

# LANGUAGE AND RELIGION:

## Mosaics of Culture



*Ethiopia's 1,600-year-old Coptic Christian Meskel Festival marks the finding of the true cross on which Christ was crucified.*

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### AP Learning Objectives

- Explain patterns and landscapes of language, religion, ethnicity, and gender.
- Explain how the process of diffusion results in changes to the cultural landscape.
- Explain what factors lead to the diffusion of universalizing and ethnic religions.
- Explain how historical processes impact current cultural patterns.



When God saw [humans become arrogant], he thought of something to bring confusion to their heads: he gave the people a very heavy sleep. They slept for a very, very long time. They slept for so long that they forgot the language they had used to speak. When they eventually woke up from their sleep, each man went his own way, speaking his own tongue. None of them could understand the language of the other any more. That is how people dispersed all over the world. Each man would walk his way and speak his own language and another would go his way and speak in his own language. . . .

God has forbidden me to speak Arabic. I asked God, “Why don’t I speak Arabic?” and He said, “If you speak Arabic, you will turn into a bad man.” I said, “There is something good in Arabic!” And He said, “No, there is nothing good in it! . . .”

Here, I slaughter a bull and I call [the Muslim] to share my meat. I say, “Let us share our meat.” But he refuses the meat I slaughter because he says it is not slaughtered in a Muslim way. If he cannot accept the way I slaughter my meat, how can we be relatives? Why does he despise our food? So, let us eat our meat alone. . . . Why, they insult us, they combine contempt for our black skin with pride in their religion. As for us, we have our own ancestors and our own spirits; the spirits of the Rek, the spirits of the Twic, we have not combined our spirits with their spirits. The spirit of the black man is different. Our spirit has not combined with theirs.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, we examine two prominent threads in the tapestry of cultural diversity—language and religion. Language and religion are basic components of cultures, the learned ways of life of different human communities. They help identify who and what we are and clearly place us within larger communities of persons with similar characteristics. At the same time, as the words of Chief Makuei suggest, they separate and divide peoples of different tongues and faiths. Language and religion are mentifacts, components of the ideological subsystem of culture that help shape the belief system of a society and transmit it to succeeding generations. Both within and between cultures, language and religion are fundamental strands in the complex web of culture, serving to shape and to distinguish people and groups.

They are ever-changing strands. Languages evolve in place, responding to the dynamics of social and economic change and spatial interaction in a closely integrated world. New artifacts and sociofacts demand new words like *e-shopping* and *co-parenting*, which entered the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2018. Languages diffuse in space, carried by streams of migrants, colonizers, and conquerors. They may be rigorously defended and preserved as essential elements of cultural identity, or they may be abandoned in the search for acceptance into a new society. Religions, too, are dynamic, sweeping across national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries by conversion, conviction, and conquest. Their broad spatial patterns—distinctive culture regions in their own right—are also fundamental in defining the culture realms outlined in Figure 2.4, while at a different scale, religious differences may



**Figure 5.1** This small town welcome sign offers evidence of religious diversity in the United States. However, the sign details only a few Christian congregations. In reality, the United States has become the most religiously diverse country in the world, with essentially all of the world’s faiths represented within its borders.

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contribute to the cultural diversity and richness within the countries of the world (Figure 5.1).

## 5.1 Classification of Languages

On a clear, dark night, the unaided eye can distinguish between 4,000 and 6,000 stars, a number comparable to some estimates of the probable total number of the world’s languages. In reality, no precise figure is possible, for even today in Africa, Latin America, New Guinea, and elsewhere, linguists race to identify and classify the tongues spoken by isolated peoples before some disappear.

In the broadest sense, **language** is any systematic method of communicating ideas, attitudes, or intent through the use of mutually understood signs, sounds, or gestures. For our geographic purposes, we may define language as an organized system of spoken words by which people communicate with one another with mutual comprehension. But such a definition fails to recognize the gradations among languages or to grasp the varying degrees of mutual comprehension between two or more of them. The language commonly called *Chinese*, for example, is more properly seen as a group of distinct but related languages—Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, and others—that are as different from one another as are such comparably related European languages as Spanish, Italian, French, and Romanian. *Chinese* has uniformity only in the fact that all of the varied Chinese languages are written alike. No matter how it is pronounced, the same symbol for *house* or for *rice*, for example, is recognized by all literate speakers of any Chinese language variant (Figure 5.2). Again, the language known as *Arabic* represents a number of related but distinct tongues, so Arabic spoken in Morocco differs from Palestinian Arabic, roughly as Portuguese differs from Italian.

Languages differ greatly in their relative importance, if “importance” can be taken to mean the number of people using them. More than half of the world’s inhabitants are native speakers of just eight of its thousands of tongues, and at least half regularly use

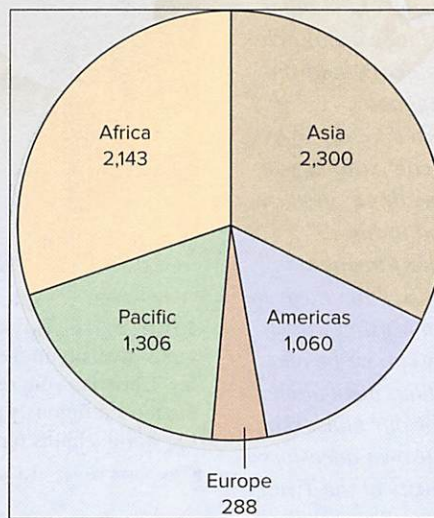
<sup>1</sup>Source: The words of Chief Makuei Bilkuei of the Dinka, a Nilotic people of the southern Sudan. His comments are directed at the attempts to unite into a single people the Arabic Muslims of the north of the Republic of the Sudan with his and other black, Luo-speaking animist and Christian people of the country’s southern areas. Recorded by Francis Mading Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan*.



# The Geography of Language

Forever changing and evolving, language in spoken or written form makes possible the cooperative efforts, group understandings, and shared behavior that is central to culture. Language is the most important medium by which culture is transmitted. It is what enables parents to teach their children about the world they live in and what they must do to become functioning members of society. Some argue that the language of a society structures the perceptions of its speakers. By the words that it contains and the concepts that it can formulate, language is said to influence the attitudes, understandings, and responses of the society to which it belongs.

If that conclusion be true, one aspect of cultural heterogeneity may be easily understood. The nearly 8 billion people on Earth speak many thousands of different languages. Knowing that more than 2,100 languages and language variants are spoken in Africa (though 85 percent of Africans speak



one or more variants of 15 core languages) gives us a clearer appreciation of the political and social divisions in that continent. Europe alone has some 288 languages and dialects

**Figure 5A** World distribution of 7,100 languages still spoken today, one-third are found in Asia, 30 percent in Africa, 18 percent in the Pacific area, 15 percent in the Americas, and 3 percent in Europe. Linguists' estimates of the number of languages ever spoken on Earth range from 31,000 to as many as 300,000 or more. Assuming the lower estimate (or even one considerably smaller), dead languages far outnumber the living. Approximately 10 percent of the world's languages are classified as moribund or nearly extinct because only the grandparent generation uses the language.

Source: Estimates based on *Ethnologue*, 21st edition, 2018.

(**Figure 5A**). Language is a hallmark of cultural diversity, an often fiercely defended symbol of cultural identity that helps to distinguish the world's diverse social groups.

or have competence in just four of them. That restricted language dominance reflects the reality that the world's linguistic diversity is rapidly shrinking. Of the at most 6,900 tongues still remaining, more than half are no longer being learned by children or used in everyday life and are endangered. One estimate anticipates that no more than 600 of the world's current living languages will still be in existence in 2100. **Table 5.1** lists those languages currently spoken as a primary tongue by 90 million or more people. At the other end of the scale are a number of rapidly declining languages whose speakers number in the hundreds or, at most, the few thousands.

The diversity of languages is simplified when we classify them into families. A **language family** is a group of languages descended from a single, earlier tongue. By varying estimates, from at least 30 to perhaps 100 such families of languages are found worldwide. The families, in turn, may be subdivided into subfamilies, branches, or groups of more closely related tongues. Some 2,000 years ago, Latin was the common language spoken throughout the Roman Empire. The fall of the empire in the 5th



**Figure 5.2** All literate Chinese, no matter which of the many languages of China they speak, recognize the same ideographs for *house*, *rice*, and *tree*.

**Table 5.1**  
First Languages Spoken by 100 Million or More People as of 2018

Language	Millions of Speakers	Total Countries
Chinese	1,299	38
Spanish	442	31
English	378	118
Arabic <sup>c</sup>	315	58
Hindi/Urdu <sup>b</sup> (India, Pakistan)	260	4
Bengali (Bangladesh/India)	243	4
Portuguese	223	15
Russian/Belorussian	154	18
Japanese	128	2
Lahnda (Pakistan)	119	6

<sup>a</sup>The official dialect of Mandarin is spoken by an estimated 909 million.

<sup>b</sup>Hindi and Urdu are basically the same language: Hindustani. Written in the Devangari script, it is called *Hindi*, the official language of India; in the Arabic script, it is called *Urdu*, the official language of Pakistan.

<sup>c</sup>The figure given includes speakers of the many often mutually unintelligible versions of colloquial Arabic. Classical or literary Arabic, the language of the Koran, is uniform and standardized but restricted to formal usage as a spoken tongue. Because of its religious association, Arabic is a second language for many inhabitants of Muslim countries with other native tongues.

Sources: Based on data from *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 21st edition, 2018.



century CE broke the unity of Europe, and regional variants of Latin began to develop in isolation. In the course of the next several centuries, these Latin derivatives, changing and developing as all languages do, emerged as the individual Romance languages—Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Romanian—of modern Europe and of the world colonized by their speakers. Catalan, Sardinian, Provençal, and a few other spatially restricted tongues are also part of the Romance language group.

Family relationship between languages can be recognized through similarities in their vocabulary and grammar. By tracing regularities of sound changes in different languages back through time, linguists are able to reconstruct earlier forms of words and, eventually, determine a word's original form before it underwent alteration and divergence. Such a reconstructed earlier form is said to belong to a **protolanguage**. In the case of the Romance languages, of course, the well-known ancestral tongue was Latin, which needs no such reconstruction. Its root relationship to the Romance languages is suggested by modern variants of *panis*, the Latin word for “bread”: *pane* (Italian), *pain* (French), *pan* (Spanish), *pão* (Portuguese), *pâine* (Romanian). In other language families, similar word relationships are less confidently traced to their protolanguage roots. For example, the Germanic languages, including English, German, Dutch, and the Scandinavian tongues, are related descendants of a less well-known proto-Germanic language spoken by peoples who lived in southern Scandinavia and along the North Sea and Baltic coasts from the Netherlands to western Poland. The classification of languages by origin and historical relationship is called a *genetic classification*.

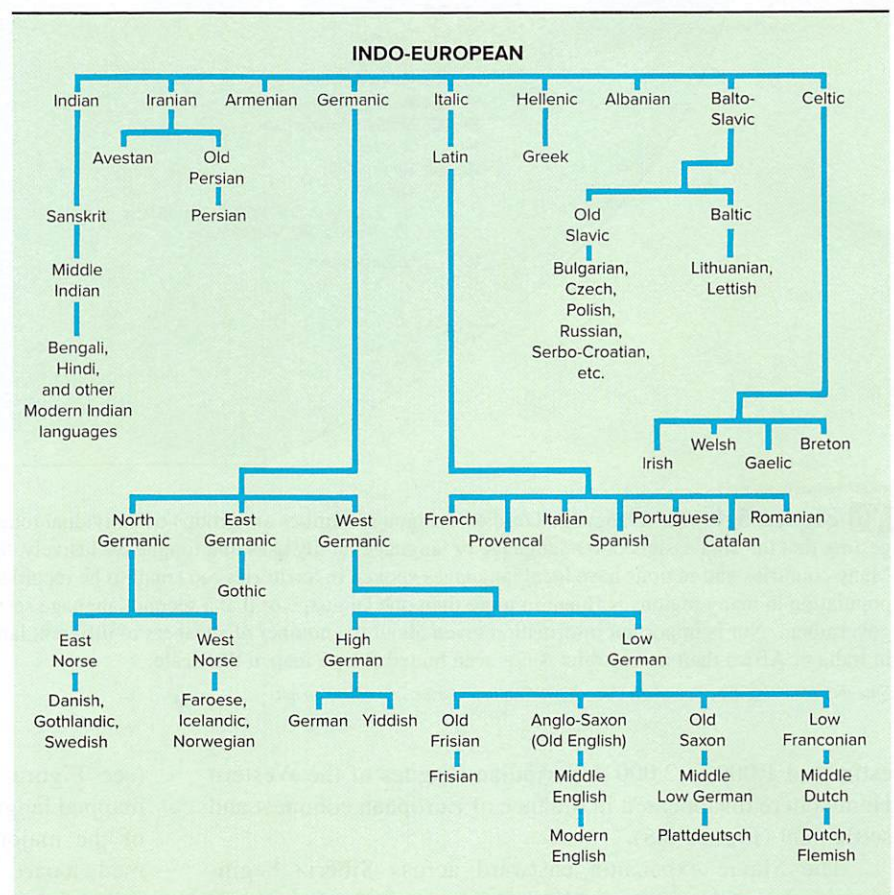
Further tracing of language roots tells us that the Romance and the Germanic languages are individual branches of an even more extensive family of related languages derived from proto-Indo-European, or simply Indo-European. Of the principal recognized language clusters of the world, the Indo-European family is the largest, embracing most of the languages of Europe and a large part of Asia, and the introduced—not the native—languages of the Americas (Figure 5.3). All told, languages in the Indo-European family are spoken by about half the world's peoples.

