

Chapter 5 – Mapping Cultural Identities

Culture as a Geographical Process

- **Culture** – A shared set of meanings that are lived through the material and symbolic practices of everyday life
 - “Shared set of meanings” could include values, beliefs, practices, and ideas about religion, language, family, gender, sexuality and other important identities
 - Essentially, it is our perception of how we see each other and the world
- A simple understanding of culture is that is ia particular way fo life, such as a set of skiolled activities, values and meanings surrounding a particular type of economic practice
- Culture has been used to describe the range of activities that characterize a particular group, such as working-class culture, corporate culture, or teenage culture
- Culture is often subject to re-evaluation and redefinition, and ultimately altered from both within and outside a particular group
- It is a dynamic concept tha trevolves around complex social, political, economic and even historical factors
- Though powerful homogenizing global forces are uniting the world, the world has not become so uniform that place no longer matters
- Place matters more than ever in the negotiation of global forces, as local forces confront globalizationa nd translate it into unique place-specific forms.
- **Cultural Geography** – The study of the ways in which space, place and landscape share culture at the same time that culture shapes space, place and landscape
- Looks at:
 - Culture – ongoing process of producing a shared set of meanings, and in the process, to form an identity and conduct their lives
 - Geography – process of seeing how the natural landscape shapes culture

Building Cultural Complexes

- Carl Sauer (1889-1975) was interested in trying to understand the material expressions of culture by focusing on their manifestations in the landscape.
- **Cultural Landscape** – a characteristic and tangible outcome of the complex interactions between a human group and a natural environment
 - This includes a group's own practices, preferences, values and aspirations
- Emphasized that the cultural landscape was a humanized form of the natural landscape and that the activities of humans resulted in an identifiable and understandbale alteration of the natural environment.
- Sauer's approach to the cultural landscape was ecological, and many of his works reflected in his study of how humans transformed the shape of Earth.
- **Historical Geography** – The geography of the past
- **Genre de vie** – a fuctionally organized way of life that is seen to be characteristic of a particular cultural group
 - Key concept in Paul Vidal de la Blache's approach to cultural geography in France
 - Centres on the livelihood practices of a group, which are seen to shape physical, social and psychological bonds

- Though emphasizing some landscape components over others or giving a larger or smaller role to the physical environment, all of these approaches placed the cultural landscape at the start of human-environment interactions
- H.C. Darby's "Domesday Book" looks at the ownership of every tract of land in England and of the conditions and contents of the lands at that time;
 - His data is used for historical geography but it often emphasizes economic factors at the expense of a cultural approach.
- Vidal de la Blance emphasized the need to study small, homogeneous areas to uncover the close relationships between people and their immediate surroundings.
- He constructed complex descriptions of pre-industrial France that demonstrated how the various genres de vie emerged from the possibilities and constraints posed by local physical environments
- The increased mobility of people and goods had produced new, more complex geographies wherein previously isolated genres de vie were being integrated into a competitive, industrial economic framework.

Cultural Traits: Canadian Vernacular Architecture

- One simple aspect of culture of interest to geographers is the idea of special traits, which include such things as distinctive styles of dress, dietary habits, and styles of architecture.
- **Cultural Trait** – a single aspect of the complex of routine practices that constitute a particular cultural group
- Example: Canadian Architecture
 - Areas of Canada first settled by Europeans, migrants built homes that were very similar in styles and building technique to those found in Europe from which they had come
 - "Everyday" or "Common" architecture maintains a distinct set of distinct regional styles, each unique to every province
 - Increased immigration and growing urbanization in the nineteenth century did little to erode these patterns.
 - They added their own distinctive contributions, since the need to adapt vernacular styles to the high-density demands of Canada's cities was met in different ways
 - Designs in cities have changed from years past, as cities grew and suburbs formed

Cultural Regions

- **Cultural Region** – the area within which a particular cultural system prevails
- It is an area where certain cultural practices, beliefs, or values are more or less practised by the majority of the inhabitants
- Examples include parts of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI where the Acadian culture is common
- Each cultural region brings its own unique architecture to the area, as well as distinct stylings and features that differentiate it from the local culture and brings part of the homeland into the new country.

