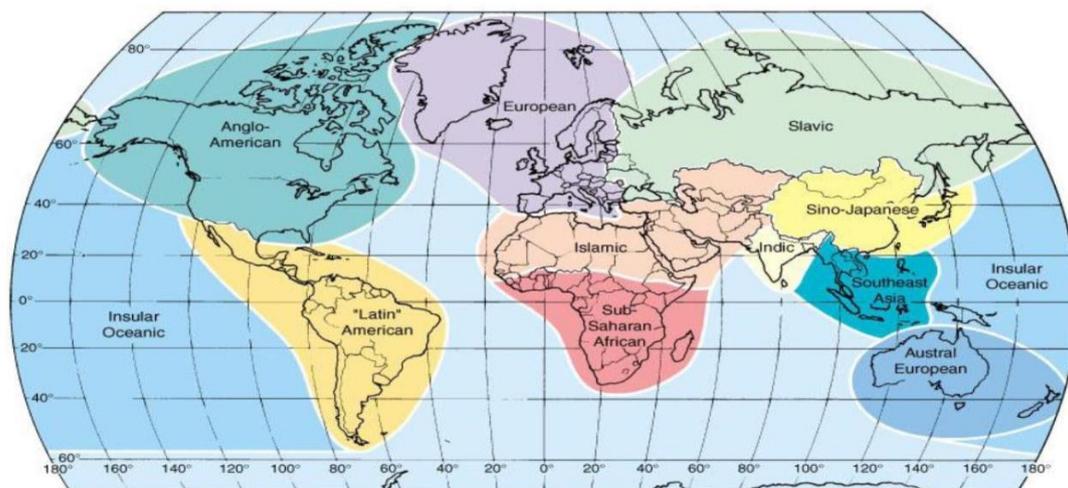
This is the culture of the Indian sub-continent. Baker called it a sub-continental culture, while D. Stamp used the term paddy culture. This cultural realm is well-defined; it lies between Himalayas in the north and Indian Ocean in the south.

This cultural realm is characterized by joint family, village community, caste system, semi- feudal land relations, subsistence agriculture, paddy farming, seasonal climate changes and agricultural season coming at the same time all over the region. The culture of this region is greatly influenced by Vedic values. Though the region is inhabited by various communities, the social system has the hidden impact of Vedic cultural values.

4. East Asian Culture

This culture is basically a Buddhist culture with regional modifications. True Buddhist culture can be seen in South Korea and Japan. Even these two countries have felt the impact of industrialization, urbanization and modernization. The culture of mainland China has modified the Buddhist system. This culture was adopted after the Second World War. (Source- Culture : A Geographical Perspective, Charles A. Heatwole)

FIGURE-Cultural Realms of the Modern World



Globalization

Globalization is the increasing interaction of people, states, or countries through the growth of the international flow of money, ideas, and culture. Globalization is primarily an economic process of integration that has social and cultural aspects. It involves goods and services, and the economic resources of capital, technology, and data. The steam locomotive, steamship, jet engine, and container ships are some of the advances in the means of transport while the rise of the telegraph and its modern offspring, the Internet and mobile phones show development in telecommunications infrastructure. All of these improvements we enjoy in the modern era have been major factors in globalization and have generated further interdependence of economic and cultural activities.

Though many scholars place the origins of globalization in modern times, others trace its history long before the European Age of Discovery and voyages to the New World, some even to the third millennium BC. Large-scale globalization began in the 1820s. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the connectivity of the world's economies and cultures grew very quickly. The term *globalization* is recent, only establishing its current meaning in the 1970s.

In 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects of globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge. Further, environmental challenges such as global warming, cross-boundary water and air pollution, and over-fishing of the ocean are linked with globalization. Globalizing processes affect and are affected by business and work organization, economics, socio-cultural resources, and the natural environment. Commonly globalization subdivides into three major areas: Economic Globalization, Cultural Globalization, and Political Globalization.

CULTURAL GLOBLIZATION

Cultural globalization refers to the transmission of ideas, meanings, and values around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations. This process is marked by the common consumption of cultures that have been diffused by the Internet, popular culture media, and international travel. This has added to processes of commodity exchange and colonization which have a longer history of carrying cultural meaning around the globe. Globalization has become one of the key concepts in economics, politics and literature. This refers to the increasing exchange of goods, people and ideas.

The circulation of cultures enables individuals to partake (join) in extended social relations that cross national and regional borders. The creation and expansion of such social relations is not merely observed on a material level. Cultural globalization involves the formation of shared norms and knowledge with which people associate their individual and collective cultural identities. It brings increasing interconnectedness among different populations and cultures.

A visible aspect of the cultural globalization is the diffusion of certain cuisines such as American fast food chains. The two most successful global food and beverage outlets, McDonald's and Starbucks, are American companies often cited as examples of globalization, with over 36,000 and 24,000 locations operating worldwide respectively as of 2015. The "Big Mac Index" is an informal measure of purchasing power parity among world currencies.