By recognizing similar words in most Indo-European tongues, linguists deduce that the Indo-European people—originally hunters and fishers but later switching to agriculture—developed somewhere in eastern Europe or the Ukrainian steppes about 5,000 years ago (though some conclude that central Turkey was the more likely site of origin and that the ancestral tongue existed 8,700 to 10,000 or more years ago). By at least 2500 BCE, their society apparently fragmented; they left the homeland, carrying segments of the parent culture in different directions. Some migrated into Greece, others settled in Italy, still others crossed central and western Europe, ultimately reaching the British Isles. Another group headed into the

Russian forest lands, and still another branch crossed Iran and Afghanistan, eventually to reach India. Wherever this remarkable people settled, they appear to have dominated local populations and imposed their language on them. For example, the word for *sheep* is *avis* in Lithuanian, *ovis* in Latin, *avis* in Sanskrit (the language of ancient India), and *hawī* in the tongue used in Homer's Troy. Modern English retains its version in the word *ewe*. All, linguists infer, derive from an ancestral word, *owis* in Indo-European. Similar relationships and histories can be traced for other protolanguages.

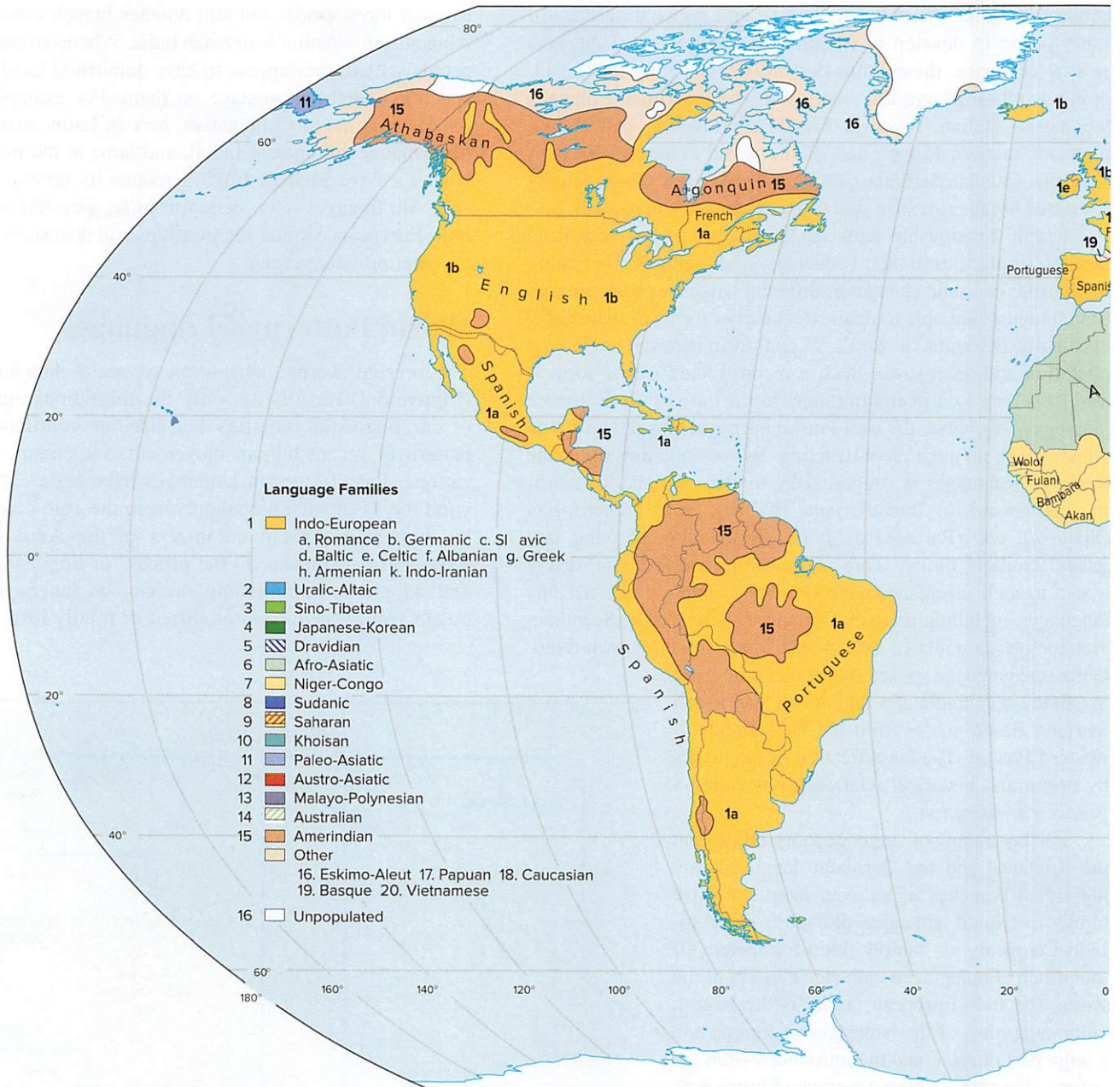
## World Pattern of Languages

The present world distribution of major language families (Figure 5.4) records not only the migrations and conquests of our linguistic ancestors but also the continuing dynamic pattern of recent human movement, settlement, and colonizations. Indo-European languages have been carried far beyond their Eurasian homelands from the 16th century onward by western European colonizers in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australasia. In the process of linguistic imposition and adoption, innumerable indigenous languages and language groups have been modified or totally lost. Most of the



**Figure 5.3** The Indo-European linguistic family tree. Euskara (Basque), Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Maltese, and Lappish are the only European languages not in the Indo-European family. (See also Figure 5.7.)





**AP | Figure 5.4** World language families. Language families are groups of individual tongues that had a common but remote ancestor. By suggesting that the area assigned to a language or language family uses that tongue exclusively, the map pattern conceals important linguistic detail. Many countries and regions have local languages spoken in territories too small to be recorded at this scale. The map also fails to report that the population in many regions is fluent in more than one language or that a second language serves as the necessary vehicle of commerce, education, or government. Nor is important information given about the number of speakers of different languages; the fact that there are more speakers of English in India or Africa than in Australia is not even hinted at by a map at this scale.

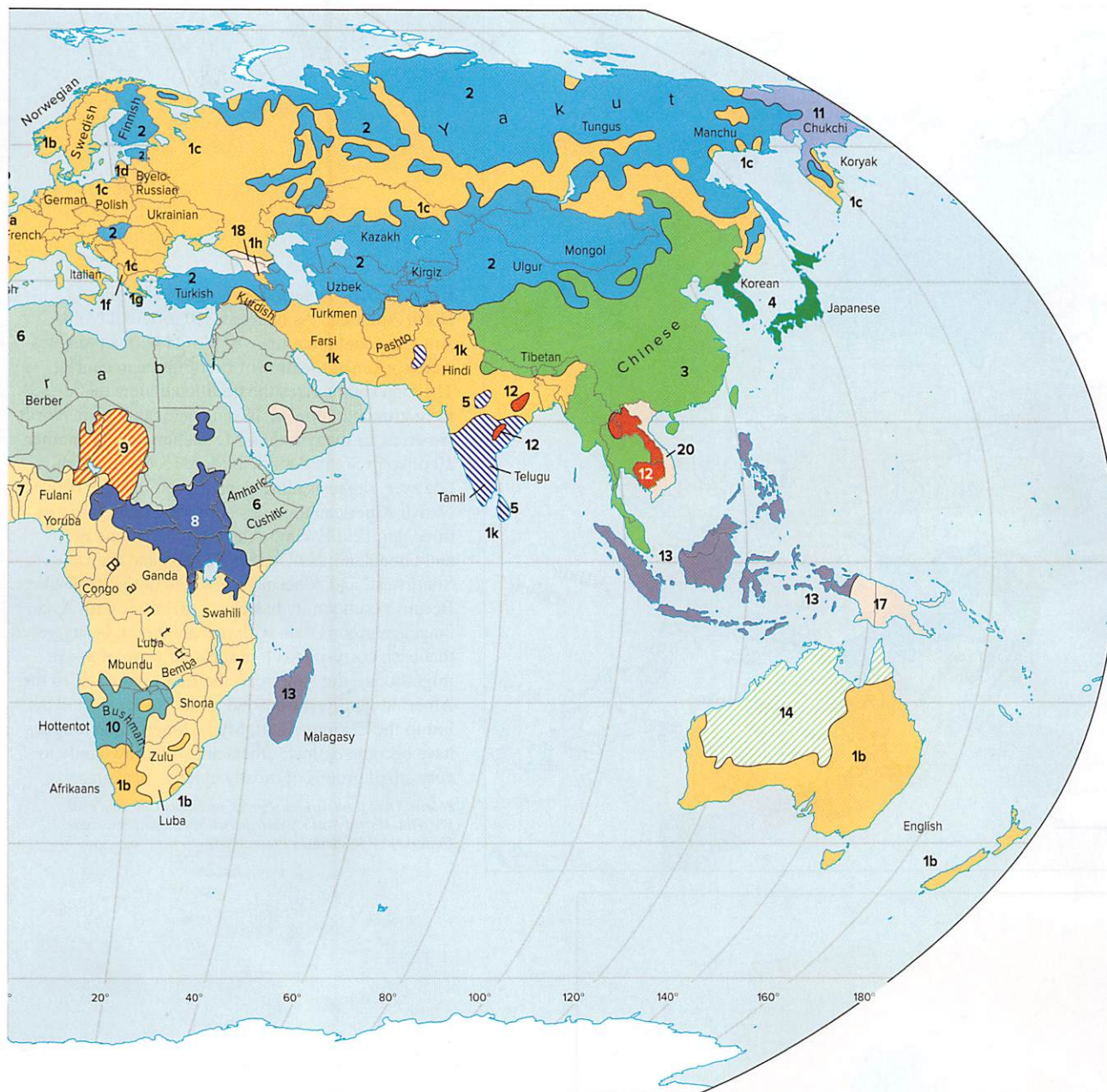
*Note that some linguistic boundaries match political boundaries, and others do not.*

estimated 1,000 to 2,000 Amerindian tongues of the Western Hemisphere disappeared in the face of European conquest and settlement (Figure 5.5).

The Slavic expansion eastward across Siberia beginning in the 16th century obliterated most of the Paleo-Asiatic languages there. Similar loss occurred in Eskimo and Aleut language areas. Large linguistically distinctive areas comprise the northern reaches of both Asia and America

(see Figure 5.4). Their sparse populations are losing the mapped languages as the indigenous people adopt the tongues of the majority cultures of which they have been forcibly made a part. In the Southern Hemisphere, the several hundred original Australian languages also loom large spatially on the map but have at most 50,000 speakers, exclusively Australian aborigines. Numerically and effectively, English dominates that continent.





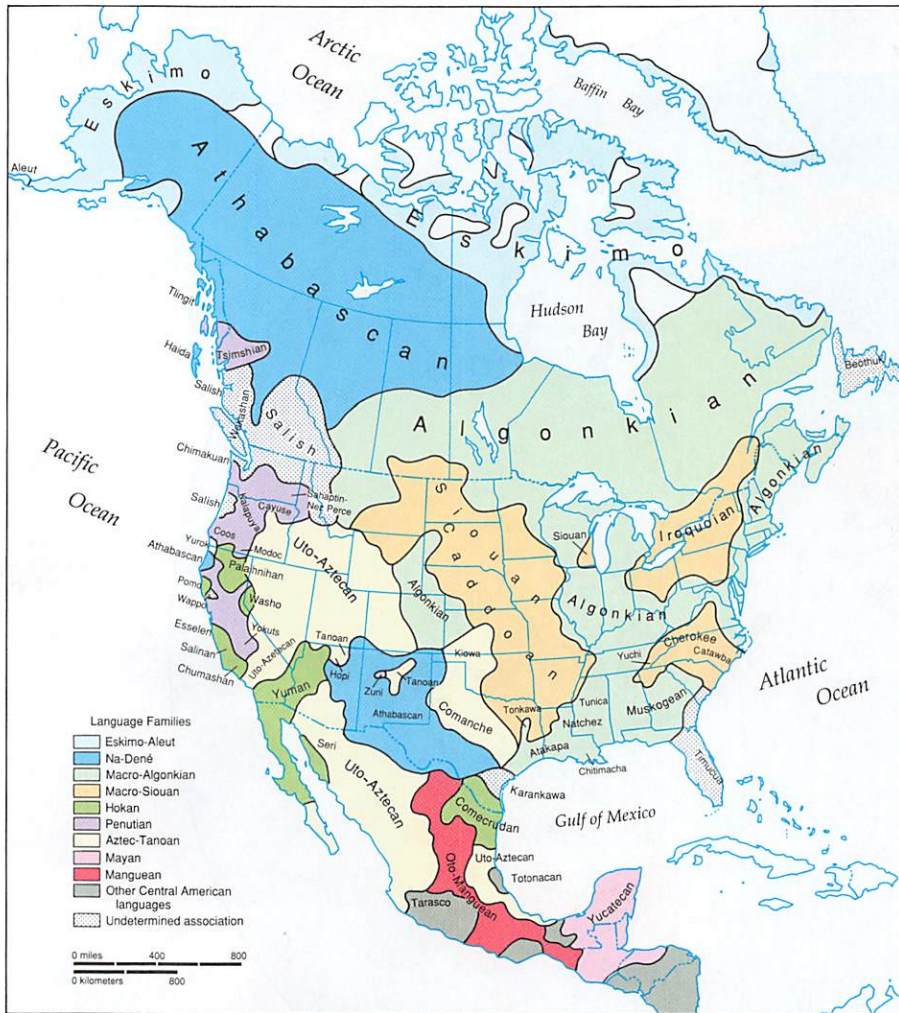
Examples of linguistic conquest by non-Europeans also abound. In Southeast Asia, formerly extensive areas identified with different members of the Austro-Asiatic language family have been reduced through conquest and absorption by Sino-Tibetan (Chinese, Thai, Burmese, and Lao, principally) expansion. Arabic—originally a minor Afro-Asiatic language of the Arabian Peninsula—was dispersed by the explosive spread of Islam through much of North Africa and southwestern Asia, where it largely replaced a host of other locally variant tongues and became the official or the dominant language of more than 20 countries and more than 300 million people. The more than 300 Bantu languages found south of the “Bantu line” in sub-Saharan Africa are variants of a proto-Bantu carried by an expanding, culturally advanced population that displaced more primitive predecessors (Figure 5.6).