Cultural Systems

- **Cultural System** – a collection of interacting elements that, taken together, shape a group's collective identity
- Includes traits, territorial affiliation, and shared history, as well as other more complex elements such as language
- It is possible for internal variation to exist in particular elements at the same time that broader similarities lend coherence

Geography and Religion

- **Religion** – belief system and a set of practices that recognize the existence of a power higher than humans
- Although religious affiliation is perhaps on the decline in some parts of the world's core regions, it still acts as a powerful shaper of daily life, from eating habits to dress codes to coming-of-age rituals
- Religious missionizing – propagandizing and persuasion- and the conversion of non-Christian souls were key elements of religious change
- Whereas missionizing and conversion are deliberate efforts to change the religious views of a person or people, diaspora and emigration involve the involuntary and voluntary movement of people who bring their religious beliefs and practices to their new locales.
- **Diaspora** – A spatial dispersion of a previously homogeneous group
- Religious practices have become so spatially mixed that it is a challenge to present a map of the contemporary global distribution of religion that reveals more than it obscures.
- The global scale is too gross a level of resolution to portray the wide variation that exists among and within religious practices
- The world's major religions originated and diffused from two fairly small areas of the globe
 - Hinduism and Buddhism (as well as Sikhism) originated in an area of the lowlands of the subcontinent of India drained by the Indus
 - Christianity and Islam (as well as Judaism) originated in the deserts of the Middle East.
- Hinduism emerged among the peoples of the Indo-Gangetic Plain about 4000 years ago
- Buddhism and Sikhism evolved from Hinduism as reform religions, with Buddhism appearing around 500 BC and Sikhism developing in the fifteenth century
- Buddhism dispersed to other parts of India and was carried by missionaries and traders to China, Korea and Japan, Southeast Asia, Tibet, and Mongolia
- As it spread, it developed many different regional forms
- Christianity, Islam and Judaism all developed among the Semitic-speaking people of the deserts of the Middle East
- Judaism originated about 4000 years ago, Christianity about 2000 years ago and Islam about 1300 years ago
- Judaism is numerically small because it does not seek new converts
- European contact with the New World was accompanied by Christian missionizing efforts directed at changing the belief systems of the Aboriginal peoples and converting them to what the missionizers believed to be “the one true religion”
- Religion, especially for the Spanish colonizing agents, was especially important in integrating

the indigenous population into the feudal system

The Geography of Canada's Religions

- The geography is a product of this country's history of colonialism and recent immigration
- The original pattern of Aboriginal faiths and belief systems found across Canada were slowly replaced by the dominant Christian faiths of the French and British colonizing powers
- Canada's 2006 census shows that the majority of Canada's population was either Roman Catholic or Protestant
- The abandonment of discriminatory immigration policies in 1966 enabled Canada to become more multicultural and thus, opened up the country to a wide variety of religious backgrounds
- Much of the growth in religion has been focused in Canada's major metropolitan centres
- Canada's religious geography has also been affected by the growing number of people who report to the census that they have no religious affiliation
- Many immigrants from China and Taiwan do not claim a religious affiliation
- Many scholars have examined the contribution of religion to the creation of social and cultural geography
- Buildings used by religious groups to conduct their worship are a very tangible indicator of that group's presence in the community and contribute to the creation of distinct cultural landscapes.
- A study by Rosalynn Trigger examines how the Protestant churches of Montreal moved out from the old city during the nineteenth century to maintain their proximity to their wealthy congregations that were migrating to the suburbs
- Robert Choquette notes that the teachings of Christianity, Islam and Judaism contrast greatly with Eastern religions

Sacred Spaces

- **Sacred Space** – an area recognized by individuals or groups as worthy of special attention as a site of special religious experiences or events
- In almost all cases, sacred spaces are segregated, dedicated and hallowed sites that are maintained as such generation after generation
- Believers recognize sacred spaces as being endowed with divine meaning
- Often, members of a specific religion are expected to journey to especially important sacred spaces to renew their faith or to demonstrate devotion
- A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred space, and a pilgrim is a person who undertakes such a journey.
- With the development of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, ideas of sacred space became more focused into specific locations
- Places of pilgrimage and shrines articulate that space and serve to connect us with the sacred.
- Geographers have treated the cemetery as a feature of the cultural landscape and have analyzed it in much the same way as folk or vernacular architecture
- Researchers have shown that the vernacular designs of the early tombstones in old cemeteries are part of distinctive traditions that were part of the culture before
- Scholars have also come to recognize that in cemeteries we use place to concretize memory in

a way that time cannot

- Memories of loved ones are engrained in the space occupied, by the burial plot and its memorial
- Cemeteries become deeply personal places, with different meanings for each one of us