## Language Diffusion

*Language diffusion* represents the increase or relocation over time in the geographic area within which a language is spoken. The Bantu of Africa or the English-speaking settlers of North America displaced preexisting populations and replaced the languages previously spoken in the areas of penetration. Therefore, we find one explanation of the spread of language families to new areas of occurrence in massive population relocations such as those accompanying the colonization of the Americas or of Australia. That is, languages may spread through migration in a process called *relocation diffusion*.

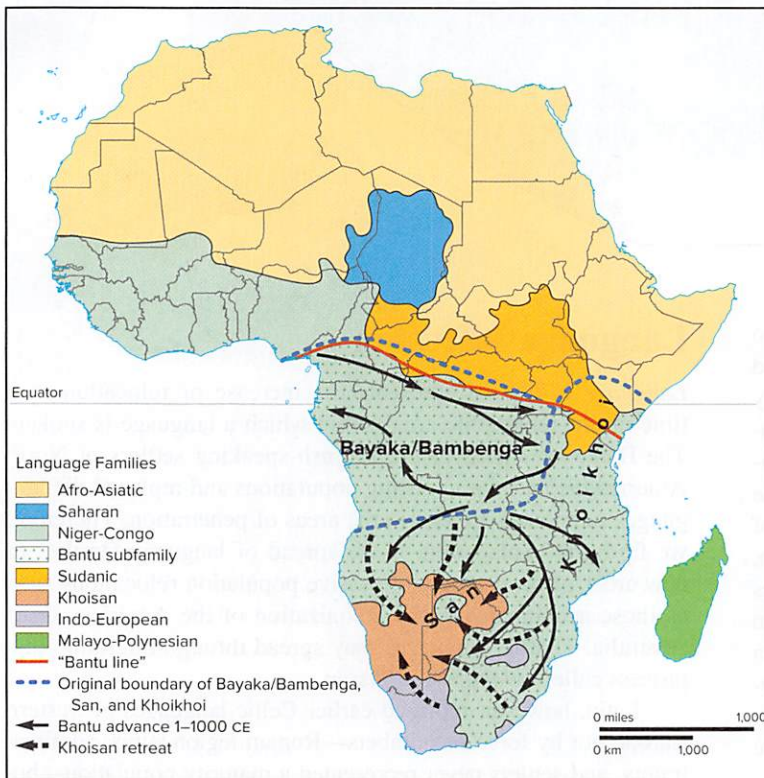
Latin, however, replaced earlier Celtic languages in western Europe not by force of numbers—Roman legionnaires, administrators, and settlers never represented a majority population—but





**Figure 5.5** Amerindian language families of North America. As many as 300 different North American and more than 70 Mesoamerican tongues were spoken at the time of first European contact. The map summarizes the traditional view that these were grouped into 9 or 10 language families in North America, as many as 5 in Mesoamerica, and another 10 or so in South America. More recent research, however, suggests close genetic relationships between Native American tongues, clustering them into just three families: Eskimo-Aleut in the extreme north and Greenland; Na-Dené in Canada and the U.S. Southwest, and Amerind elsewhere in the hemisphere. Because each family has closer affinities with Asian language groups than with one another, it is suggested that each corresponds to a separate wave of Asian migration to the Americas: the first giving rise to the Amerind family, the second to the Na-Dené, and the last to the Eskimo-Aleut. Many Amerindian tongues have become extinct; others are still known only to very small groups of mostly elderly speakers.

Source: Data from various sources, including C. F. and F. M. Voegelin, *Map of North American Indian Languages* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986).



**Figure 5.6** Bantu advance, Khoisan retreat in Africa. Linguistic evidence suggests that proto-Bantu speakers originated in the region of the Cameroon-Nigeria border, spread eastward across the southern Sudan, then turned southward to Central Africa. From there, they dispersed slowly eastward, westward, and, against slight resistance, southward. The earlier Khoisan-speaking occupants of sub-Saharan Africa were no match against the advancing metal-using Bantu agriculturalists. The Bayaka/Bambenga, adopting a Bantu tongue, retreated deep into the forests; San and Khoikhoi retained their distinctive Khoisan "click" language but were forced out of forests and grasslands into the dry steppes and deserts of the southwest.



by the gradual abandonment of their former languages by native populations brought under the influence and control of the Roman Empire and, later, of the Western Christian church. Adoption rather than eviction of language was the rule followed in perhaps the majority of historical and contemporary instances of language spread. Knowledge and use of the language of a dominating culture may be seen as a necessity when that language is the medium of commerce, law, civilization, and personal prestige. Usually, those who are in or aspire to positions of importance are the first to adopt the new language of control and prestige. Later, through schooling, daily contact, and business or social necessity, other, lower social strata of society may gradually be absorbed into the expanding pool of language adopters. It was on that basis, not through numerical superiority, that Indo-European tongues were dispersed throughout Europe and to distant India, Iran, and Armenia. Likewise, Arabic became widespread in western Asia and North Africa not through massive population relocations but through conquest, religious conversion, and dominating culture. Thus, languages may spread through expansion diffusion as they acquire new speakers.

*Hierarchical diffusion* of an official or prestigious language within urban centers and centers of power has occurred in many societies. In India during the 19th century, the English established an administrative and judicial system that put a very high premium on their language as the sole medium of education, administration, trade, and commerce. Proficiency in it was the hallmark of the cultured and educated person (as knowledge of Sanskrit and Persian had been under previous conquerors of India). English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and other languages introduced during the age of empire retain a position of prestige and even status as the official language in multilingual societies, even after independence has been achieved by former colonies. In Uganda and other former British possessions in Africa, a stranger may be addressed in English by one who wishes to display his or her education and social status, though standard Swahili, a second language for many different culture groups, may be chosen if certainty of communication is more important than prestige.

As a diffusion process, language spread may be impeded by barriers or promoted by their absence. Cultural barriers may retard or prevent language adoption. Speakers of Greek resisted centuries of Turkish rule of their homeland, and the language remained a focus of cultural identity under foreign domination. Breton, Catalan, Gaelic, Welsh, and other localized languages of Europe remain symbols of ethnic separateness from dominant national cultures.

Physical barriers to language spread have also left their mark (see Figure 5.4). Migrants or invaders follow paths of least topographic resistance and disperse most widely where access is easiest. Once past the barrier of the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush mountains, Indo-European tongues spread rapidly through the Indus and Ganges river lowlands of the Indian subcontinent but made no headway in the mountainous northern and eastern border zones. The Pyrenees Mountains serve as a linguistic barrier separating France and Spain. They also house the Basques, who speak the only language—Euskara in their tongue—in southwestern Europe that survives from pre-Indo-European times (Figure 5.7). Similarly, the Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian seas separate the Slavic speakers to the north and the areas of Ural-Altai languages to the south. At the same time, in their rugged mountains,



**Figure 5.7** In their mountainous homeland, the Basques have maintained a linguistic uniqueness despite more than 2,000 years of encirclement by dominant lowland speakers of Latin or Romance languages. This sign—thanking travelers for their visit and wishing them a good trip home—gives its message in both Spanish and the Basque language, Euskara.

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they contain an extraordinary mixture of languages, many unique to single valleys or villages, lumped together spatially into a separate Caucasian language family.

## Language Change

Migration, segregation, and isolation give rise to separate, mutually unintelligible languages. Changes occur naturally in word meaning, pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax (the way words are put together in phrases and sentences). Because they are gradual, minor, and readily adopted, such changes tend to go unnoticed. Yet, cumulatively, they can result in language change so great that over the course of centuries, an essentially new language has been created. The English of 17th-century Shakespearean writings or the King James Bible (1611) sounds stilted to our ears. Few of us can easily read Chaucer's 14th-century *Canterbury Tales*, and the 8th-century *Beowulf* is practically unintelligible.

Change may be gradual and cumulative, with each generation deviating in small degree from the speech patterns and vocabulary of its parents, or it may be massive and abrupt. English gained about 10,000 new words from the Norman-French of the 11th-century Norman conquerors. In some 70 years (1558–1625) of literary and linguistic creativity during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, an estimated 12,000 words—often borrowed from Latin or Greek (such as the word *geography*)—were introduced.

Discovery and colonization of new lands and continents in the 16th and 17th centuries greatly expanded English as new foods, vegetation, animals, and artifacts were encountered and adopted along with their existing aboriginal American, Australian, or African names. The Indian languages of the Americas alone brought more than 200 relatively common daily words to English,







# Language Exchange

The English language is highly indebted to other tongues. The geographer's vocabulary is full of words derived from Greek or Latin. From the Greek words *topos* (place) and *kosmos* (world) we get the English words *topography* and *cosmopolitan*. Where would the geographer be without these Latin-derived terms: *latitude*, *longitude*, *propinquity*, *province*, and *village*? From French, the English language borrowed words of culture: *boutique*, *buffet*, *chaise longue*, *etiquette*, *feminine*, *lingerie*, *masculine*, and *naive*. From Arabic, the English language picked up *alcohol*, *coffee*, and

*masquerade*, from German, *angst*, *hinterland* and *kindergarten*, and from Spanish, *machete*. In South Asia, the English encountered new household items and Hindi/Urdu words to describe them: *bungalow*, *cot*, *dungarees*, *pajamas*, *shampoo*, and *veranda*. They also picked up new religious ideas and words in South Asia: *avatar*, *guru*, *pundit*, *nirvana*, and *yoga*.

As a lingua franca, English words are constantly being borrowed and modified by other languages. Recent English exports include *airport*, *jeans*, *know-how*, and *sex-appeal*. In France, young people listen to

the popular music of *les rappeurs*. German has borrowed *das Bodybuilding*, *der Computer*, and *das Mobiltelefon*. In South Africa, a Zulu-speaking university student might wear *izingilazi* (eyeglasses) while driving her *imotokali* (motor car) or working at her *ikhomp'yutha* (computer). Some words go full circle and pick up new meanings. From the English word *animation*, the Japanese got their word *animēshon*, which in turn was borrowed back into English and shortened to *anime*.

(21), the other leading current international languages. Global integration requires a common language, and English has taken on that role, being used in international air traffic control, diplomacy, two-thirds of scientific publishing, and most international academic conferences. While the dominance of English on the Internet is diminishing, it still leads with a 25 percent share of Internet users, followed by Mandarin at 19 percent and Spanish at 8 percent. No other language in history has assumed so important a role on the world scene.

## Standard and Variant Languages

People who speak a common language such as English are members of a speech community, but membership does not necessarily imply linguistic uniformity. A speech community usually possesses both a standard language—comprising the accepted community norms of syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation—and a number of more or less distinctive dialects reflecting the ordinary speech of regional, social, professional, or other subdivisions of the general population.

### Standard Language

A dialect may become the standard language through connection with the speech of the most prestigious and most powerful members of the community. A rich literary tradition may help establish its primacy, and its adoption as the accepted written and spoken norm in administration, economic life, and education will solidify its position, eliminating deviant, nonstandard forms. The dialect that emerges as the basis of a country's standard language is often the one identified with its capital or center of power at the time of national development. Standard French is

based on the dialect of the Paris region, a variant that assumed dominance in the latter half of the 12th century and was made the only official language in 1539. Castilian Spanish became the standard after 1492 with the Castile-led reconquest of Spain from the Moors and the export of the dialect to the Americas during the 16th century. Its present form, however, is a modified version associated not with Castile but with Madrid, the modern capital of Spain. Standard Russian is identified with the speech patterns of the former capital, St. Petersburg, and Moscow, the current capital. Modern Standard Chinese is based on the Mandarin dialect of Beijing. In England, Received Pronunciation—"Oxford English," the speech of educated residents of London and southeastern England and used by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)—was until recently the accepted standard. It is now being modified, or replaced by a dialect called "Estuary English," which refers to the region around the lower River Thames in southeastern England.

Forces other than politics may affect language standardization. In its spoken form, Standard German is based on norms established and accepted in the theater, the universities, public speeches, and radio and television. The Classical or Literary Arabic of the Koran became the established norm from the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean. Standard Italian was derived from the Florentine dialect of the 13th and 14th centuries, which became widespread as the language of literature and economy.

In many societies, the official or unofficial standard language is not the dialect of home or daily life, and populations in effect have two languages. One is their regional dialect, which they employ with friends, at home, and in local community contacts; the other is the standard language used in more formal situations. In some cases, the contrast is great; regional variants of Arabic may be mutually unintelligible. Most Italians encounter Standard Italian



for the first time in primary school. In India, the several totally distinct official regional languages are used in writing and taught in school but have no direct relationship to local speech; citizens must be bilingual to communicate with government officials who know only the regional language but not the local dialect.

## Dialects

Just as no two individuals speak exactly the same, all but the smallest and most closely knit speech communities display recognizable speech variants called **dialects**. Simply ordering a carbonated beverage in different parts of the United States offers plenty of proof of regional speech variation (**Figure 5.9**). Vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, and the speed at which the language is spoken may set groups of speakers apart from one another and, to a trained observer, clearly mark the origin of the speaker. In George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, on which the musical *My Fair Lady* was based, Henry Higgins—a professor of phonetics—is able to identify the London neighborhood of origin of a flower girl by listening to her vocabulary and accent. Sometimes, such variants are totally acceptable; in others, they mark the speaker as a social, cultural, or regional “outsider” or “inferior.” In the song “Why Can't the English?” Professor Higgins proclaims, “An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him, the moment he begins to talk he makes some other Englishman despise him.”

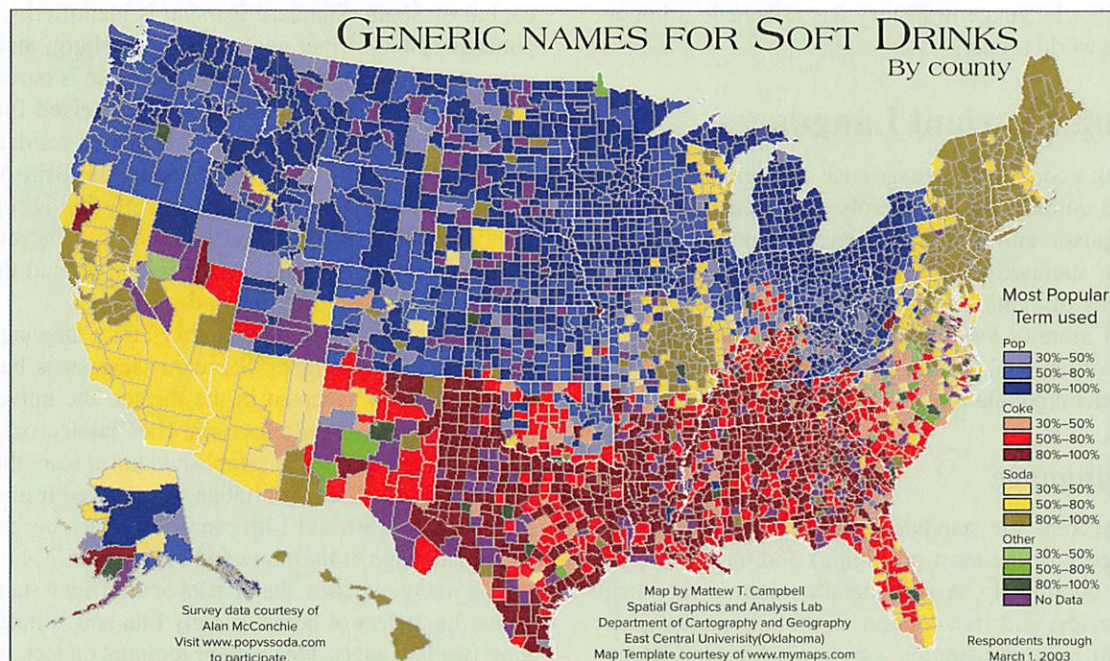
Shaw's play shows us dialects coexisting in space. Cockney and cultured English share the streets of London; Black English and Standard American are heard in the same schoolyards throughout the United States. In many societies, dialects denote social class and educational level. Speakers of higher

socioeconomic status or educational achievement are most likely to follow the norms of their standard language; less-educated or lower-status persons or groups consciously distinguishing themselves from the mainstream culture are more likely to use the **vernacular**—nonstandard language or dialect native to the locale or adopted by the social group. In some instances, however, as in Germany and German-Switzerland, local dialects are preserved and prized as badges of regional identity.

Different dialects may be part of the speech patterns of the same person. Professionals discussing, for example, medical, legal, financial, or scientific matters with their peers employ vocabularies and formal modes of address and sentence structure that are quickly changed to informal colloquial speech when the conversation shifts to sports, vacations, or personal anecdotes. Even gender may be the basis for linguistic differences.

More commonly, we think of dialects in spatial terms. Speech is a geographic variable; each locale is apt to have its own, perhaps slight, language differences from neighboring places. Such differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, word meanings, and other language characteristics tend to accumulate with increasing distance. When they are mapped, they help define the **linguistic geography**—the character and spatial pattern of dialects and languages—of a speech community.

Every dialect feature has a territorial extent. The outer limit of its occurrence is a boundary line called an **isogloss** (the term *isophone* is used if the areal variant is marked by difference in sound rather than word choice). Each isogloss is a distinct entity, but taken together, isoglosses give clear map evidence of dialect regions that in turn may reflect paths and barriers for spatial interaction, long-established political borders, or past migration flows and diffusion of word choice and pronunciation.



**Figure 5.9** The generic term for a carbonated beverage varies regionally across the United States, from soda to pop to coke. Maps such as this visually record geographic variations in word usage or accent or pronunciation. Despite the presumed influence of national radio and television programs in promoting a “general” or “standard” American word usage, regional variations persist.

Source: M. Campbell and G. Plumb, *Web Atlas of Oklahoma*, East Central University.



**Geographic or regional dialects** may be recognized at different scales. On the world scene, for example, British, American, Indian, and Australian English are all acknowledged distinctive dialects of the same evolving language (see the feature “World Englishes”). Regionally, in Britain alone, one can recognize Southern British English, Northern British English, and Scottish English, each containing several more localized variants. Japanese has three recognized dialect groups; and China’s Han ethnic group—making up more than 90 percent of the population of a country whose official language is Standard Mandarin—speak as many as 1,500 dialects, many almost entirely mutually incomprehensible.

Indeed, all long-established speech communities show their own structure of geographic dialects whose number and diversity tend to increase in areas longest settled and most fragmented and isolated. For example, the local speech of Newfoundland—isolated off the Atlantic coast of mainland Canada—retains much of the 17th-century flavor of the four West Counties of England from which the overwhelming majority of its settlers

came. Yet the isolation and lack of cultural mixing of the islanders have not led to a general Newfoundland “dialect”; settlement was coastal and in the form of isolated villages in each of the many bays and indentations. There developed from that isolation and the passage of time nearly as many dialects as there are bay settlements, with each dialect separately differing from Standard English in accent, vocabulary, sounds, and syntax. Isolation has led to comparable linguistic variation among the 47,000 inhabitants of the 18 Faeroe Islands between Iceland and Scotland; their Faeroese tongue has 10 dialects.

**Dialects in the United States** Mainland North America had a more diversified colonization than did Newfoundland, and its more mobile settlers mixed and carried linguistic influences away from the coast into the continental interior. Nonetheless, as early as the 18th century, three distinctive dialect regions had emerged along the Atlantic coast of the United States (Figure 5.10) and are evident in the linguistic geography of North America to the present day.



**Figure 5.10** Dialect areas of the eastern United States. The Northern dialect and its subdivisions are found in New England and adjacent Canada (the international boundary has little effect on dialect borders in North America), extending southward to a secondary dialect area centered on New York City. Midland speech is found along the Atlantic Coast only from central New Jersey southward to central Delaware, but it spreads much more extensively across the interior of the United States and Canada. The Southern dialect dominates the East Coast from Chesapeake Bay South.

Source: Hans Kurath, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949).

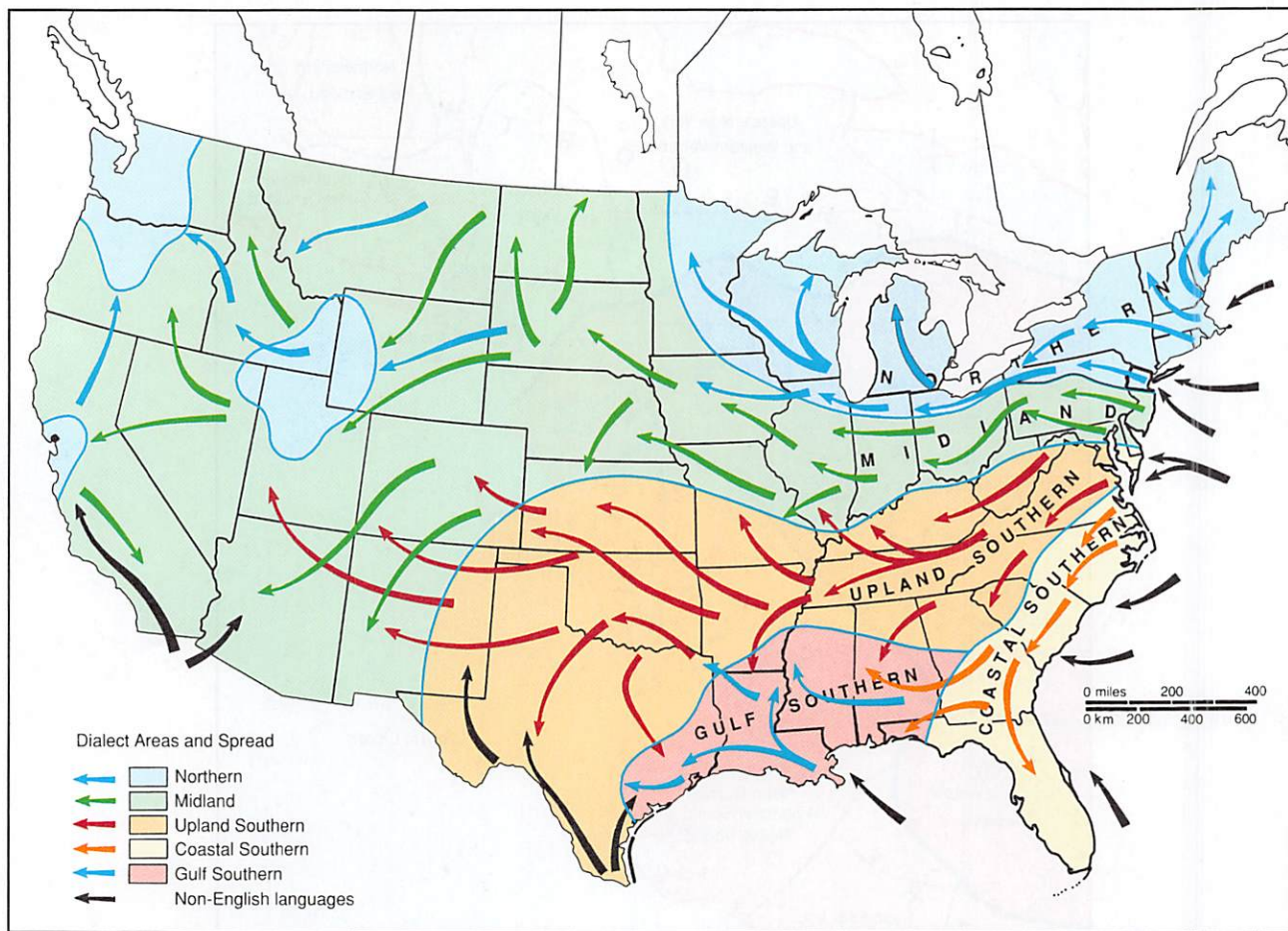


With the extension of settlement after the Revolutionary War, each of the dialect regions expanded inland. Speakers of the Northern dialect moved along the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes. Midland speakers from Pennsylvania traveled down the Ohio River, and the related Upland Southern dialect moved through the mountain gaps into Kentucky and Tennessee. The Coastal Southern dialect was less mobile, held to the east by plantation prosperity and the long resistance to displacement exerted by the Cherokees and the other Civilized Tribes (Figure 5.11).

Once across the Appalachian barrier, the diffusion paths of the Northern dialect were fragmented and blocked by the time they reached the Upper Mississippi. Upland Southern speakers spread out rapidly: northward into the old Northwest Territory, west into Arkansas and Missouri, and south into the Gulf Coast

states. But the Civil War and its aftermath halted further major westward movements of the southern dialects. The Midland dialect, apparently so restricted along the Eastern Seaboard, became, almost by default, the basic form for much of the interior and West of the United States. It was altered and enriched there by contact with the Northern and Southern dialects, by additions from Native American languages, by contact with Spanish culture in the Southwest, and by contributions from the great non-English immigrations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Naturally, dialect subregions are found in the West, but their boundary lines—so clear in the eastern interior—become less distinct from the Plains States to the Pacific.

In areas with strong infusions of recently arrived Hispanic, Asian, and other immigrant groups, language mixing tends to accelerate language change as more and different non-English



**Figure 5.11** Speech regions and dialect diffusion in the United States. This generalized map is most accurate for the Eastern Seaboard and the easternmost diffusion pathways where most detailed linguistic study has been concentrated. West of the Mississippi River, the Midland dialect becomes dominant, though altered through modifications reflecting intermingling of peoples and speech patterns. Northern speech characteristics are still clearly evident in the San Francisco Bay area, brought there in the middle of the 19th century by migrants coming by sea around Cape Horn. Northerners were also prominent among the travelers of the Oregon Trail and the California Gold Rush.

Sources: Based on Raven I. McDavid, Jr. "The Dialects of American English," in W. Nelson Francis, *The Structure of American English* (New York: Ronald Press, 1958); "Regional Dialects in the United States," Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd College Edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980); and Gordon R. Wood, *Vocabulary Change* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), Map 83, p. 358.



# World Englishes

Non-native speakers of English far outnumber those for whom English is the first language. Most of the more than 1.5 billion people who speak and understand at least some English as a second language live in Asia; they are appropriating the language and remaking it in regionally distinctive fashions to suit their own cultures, linguistic backgrounds, and needs.