Geography and Language

- **Language** – a means of communicating ideas or feelings by means of a conventionalized system of signs, gestures, marks, or articulate vocal sounds
- Communication is symbolic, based on commonly understood meanings of signs or sounds
- **Dialects** – regional variations from standard language, in terms of accent, vocabulary and grammar
- **Language family** – a collection of individual languages believed to be related in their prehistoric origin
- **Language branch** – a collection of languages that possess a definite common origin but have split into individual languages
- **Language group** – a collection of several individual languages that are part of a language branch, share a common origin, and have similar grammar and vocabulary
- Language is one of our greatest cultural creations and it is inherently geographical in its place-marking and place-making abilities
- Though language, we describe our world in our own words and by use of that language, provide others with some indication of where we are from
- Regional accents can enable those familiar enough with our language to tell exactly where within a region we were brought up
- Within the vocabulary and structure of our languages, we preserve a faint memory of where our distant ancestors originated

The Memory of Language

- Language retains a memory of its past within its present form
- Sir William Jones observed the close similarities between Sanskrit and many European languages, both extinct and extant
- **Cultural Hearth** – the geographical origin or source of innovations, ideas or ideologies
- Many have suggested that proto-indo-European had developed between 6500 and 4500 years ago
- **Isolate** – a language that has no known relationship with any other and cannot be assigned to a language family
- **Language and Regional Identity**
 - **Mother tongue** – the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census
 - **Official Languages** – Languages in which the government has a legal obligation to conduct its affairs, and in which the public has the right to receive federal services
 - Government policies indicate a tolerance of other languages, but the reality of the workplace shows that a proficiency in English or French is an important determinant of an individual's economic success

- **Anglophone** – a person whose mother tongue is English
 - 60% of Canada's population in 1996 was anglophone
 - Highest proportion was in Newfoundland (98.6%) while the lowest proportion was in Quebec (9.2%)
- **Francophone** – a person whose mother tongue is French
 - 22.1% of Canada's population is francophone
 - 86% of Canada's francophones lived in Quebec in 1996
- **Allophone** – a person whose mother tongue is neither English nor French
- The use of French in Quebec has fallen because of the decline in the provincial birth rate among francophones and an increase in the number of allophone immigrants to the province
- The majority of the francophone population outside of Quebec can be found mainly in Ontario and New Brunswick
- “Language Islands”, coined by geographer Donald Cartwright, numbers of francophones just inside the Ontario border and anglophones within Quebec have steadily eroded over the years to leave a larger geographical divide between Quebec and the country
- Bilingualism in English and French is also part of a federal government policy to show Quebec that Canada as a whole could also be a home for francophones
- 1996 census records that 17% of the country's population were bilingual in English and French
- Highest rates of bilingualism were recorded in Quebec (38%) and New Brunswick (33%).
- Canada's allophone population is estimated at 6.3 million people who spoke neither English nor French as their mother tongue
 - This is 20.1% of the population
- **Language Shift** – an indicator of the number of people who adopt a new language, usually measured by the difference between mother tongue and home language populations
- Given patterns of immigration, Toronto has the highest proportion of allophones since 44% of the population has a mother tongue other than English or French
- Canada's Aboriginal Languages are among the most endangered in the world
 - Only 3 of 50 languages currently spoken in Canada are considered secure and at least a dozen are on the brink of extinction
 - Numbers of native language speakers has been reduced through slaughter and disease, forced assimilation in residential schools and the economic/political necessity to learn English or French
- 15% of total Aboriginal peoples in Canada used an Aboriginal language at home in 1996, which reflects the language shift into English or French
- Mary Jane Norris has noted that the loss of language does not equate with the death of a culture but it can severely handicap its future
- Vocabulary that each language develops is unique and its loss therefore diminishes a people's ability to describe phenomena in terms most appropriate to it
- **Dialect**
 - Use of English and French in Canada provides a further insight into the place-making

abilities of language

- This is because the way in which these languages are now spoken in Canada differs sufficiently from the way they are spoken in England and France that native speakers on either sides of the Atlantic can tell them apart
- Difference must have been caused by emigration:
 - *When people move, their language escapes the changes in vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation that occurs in the region of origin*
 - First settlers in Canada were from different parts of France, who settled in different areas of Canada and thus established their own dialect of French upon that area
 - At the same time, many of the dialects in France were being unified by the government into one language which was Parisian French
 - Verbs normally used in France before were now being used in Canada and parts of the US
 - *When people move, their language undergoes considerable changes in vocabulary as people adapt to their new surroundings*
 - As the early settlers moved into the new world, some words from their language were changed.
 - Many were English words now given new meaning or more use in these new surroundings
 - Many of the words became slang or a completely new word used to describe a particular process
 - Pronunciation of certain words are also changed as people adapt to the new surroundings
 - Different parts of Canada may have subtle difference in how they would speak a certain word