It is inevitable that widely spoken languages separated by distance, isolation, and cultural differences will fragment into dialects that, in turn, evolve into new languages. Latin splintered into French, Spanish, Italian, and other Romance languages. English is similarly experiencing that sort of regional differentiation, shaped by the variant life-worlds of its far-flung community of speakers, and following the same path to mutual unintelligibility. Although Standard English may be one of or the sole official language of their countries of birth, millions of people around the world claiming proficiency in English or English as their national language cannot understand one another. Even teachers of English from India, Malaysia, Nigeria, or the Philippines, for example, may not be able to communicate in their supposedly common tongue—and find the cockney English of London utterly alien.

The splintering of spoken English is a fact of linguistic life and its offspring—called “World Englishes” by linguists—defy frequent attempts by governments to encourage adherence to international standards.

Singlish (Singapore English) and Taglish (a mixture of English and Tagalog, the dominant language of the Philippines) are commonly cited examples of the multiplying World Englishes, but equally distinctive regional variants have emerged in India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Nigeria, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. One linguist suggests that beyond an “inner circle” of states where English is the first and native language—for example, Canada, Australia, United States—lies an “outer circle” where English is a second language (Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Zambia, and many others) and where the regionally distinctive World Englishes are most obviously developing. Even farther out is an “expanding circle” of such states as China, Egypt, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, and others where English is a foreign language and distinctive local variants in common usage have not yet developed.

Each of the emerging varieties of English is, of course, “correct,” for each represents a functioning mode of communication with mutual comprehension between its speakers. Each also represents a growing national cultural confidence and pride in the particular characteristics of the local varieties of English, and each regional variant is strengthened by local teachers who do not themselves have a good command of the standard language. Conceivably, these factors may mean that English will fragment into scores or hundreds of mutually unintelligible tongues. But equally conceivably, the

worldwide influence of globalized business contacts, the Internet, worldwide American radio and television broadcasts, near-mandatory use of English in scientific publication, and the like will mean a future English more homogeneous and, perhaps, more influenced and standardized by American usage.

Most likely, observers of World Englishes suggest, both divergence and convergence will take place. While use of English as the major language of communication worldwide is a fact in international politics, business, education, and the media, increasingly, speakers of English learn two “dialects”—one of their own community and culture and one in the international context. While the constant modern world electronic and literary interaction between the variant regional Englishes make it likely that the common language will remain universally intelligible, it also seems probable that mutually incomprehensible forms of English will become entrenched as the language is taught, learned, and used in world areas far removed from contact with first-language speakers and with vibrant local economies and cultures independent of the Standard English community. “Our only revenge,” said a French official, deploring the declining role of French within the EU, “is that the English language is being killed by all these foreigners speaking it so badly.”

words enter the general vocabulary of all Americans. In many cases, those infusions create or perpetuate pockets of linguistically unassimilated peoples whose urban neighborhoods in shops, signage, and common speech bear little resemblance to the majority Anglo communities of the larger metropolitan area. Even as immigrant groups learn and adopt English, there is an inevitable retention of familiar words and phrases and, for many, the unstructured intermixture of old and new tongues into such hybrids as “Spanglish” among Latin and Central American immigrants, for example, or “Runglish” among the thousands of Russian immigrants of the Brighton Beach district of New York City.

Local dialects and accents do not display predictable patterns of consistency or change. Regional differences still persist in the face of the presumed leveling effects of the mass media. The distinct evidence of increasing contrasts between the speech patterns and accents of Chicago, New York, Birmingham, St. Louis, and other cities is countered by reports of decreasing local dialect pronunciations in large southern cities such as Dallas and Atlanta that have experienced major influxes of Northerners. Other studies find that some regional accents are fading in small towns and rural areas, presumably because mass media standardization is more influential than local dialect reinforcement as local populations decline and physical and social mobility increase.



## Pidgins and Creoles

Language is rarely a total barrier in communication among peoples, even those whose native tongues are mutually incomprehensible. **Bilingualism** or **multilingualism** may permit skilled linguists to communicate in a jointly understood third language, but long-term contact may require the creation of new language—a pidgin—learned by both parties. In the past 400 years, more than 100 new languages have been created out of the global mixing of peoples and cultures. A pidgin is an amalgam of languages, usually a simplified form of one, such as English or French, with words borrowed from another one, perhaps a non-European local language. In its original form, a pidgin is not the mother tongue of any of its speakers; it is a second language for everyone who uses it, a language generally restricted to such specific functions as commerce, administration, or work supervision. For example, given the variety of languages spoken among the some 270 ethnic groups of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a special tongue called Lingala, a hybrid of Congolese dialects and French, emerged to permit, among other things, communication with soldiers drawn from across the country.

Pidgins are initially characterized by a highly simplified grammatical structure and a limited vocabulary, adequate to express basic ideas but not complex concepts. For example, fanagalo, a pidgin created earlier in South Africa's gold mines to allow spoken communication between workers of different tribes and nationalities and between workers and Afrikaner bosses, is being largely abandoned. Since the mid-1990s, workers have increasingly been schooled in basic English as fanagalo—which lacks the vocabulary to describe how to operate new, automated mining machinery and programmable winches with their multiple sensors and warnings in English—became less useful. In South America, when the Portuguese arrived five centuries ago, the challenge of communicating with conquered native peoples speaking more than 700 languages led Jesuit priests to concoct a pidgin mixture of Indian, Portuguese, and African words they called “lingua geral,” or the “general language.” As a living language, lingua geral gradually died out in most of Brazil but has been retained and adopted as an element of their cultural identity by some isolated Indian groups that have lost their own original mother tongue. If a pidgin becomes the first language of a group of speakers—who may have lost their former native tongue through disuse—a **creole** language has evolved. In their development, creoles invariably acquire a more complex grammatical structure and enhanced vocabulary.

Creole languages have proved useful integrative tools in linguistically diverse areas; several have become symbols of nationhood. Swahili, a pidgin formed from a number of Bantu dialects with major vocabulary additions from Arabic, originated in the coastal areas of East Africa and spread inland first by Arab ivory and slave caravans and later by trade during the period of English and German colonial rules. When Kenya and Tanzania gained independence, they made Swahili the national language of administration and education. Other examples of creolization are Afrikaans (a pidginized form of 17th-century Dutch used

in the Republic of South Africa); Haitian Creole (the language of Haiti, derived from the pidginized French used in the slave trade); and Bazaar Malay (a pidginized form of the Malay language, a version of which is the official national language of Indonesia).

## Lingua Franca

A **lingua franca** is an established language used habitually for communication by people whose native tongues are mutually incomprehensible. For them, it is a second language, one learned in addition to the native tongue. Lingua franca, literally “Frankish tongue,” was named from the dialect of France adopted as their common tongue by the Crusaders assaulting the Muslims of the Holy Land. Later, it endured as a language of trade and travel in the eastern Mediterranean, useful as a single tongue shared in a linguistically diverse region.

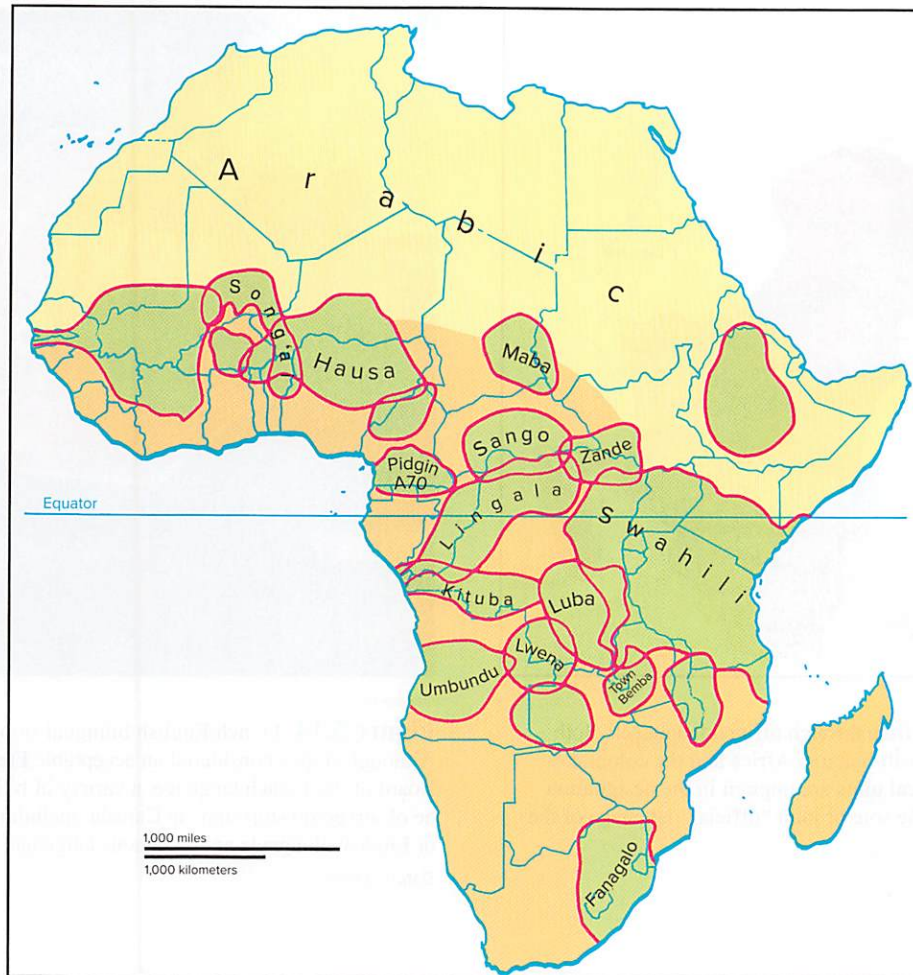
Between 300 BCE and 500 CE, the Mediterranean world was unified by Common Greek. Later, Latin became a lingua franca, the language of empire and, until replaced by the vernacular European tongues, of the Church, government, scholarship, and the law. Outside the European sphere, Aramaic served the role from the 5th century BCE to the 4th century CE in the Near East and Egypt; Arabic followed Muslim conquest as the unifying language of that international religion after the 7th century. Mandarin Chinese and Hindi in India have a lingua franca role in their linguistically diverse countries. The immense linguistic diversity of Africa has made regional lingua francas such as Swahili necessary (**Figure 5.12**), and in a world of increased spatial interaction, English increasingly serves as the lingua franca of globalization.

## Official Languages

Governments may designate a single tongue as a country's official **language**, the required language of instruction in the schools and universities, government business, the courts, and other official and semiofficial public and private activities. In societies in which two or more languages are in common use (multilingualism), such an official language may serve as the approved national lingua franca, guaranteeing communication among all citizens of differing native tongues.

In many immigrant societies, such as the United States, only one of the many spoken languages may have implicit or official government sanction. Many Americans are surprised to discover, however, that English is not the official language of the United States. Nowhere does the Constitution provide for an official language, and no federal law specifies one. The country was built by a great diversity of immigrants and in 2016, 21 percent of U.S. households spoke a language other than English at home. A majority of states offer driving tests in foreign languages, multilingual ballots are provided in many jurisdictions, and many school districts offer bilingual teaching. There have been a number of failed attempts to add a Constitutional amendment making English the official national





**Figure 5.12** Lingua francas of Africa. The importance and extent of competing lingua francas in sub-Saharan Africa change over time, reflecting the spread of populations and the relative economic or political stature of speakers of different languages. In many areas, an individual may employ different lingua francas, depending on activity: dealing with officials, trading in the marketplace, conversing with strangers. Among the elite in all areas, the preferred lingua franca is apt to be a European language. When a European tongue is an official language (Figure 5.13) or the language of school instruction, its use as a lingua franca is more widespread. Throughout northern Africa, Arabic is the usual lingua franca for all purposes.

Source: Adapted from Bernd Heine, *Status and Use of African Lingua Francas* (Munich: Weltforum Verlag; and New York: Humanities Press, 1970).

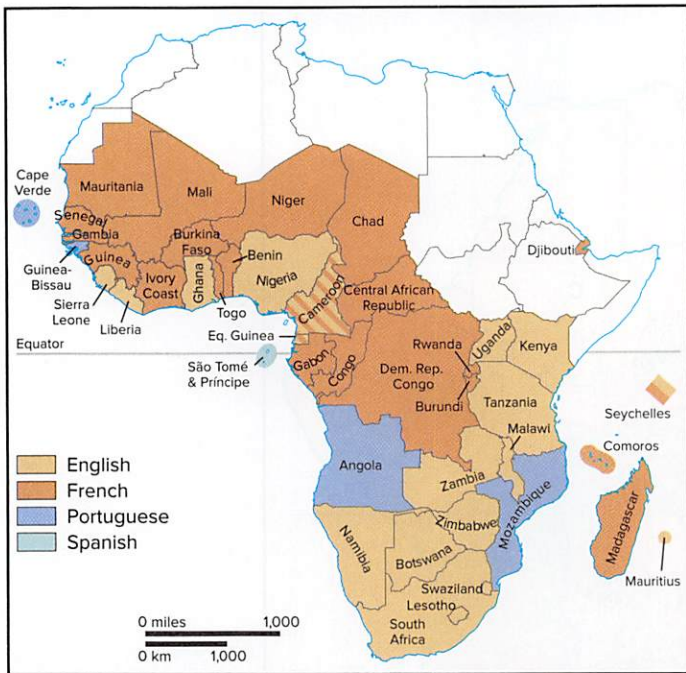
language of the United States. In general, however, immigrants have been eager to learn English as they enter mainstream American life.

Nearly every country in linguistically complex sub-Saharan Africa has selected a European language—usually that of their former colonial governors—as an official language (Figure 5.13), only rarely designating a native language or creole as an alternate official tongue. Indeed, less than 10 percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa live in countries with any indigenous African tongue given official status. Nigeria has some 350 clearly different languages and is dominated by three of them: Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo. English is not a native tongue for any Nigerian, yet throughout the country, English is the sole language of instruction and the sole official

language. Effectively, all Nigerians must learn a foreign language before they can enter the mainstream of national life. Most Pacific Ocean countries, including the Philippines (with between 80 and 110 Malayo-Polynesian languages) and Papua New Guinea (with more than 850 distinct Papuan tongues), have a European language as at least one of their official tongues.

Increasingly, the diffusion of popular English words and phrases in everyday speech, press, and television threatens the “purity” of other European languages. So common has the adoption of phrases such as *Das Laptop* and *le hot dog* that some nearly new language variants are now recognized: *franglais* in France and *Denglisch* in Germany are the best-known examples. Both have spurred resistance movements





**Figure 5.13** Europe in Africa through official languages. Both the linguistic complexity of sub-Saharan Africa and the colonial histories of its present political units are implicit in the designation of a European language as the sole or joint “official” language of the different countries.



**Figure 5.14** French/English bilingual stop sign in Ottawa, Ontario. Although stop is considered an acceptable French word by the Quebec Board of the French language, a variety of bilingual combinations can be observed on stop signs in Canada, including some featuring French or English alongside an indigenous language.

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from officially sanctioned language monitors of, respectively, the French Academy and the Institute for the German Language. Japan, Latvia, Poland, and Spain are among the states seeking to preserve the purity of their official languages from contamination by English or other borrowed foreign words.

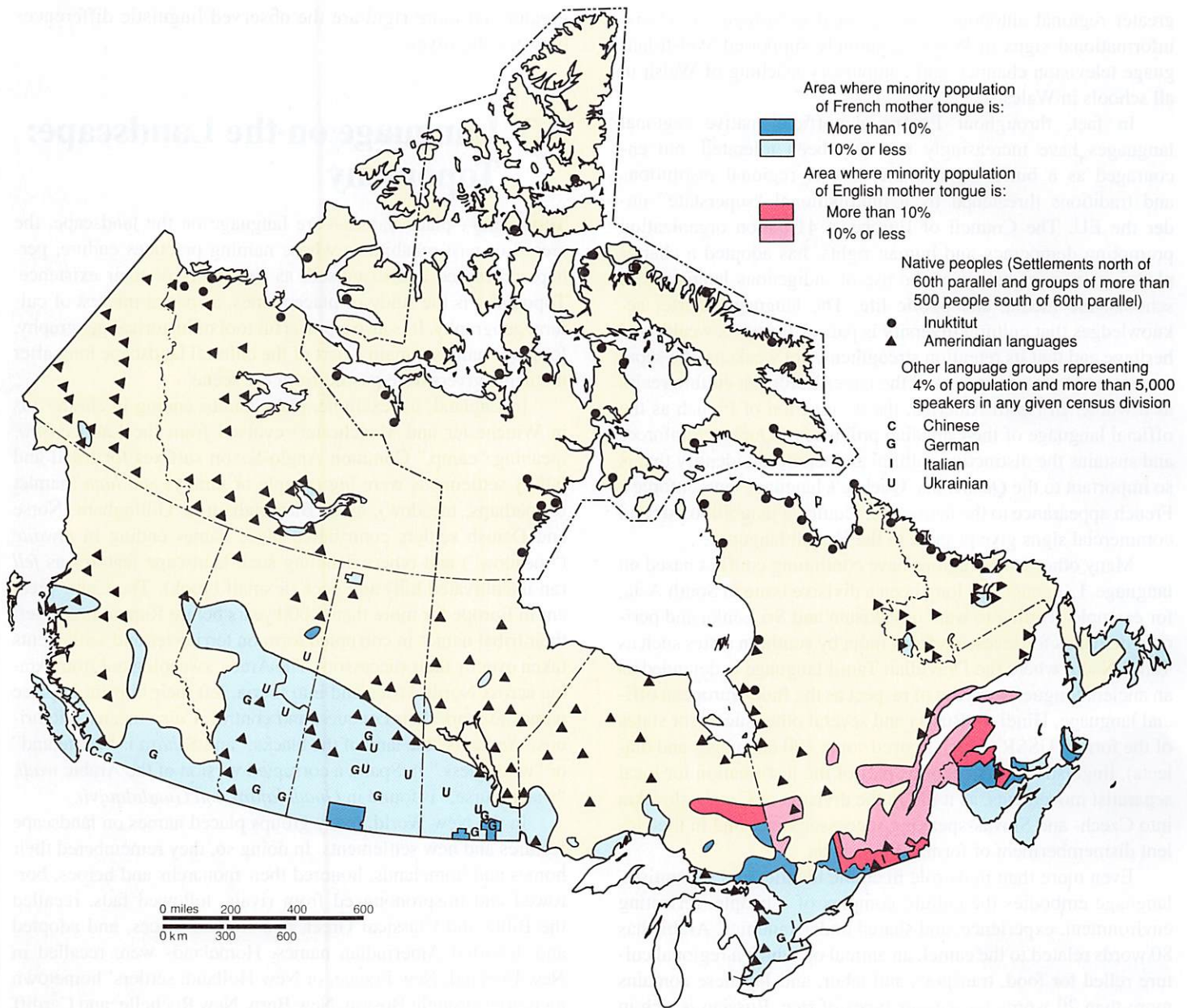
In some countries, multilingualism has official recognition through designation of more than a single state language. Canada and Finland, for example, have two official languages (bilingualism), reflecting rough equality in numbers or influence of separate linguistic populations comprising a single country. In a few multilingual countries, more than two official languages have been designated. Bolivia and Belgium have three official tongues, and Singapore has four. South Africa’s constitution designates 11 official languages, and India gives official status to 18 languages at the regional, though not at the national, level.

Multilingualism may reflect significant cultural and spatial divisions within a country. In Canada, the Official Languages Act of 1985 accorded French and English equal status as official languages of Parliament and government throughout the nation (Figure 5.14). French-speakers are concentrated in the province of Quebec, however, and constitute a culturally

distinct population sharply divergent from the English-speaking majority of other parts of Canada (Figure 5.15). Within sections of Canada, even greater linguistic diversity is recognized; the legislature of the Northwest Territories, for example, has eight official languages—six native, plus English and French.

Few countries remain purely **monolingual**. Past and recent movements of peoples as colonists, refugees, or migrants have assured that most of the world’s countries contain linguistically mixed populations. Maintenance of native languages among such populations is not assured, of course. Where numbers are small or pressures for integration into the dominant culture are strong, immigrant and aboriginal (native) linguistic minorities tend to adopt the majority or official language for all purposes. On the other hand, isolation and relatively large numbers of speakers may serve to preserve native tongues. In Canada, for example, aboriginal languages with large populations of speakers—Cree, Ojibwe, and Inuktitut—are well maintained in their areas of concentration (respectively, northern Quebec, the northern prairies, and Nunavut). In contrast, much smaller language groups in southern Canada have a much lower ratio of retention among native speakers.





**Figure 5.15** Bilingualism and diversity in Canada. The map shows areas of Canada that have a minimum of 5,000 inhabitants and include a minority population identified with an official language.

Source: Commissioner of Official Languages, Government of Canada.

## 5.2 Language, Territoriality, and Cultural Identity

The designation of more than one official language does not always satisfy the ambitions of linguistically distinct groups for recognition and autonomy. Language is a defining characteristic of ethnic and cultural identity. Languages contain unique expressions of a culture's heritage. Thus, many groups from around the world believe that losing their linguistic identity would be the worst and final evidence of discrimination and subjugation.

Language has often been the focus of separatist movements among spatially distinct, minority linguistic groups.

In Europe, France, Spain, Britain—and Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union before their dismemberment—experienced such language “revolts” and acknowledged, sometimes belatedly, the local concerns that they express. After 1970, France dropped its ban on teaching regional tongues and Spain relaxed its earlier total rejection of Basque and Catalan as regional languages, recognizing Catalan as a co-official language in its home region in northeastern Spain. In the United Kingdom, parliamentary debates concerning



greater regional autonomy have resulted in bilingual road and informational signs in Wales, a publicly supported Welsh-language television channel, and compulsory teaching of Welsh in all schools in Wales.

In fact, throughout Europe nonofficial native regional languages have increasingly not only been tolerated, but encouraged as a buffer against the loss of regional institutions and traditions threatened by a multinational “superstate” under the EU. The Council of Europe, a 41-nation organization promoting democracy and human rights, has adopted a charter pledging encouragement of the use of indigenous languages in schools, the media, and public life. The language charter acknowledges that cultural diversity is part of Europe’s wealth and heritage and that its retention strengthens, not weakens, the separate states of the continent and the larger European culture realm as a whole. In North America, the designation of French as the official language of the Canadian province of Quebec reinforces and sustains the distinctive cultural and territorial identity that is so important to the *Québécois*. Quebec’s language laws enforce a French appearance to the landscape, requiring that billboards and commercial signs give priority to the French language.

Many other world regions have continuing conflict based on language. Language has long been a divisive issue in South Asia, for example, leading to wars in Pakistan and Sri Lanka and periodic demands for secession from India by southern states such as Tamil Nadu, where the Dravidian Tamil language is defended as an ancient tongue as worthy of respect as the Indo-European official language, Hindi. In Russia and several other successor states of the former USSR (which housed some 200 languages and dialects), linguistic diversity forms part of the justification for local separatist movements, as it did in the division of Czechoslovakia into Czech- and Slovak-speaking successor states and in the violent dismemberment of former Yugoslavia.

Even more than in its role in ethnic identity and separatism, language embodies the culture complex of a people, reflecting environment, experience, and shared understandings. Arabic has 80 words related to the camel, an animal on which a regional culture relied for food, transport, and labor, and Japanese contains more than 20 words for various types of rice. Russian is rich in terms for ice and snow, indicative of the prevailing climate of its linguistic cradle; Hawaiians reportedly have 108 words for sweet potato, 65 for fishing net, and 47 for banana. The 15,000 tributaries and subtributaries of the Amazon River have obliged the Brazilians to enrich Portuguese with words that go beyond *river*. Among them are *paraná* (a stream that leaves and reenters the same river), *igarapé* (an offshoot that runs until it dries up), and *furo* (a waterway that connects two rivers).

Most—perhaps all—cultures display subtle or pronounced differences in ways males and females use language. Most have to do with vocabulary and with grammatical forms peculiar to individual cultures. For example, among the Caribs of the Caribbean, the Zulu of Africa, and other groups, men have words that women through custom or taboo are not permitted to use, and women have words and phrases that the men never use “or they would be laughed to scorn,” an informant reports. The greater and more inflexible the difference in the social roles of men and women in a particular culture, the

greater and more rigid are the observed linguistic differences between the sexes.

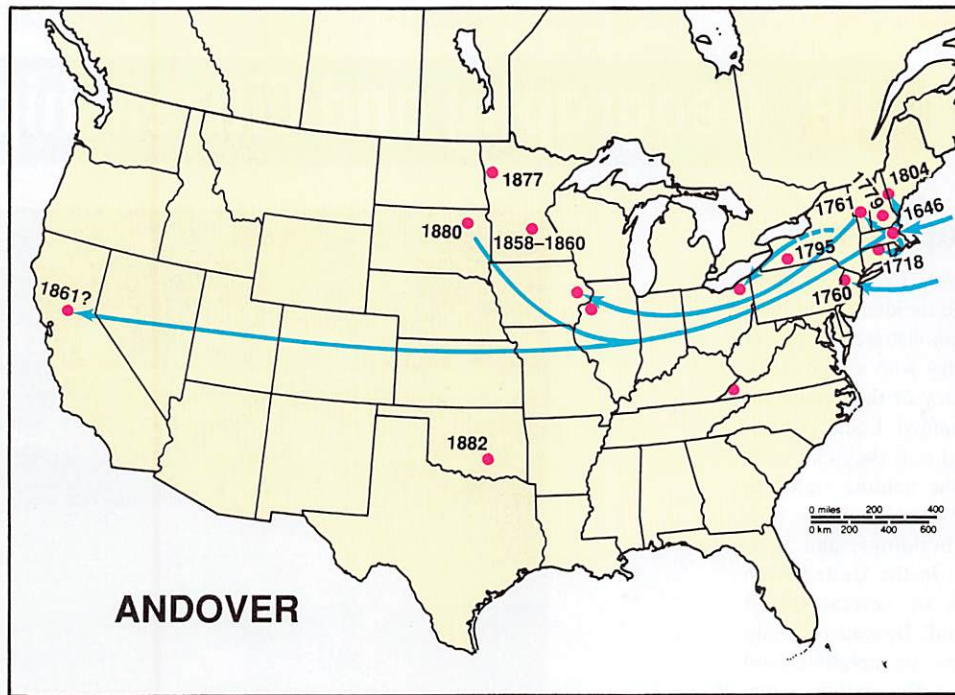
## 5.3 Language on the Landscape: Toponymy

**Toponyms**—place names—are language on the landscape, the record of past inhabitants whose naming practices endure, perhaps corrupted and disguised, as reminders of their existence. Toponymy is the study of place names, a special interest of cultural geography. It is also a powerful tool of historical geography, for place names remain a part of the cultural landscape long after the name givers have passed from the scene.

In England, for example, place names ending in *chester* (as in Winchester and Manchester) evolved from the Latin *castra*, meaning “camp.” Common Anglo-Saxon suffixes for tribal and family settlements were *ing* (people or family) and *ham* (hamlet or, perhaps, meadow), as in Birmingham or Gillingham. Norse and Danish settlers contributed place names ending in *thwaite* (“meadow”) and others denoting such landscape features as *fell* (an uncultivated hill) and *beck* (a small brook). The Celts, present in Europe for more than 1,000 years before Roman times, left their tribal names in corrupted form on territories and settlements taken over by their successors. The Arabs, sweeping out from Arabia across North Africa and into Iberia, left their imprint in place names to mark their conquest and control. *Cairo* means “victorious,” *Sudan* is “the land of the blacks,” and *Sahara* is “wasteland” or “wilderness.” In Spain, a corrupted version of the Arabic *wadi*, “watercourse,” is found in *Guadalajara* and *Guadalquivir*.

In the New World, many groups placed names on landscape features and new settlements. In doing so, they remembered their homes and homelands, honored their monarchs and heroes, borrowed and mispronounced from rivals, followed fads, recalled the Bible and Classical Greek and Roman places, and adopted and distorted Amerindian names. Homelands were recalled in New England, New France, or New Holland; settlers’ hometown memories brought Boston, New Bern, New Rochelle, and Cardiff from England, Switzerland, France, and Wales. Monarchs were remembered in Virginia for the Virgin Queen Elizabeth, Carolina for one English king, Georgia for another, and Louisiana for a king of France. Washington, D.C.; Jackson, cities in Mississippi and Michigan; Austin, Texas; and Lincoln, Illinois memorialized heroes and leaders. Names given by the Dutch in New York were often distorted by the English; Breukelyn, Vlissingen, and Haarlem became Brooklyn, Flushing, and Harlem. French names underwent similar twisting or translation, and Spanish names were adopted, altered, or, later, put into such bilingual combinations as Hermosa Beach. Amerindian tribal names—Yenish, Maha, and Kansa—were modified, first by French and later by English speakers—to Erie, Omaha, and Kansas. A faddish “Classical Revival” after the Revolution gave us Troy, Athens, Rome, Sparta, and other ancient town names and later spread them across the country. Bethlehem, Ephrata, Nazareth, and Salem came from the Bible. Popular place names diffused westward across the United States frontier (Figure 5.16).





**Figure 5.16** Migrant Andover. Place names in a new land tend to be transportable, carried to new locales by migrating town founders. They are a reminder of the cultural origins and diffusion paths of settlers. Andover, a town name from England, was brought to New England in 1646 and later carried westward.

Source: American Name Society.

Place names, whatever their language of origin, frequently consist of two parts: generic (classifying) and specific (modifying or particular). *Big River* in English is translated into *Rio Grande* in Spanish, *Mississippi* in Algonquin, and *Ta Ho* in Chinese. The *order* of generic and specific, however, may alter among languages and give a clue to the group originally bestowing the place name. In English, the specific usually comes first: *Hudson River*, *Bunker Hill*, *Long Island*, and so on. When, in the United States, we find *River Rouge* or *Isle Royale*, we also find evidence of French settlement—the French reverse the naming order. Some generic names can be used to trace the migration paths across the United States of the three Eastern dialect groups (see Figure 5.10). Northern dialect settlers tended to carry with them their habit of naming a community and calling its later neighbors by the same name modified by direction—Lansing and East Lansing, for example. *Brook* is found in the New England settlement area, *run* is from the Midland dialect, and *bayou* and *branch* are from the Southern area.

European colonists and their descendants gave new place names to a physical landscape already extensively named by indigenous peoples, effectively erasing signs of indigenous presence. In other cases, names were adopted, but often shortened, altered, or—certainly—mispronounced. The vast territory that local Amerindians called *Mesconsing*, meaning “the long river,” was recorded by Lewis and Clark as *Quisconsing*, later to be further distorted into *Wisconsin*. *Milwaukee* and *Winnipeg*,

*Potomac* and *Niagara*, *Adirondack*, *Chesapeake*, *Shenandoah*, and *Yukon*; the names of 27 of the 50 United States; and the present identity of thousands of North American places and features, large and small, had their origin in Native American languages.

In northern Canada, Indian and Inuit (Eskimo) place names are returning. The town of Frobisher Bay has reverted to its Eskimo name *Iqaluit* (“place of the fish”); Resolute Bay has become *Kaujuitok* (“place where the sun never rises”) in Inuktitut, the lingua franca of the Canadian Eskimos; the Jean Marie River has returned to *Tthedzehl’edeli* (“river that flows over clay”), its earlier Slavey name. These and other official name changes reflect a decision that community preference will be the standard for all place names, no matter how entrenched European versions might be.

Decisions to rename places recognize the importance of language as a powerful unifying thread in peoples’ culture complexes (see the feature “Changing Toponyms.”). Language may serve as a key marker of ethnicity and a fiercely defended symbol of the history and individuality of a distinctive social group. Hispanic Americans demand the right of instruction in their own language, and Basques wage civil war to achieve a linguistically based separatism. Indian states were adjusted to coincide with language boundaries, and the Polish National Catholic Church was created in America, not Poland, to preserve Polish language and culture in an alien environment.





## Changing Toponyms

Toponyms are powerful. The act of naming a place is to define its identity, at least in part. Toponyms demonstrate the power of the person or country who assigned the name and the legitimacy of the person for whom the place was named. Local governments have discovered that they can raise revenues by selling the naming rights to important, publicly owned facilities such as stadiums, public buildings, and transit stations. In Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, the names of several transit stations have been sold. Instead of being named for the streets or neighborhood where they are located, the stations carry corporate names such as First Gulf Bank station. The names of sports stadium once reflected the name of the home team such as Dodger Stadium or their location such as Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati and Fenway Park in Boston. More recently, stadium names have become market commodities, reflecting corporate control over popular culture and the cultural landscape. For example, Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh was replaced by PNC Park, named for a bank.

Toponyms reflect political power. Grosse Frankfurter Strasse, one of the most important streets in Berlin, Germany, was renamed Stalinallee by the communists in 1949, and then renamed Karl Marx Allee in 1961 when Stalin fell out of fashion. Proposals to revert to the original street name have been discussed. Colonial powers imposed a new language and often erased signs of indigenous culture. The post-colonial era has been marked by a new wave of name changes. In India, rising post-colonial pride resulted in decisions to undo anglicized city names: Bombay changed to *Mumbai*, Madras to *Chennai*, and Calcutta to *Kolkata*.

The United States Board on Geographic Names is charged with designating official names of geographic features. Recently, it has received many proposals to eliminate derogatory or racist names and recover indigenous names. Dozens of toponyms using the racial epithet *squaw* have been changed. Utah's Negro Bill Canyon was renamed Grandstaff Canyon. The most

significant recent action was the official name change of North America's highest mountain from Mount McKinley to *Denali*. The name *Mount McKinley* was given to commemorate President McKinley who was assassinated in 1901 but had never travelled to Alaska and had no meaningful connections to the mountain. The name *Denali* means "the tall one" in the indigenous Athabascan language and had been used for centuries. Thus, in keeping with the wishes of Alaskans who had been petitioning for the change since the 1970s, the name of the mountain was officially changed in 2015.

Minneapolis' Lake Calhoun was named in honor of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun who commissioned the 1817 army survey that first mapped the lake. Calhoun later served as Vice President of the United States where he was an outspoken defender of slavery. Almost two centuries after the lake was named in his honor, public pressure to eliminate symbols of racism began to focus on Lake Calhoun, even though most Minneapolis residents had no idea where the name came from. Activists succeeded in convincing the City of Minneapolis to revert to the original indigenous Dakota name—*Bde Maka Ska* which means "white earth lake."



**Figure 5B** The name of Minneapolis' Lake Calhoun changed to Bde Maka Ska.

©Mark Bjelland

## Thinking Geographically

1. Have any stadiums or other public facilities in your city sold their naming rights? If so, what do the new names suggest about who holds cultural and economic power? Where would you draw the line in allowing public facilities and landscape features to have their naming rights sold to the highest bidder? Write a one-page essay defending your position on this question.
2. Birch Creek in Alaska recently reverted to its indigenous name K'iidòotinjik River. Some detractors complain that non-English names are difficult to spell and pronounce. Is maintaining language diversity and indigenous cultural identity worth the inconvenience to English speakers who must learn new, unfamiliar names? Explain your reasoning.
3. Some defenders of the status quo argue that keeping old toponyms is an important part of remembering the past in order to avoid repeating it, even if that past was racist, sexist, oppressive, or violent. Is it important to keep offensive toponyms in order to remember the past or is eliminating those toponyms an important step in overcoming the evils of the past? Create an oral presentation to defend your position.



## 5.4 Religion and Culture

Unlike language, which is an attribute of all people, religion varies in its cultural role—dominating some societies, unimportant or denied totally in others. All societies have belief systems—common understandings, expectations, and objects held in high regard—that unite their members and set them off from other culture groups. Such a value system is termed a **religion** when it involves practices of formal or informal worship and addresses questions of meaning and ultimate significance. In a more inclusive sense, religion may be viewed as a unified system of beliefs and practices that join all those who adhere to them into a single moral community. Religion can intimately affect all facets of a culture. Religious belief is by definition an element of the ideological subsystem; formalized and organized religion is an institutional expression of the sociological subsystem. And religious beliefs strongly influence attitudes toward the use and development of the technological subsystem.

Nonreligious belief and value systems exist—humanism or Marxism, for example—that are just as binding on the societies that espouse them as are more traditional religious beliefs. Even societies that largely reject religion—that are officially atheistic or secular—may be strongly influenced by traditional values and customs set by predecessor religions, in days of work and rest, for example, or in legal principles.

Because religions are formalized views about the relation of the individual to this world and to the sacred, each carries a distinct conception of the meaning and value of this life, and most contain rules for living. These rules for living become interwoven with the traditions of a culture. For example, the Muslim observance of daily prayers led to a defining visual feature of Muslim countries—minaret towers on mosques from which the call to prayer is issued five times each day (see [Figure 5.25](#)). Economic patterns may be intertwined with past or present religious beliefs. Traditional restrictions on food and drink may affect the kinds of animals that are raised or avoided, the crops that are grown, and the importance of those crops in the daily diet. Occupational assignment in the Hindu caste system is in part religiously supported. Religious beliefs and practices may justify social

inequalities or work toward their elimination through social services and activism.

In many countries, there is a state religion—that is, religious and political structures are intertwined. Islam is the most common official state religion. By their official names, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan proclaim their close links between religion and government. Despite declining support, many European countries still have an official state Christian church. Buddhism has been the state religion in Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. Despite Indonesia's overwhelming Muslim majority, that country sought and formerly found domestic harmony by recognizing five official religions and a state ideology—*pancasila*—whose first tenet is belief in one god.

The landscape imprint of religion is sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle (see feature “Religious Attire in Secular Spaces”). The structures of religious worship—temples, churches, mosques, stupas, or cathedrals—landscape symbols such as shrines or statues, and such associated land uses as monasteries may lend a regionally distinctive cultural character to an area. “Landscapes of death” may also be visible regional variables, for different religions and cultures dispose of their dead in different manners. Cemeteries are significant and reserved land uses among Christians, Jews, and Muslims who typically bury their deceased with headstones or other markers and monuments to mark graves. Egyptian pyramids or elaborate mausoleums like the Taj Mahal are more grandiose structures of entombment and remembrance. On the other hand, Hindus and Buddhists have traditionally cremated their dead and scattered their ashes, leaving no landscape evidence or imprint.

Some religions make a subtle cultural stamp on the landscape through recognition of particular natural or cultural features as sacred. These **sacred places** are infused with special religious significance and are sites of reverence, fear, pilgrimage, or worship. Grottos, lakes, single trees or groves, rivers such as the Ganges or Jordan, or special mountains or hills, such as Mount Ararat or Mount Fuji, are examples of sacred places unique to specific religions. In some cases, places such as the Old City of Jerusalem are sacred to more than one religion ([Figure 5.17](#)).



Religion, like language, is a symbol of group identity and a cultural rallying point. Religious enmity forced the partition of the Indian subcontinent between Muslims and Hindus after the departure of the British in 1947. Religion continues to be a root cause of many local and regional conflicts throughout the world in the 21st century, as Chief Makuei's words opening this chapter suggest, including confrontations among Muslim sects in

Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, and Syria; Muslims and Jews in Palestine; Christians and Muslims in the Philippines and Nigeria, Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar; and Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims in Sri Lanka. More peacefully, in the name of their beliefs, American Amish, Hutterite, Shaker, and other religious communities have isolated themselves from the secular world and pursued their own ways of life.





**Figure 5.17** The Old City of Jerusalem in Israel contains sites sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. In the foreground, Jews gather to pray at the Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall, a remnant of the ancient Jewish temple which was the center of Jewish religious life before it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. For Christians, Jerusalem is sacred because Jesus was crucified just outside the city walls. During the Middle Ages, Christians fought the Crusades against Muslims over control of Jerusalem. The dome shown at the top of the photo is part of al-Haram al-Shariff (the Noble Sanctuary), a site sacred to Muslims because it marks where Muhammed is believed to have ascended to heaven.

©McGraw-Hill Education/Mike Camille, photographer

## Classification of Religion

Religions are cultural innovations. They may be unique to a single culture group, closely related to the faiths professed in nearby areas, or derived from belief systems in a distant location. Although interconnections among religions can often be discerned—as Christianity and Islam both trace descent from Judaism—family groupings are not as useful to us in classifying religions as they were in studying languages. A distinction between **monotheism**, belief in a single deity, and **polytheism**, belief in many gods, is frequent, but less important to understanding the geography of religion. Simple territorial categories have been offered recognizing origin areas of religions: Western versus Eastern, for example, or African, Far Eastern, or Indian. With proper detail such distinctions may inform us where particular religions had their roots but do not reveal their courses of development, paths of diffusion, or current distributions.

The geographer's approach to religion is different from that of theologians or historians. We are not so concerned with specific doctrines or important figures. Rather, we are interested in religions' patterns and processes of diffusion, with the spatial distributions they have achieved, and with the impact and imprint of different religious systems on the landscape. To explain

their patterns of spatial diffusion, geographers have found it useful to categorize religions as *universalizing*, *ethnic*, or *tribal (traditional)*.

Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are the major **universalizing religions**, faiths that claim applicability to all humans and proselytize; that is, they seek to transmit their beliefs through missionary work and conversion. Membership in universalizing religions is open to anyone who chooses to make some sort of symbolic commitment, such as the initiation ritual of baptism for Christians. No one is excluded because of nationality, ethnicity, or previous religious belief.

**Ethnic religions** have strong territorial and cultural group identification. One usually becomes a member of an ethnic religion by birth or by adoption of a complex lifestyle and cultural identity, not by simple declaration of faith. These religions do not usually proselytize, and their members form distinctive closed communities identified with a particular ethnic group or political unit. An ethnic religion—for example, Judaism, Indian Hinduism, or Japanese Shinto—is an integral element of a specific culture; to be part of the religion is to be immersed in the totality of the culture.

**Tribal, or traditional religions**, are special forms of ethnic religions distinguished by their small size, their unique identity



# Religious Attire in Secular Spaces

Religious believers express their faith in their daily lives at multiple geographic scales. While geographic patterns of religion are often mapped at national or global scales, finer geographic scales such as the home and the body are also important. For example, at the scale of the body, distinctive dress, dietary practices, and sexual mores can be ways of expressing one's religious devotion. Distinctive patterns of dress can express religious values such as modesty, demonstrate an adherent's religious devotion, or highlight a group's separation from the wider society. Orthodox Jews have adopted hats, beards, and dark coats for men and long sleeves and head coverings for women. Many Sikh men demonstrate their faith publicly through their personal appearance, keeping their hair uncut and wrapped in a turban. Muslim men often wear beards, following Muhammed's concern that believers distinguish themselves from nonbelievers. The Amish are a pacifist Christian group whose men wear beards without moustaches because of a historic association between moustaches and the German military.

Islamic attire is a powerful symbol of religious and national identities. The wearing of veils by Muslim women is traced to passages in the Quran calling for a woman's beauty to be disguised outside the home. Veiling practices vary from the headscarf or *hijab*, to the full face veil, or *niqab*, to the full body covering of the traditional Afghan *burqa*. The Muslim theocracy of Iran requires women to wear the hijab in public while in Saudi Arabia women are required to wear the hijab and a long black cloak or *abaya*.

Critics from secular societies often decry the control of women's bodies by laws mandating veiling. However, secular societies that celebrate personal freedoms have sometimes implemented strict bans on veiling. In Turkey, secular governments have treated veiling as a backward practice and for decades banned the wearing of Islamic headscarves in public office buildings and universities. Several western European countries with growing Muslim minority populations have passed laws restricting veiling in public spaces. European politicians have expressed concern that the veil symbolizes female subservience and the lack of

cultural assimilation of new immigrants. In 2004, France banned the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools, arguing that schools were to be religiously neutral secular spaces. Banned were the hijab, large Christian crosses, and Jewish skullcaps. In 2011, France and Belgium implemented bans on the niqab in public spaces. Under France's ban, the niqab could be worn only in the private home, in a house of worship, or as a passenger in a private car. A Dutch law restricts the niqab on public transportation and in public spaces.

Geographers have observed that veiling is a dynamic spatial practice. Muslim women vary their veiling practices depending upon their geographic location. Further, the act of wearing a veil takes on different meanings at school, at work, in the street, at home, or at mosque. A thriving global Islamic fashion industry has emerged to produce its own fashion magazines and stylish hijab and abaya designs. Thus, for many European Muslims, wearing a veil is a personal choice that may express religious devotion, make a political statement, or merely display self confidence in one's identity as a modern, European Muslim woman.

with localized culture groups not yet fully absorbed into modern society, and their close ties to nature. **Animism** is the name given to their belief that life exists in all objects, from rocks and trees to lakes and mountains, or that such inanimate objects are the abode of the dead, spirits, or gods. **Shamanism** is a form of tribal religion that involves community acceptance of a *shaman*, a religious leader, healer, and worker of magic who, through special powers, can intercede with and interpret the spirit world.

## 5.5 Patterns and Flows

The nature of the different classes of religions is reflected in their distributions over the world and in their number of adherents. Universalizing religions tend to be expansionary, carrying their message to new peoples and lands. Ethnic religions, unless their adherents are dispersed, tend to be regionally confined or to expand only slowly and over long periods. Tribal religions tend to contract spatially as their adherents are incorporated into modern society and converted by proselytizing faiths.

As we expect in human geography, the map records only the latest stage of a constantly changing cultural reality. While established religious institutions tend to be conservative and resistant

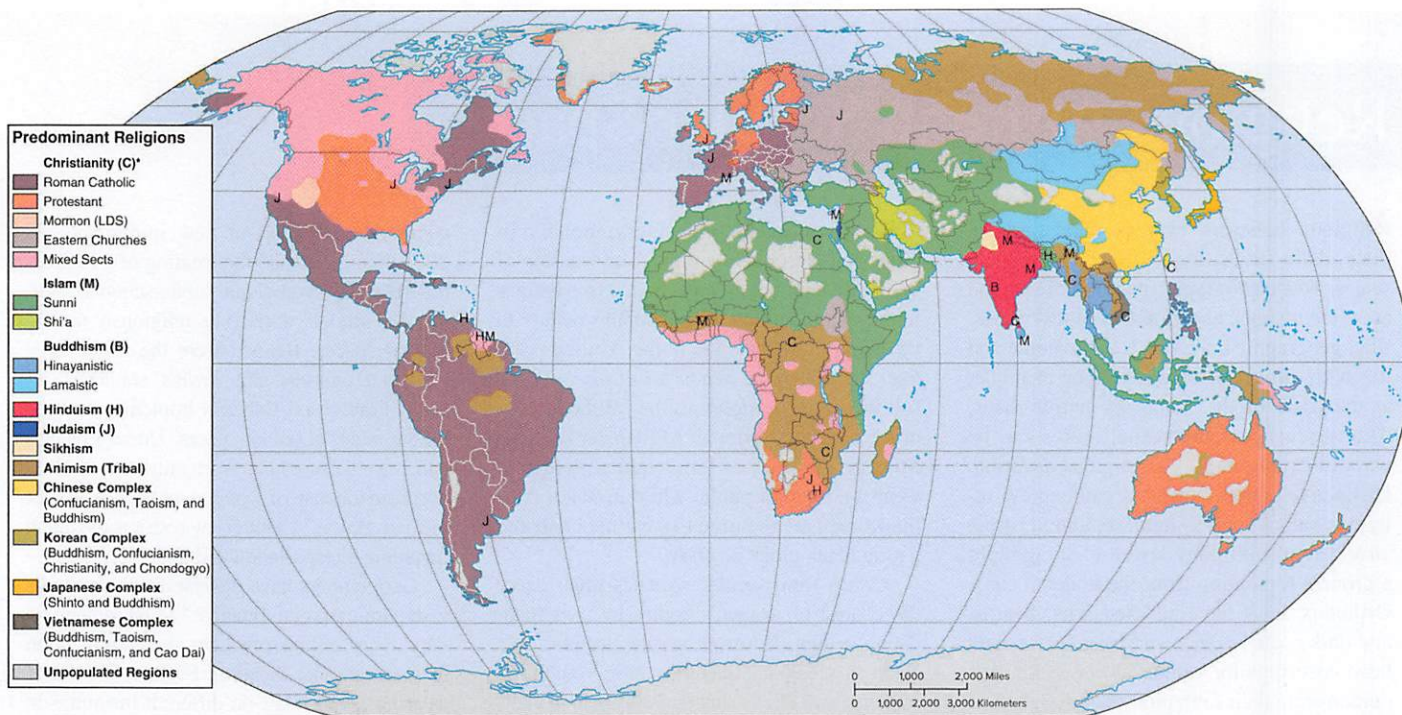
to change, religion is a dynamic culture trait. Personal and collective beliefs may alter in response to developing individual and societal needs and challenges. Religions may be imposed by conquest, adopted by conversion, and recede or persevere in the face of surrounding pluralism, hostility or indifference.

## The World Pattern

The world map of religious affiliation offers a global view of the spatial distribution of major religions (**Figure 5.18**).

More than half of the world's population adheres to one of the major universalizing religions: Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism. Of these three, Figure 5.18 indicates, Christianity and Islam are most widespread; Buddhism is largely an Asian religion. Hinduism, the largest ethnic faith, is essentially confined to the Indian subcontinent, showing the spatial restriction characteristic of most ethnic and traditional religions even when found outside of their homeland area. Small Hindu emigrant communities in Africa, southeastern Asia, Britain, or the United States, for example, tend to remain isolated even in densely crowded urban areas. Although it is not localized beyond Israel, Judaism is also included among the ethnic religions because of its identification with a particular people and cultural tradition.





**AP Figure 5.18** Principal world religions. The assignment of areas to a single religion category conceals a growing intermixture of faiths. The capital letters indicate pockets of locally important groups of minority religions. In European and other western countries that have experienced recent major immigration flows, those influxes are altering the effective, if not the numerical, religious balance. In nominally Christian, Catholic France, for example, low churchgoing rates suggest that now more Muslims than practicing Catholics reside there and, considering birth rate differentials, that someday Islam may be the country's predominant religion (as measured by the number of practicing adherents). Secularism—rejection of religious belief—is common in many countries but is not indicated on this map.

Extensive areas of the world are peopled by those who practice tribal or traditional religions, often in concert with the universalizing religions to which they have been outwardly converted. Tribal religions are found principally among peoples who have not yet been fully absorbed into modern cultures and economies or who are on the margins of more populous and advanced societies. Although the areas assigned to tribal religions in Figure 5.18 are significant, the number of adherents is small and declining. **Table 5.2** presents a reasonable ranking of the major religions of the world by estimated number of adherents. The list is not exhaustive; the *World Christian Encyclopedia* tabulates 10,000 distinct religions, including nearly 12,000 Christian denominations.

Frequently, members of a particular religion show areal concentration within a country. Thus, in urban Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics reside in separate areas whose boundaries are clearly understood. The “Green Line” in Beirut, Lebanon, marked a guarded border between the Christian East and the Muslim West sides of the city, while within the country as a whole, regional concentrations of adherents of different faiths and sects are clearly recognized.

The world map misses finer-scale detail and the reality of religious diversity in a given location. For example, the map identifies western Canada as mainly Protestant Christian, while a trip to the Vancouver suburb of Richmond, British Columbia, would complicate that picture. Lined up next to one another on a short stretch of a single street, one finds a Hindu temple, a Sikh temple, a Buddhist temple, a Buddhist monastery, an Islamic mosque, several

Religion	Number of Adherents (millions)
Christianity	2,112
Islam	1,555
Hinduism	1,017
Nonreligious/Secular/Agnostic/Atheist	788
Syncretic religions	590
Buddhism	485
Tribal/animist religions	174
Shinto	108
Other religions	27
Sikhism	24
Judaism	14
Taoism	9.9
Jainism	5.1
Baha'i	4.8
Confucianism	4.0
Zoroastrianism	1.8

Source: Z. Maoz and E. A. Henderson. 2013. World Religion Project: Global Religion Dataset, 1945–2010.



# Militant Fundamentalism

The term *fundamentalism* entered the social science vocabulary in the late 20th century to describe conservative, reactionary religious movements. Originally, it designated an early 20th century American Christian movement embracing both traditional religious orthodoxy and ethical precepts. More recently, fundamentalism has become a generic description for all religious movements that seek to regain and publicly institutionalize traditional social and cultural values that are usually rooted in the teachings of a sacred text.

Springing from rejection of the secularist tendencies of modernity, fundamentalism is now found in every dominant religion wherever a western-style society has developed, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Zoroastrianism. Fundamentalism is, therefore, a reaction to the modern world; it seeks to counteract cultural changes that undermine religious faith and traditional

religious values. The near-universality of fundamentalist movements is seen by some as another expression of a widespread rebellion against secular globalization.

Fundamentalists place a high priority on doctrinal conformity. Further, they are convinced of the correctness of their beliefs. To some observers, therefore, fundamentalism is by its nature undemocratic, and states controlled by fundamentalist regimes combining politics and religion, of necessity, stifle debate and punish dissent. In the modern world, that rigidity seems most apparent in Islam where, it is claimed, “all Muslims believe in the absolute inerrancy of the Quran . . .” (*The Islamic Herald*, April 1995) and several countries—for example, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan—proclaim by official name their administrative commitment to religious control.

In most of the modern world, however, such commitment is not overt or official,

and fundamentalists often believe that they and their religious convictions are under threat. They view modern secular society undermining the true faith and religious verities. Initially, therefore, a fundamentalist movement exhorts its followers to ardent prayer, ascetic practices, and physical or military training.

If it is unable to peacefully impose its beliefs on others, some fundamentalist groups justify other more extreme actions against perceived oppressors. Initial protests and nonviolent actions may escalate to outright terrorism. That escalation advances when inflexible fundamentalism is combined with the unending poverty and political impotence felt in many—particularly Middle Eastern—societies today. When an external culture or power—commonly a demonized United States—is seen as the source of cultural decay, and economic and military domination some fundamentalists have been able to justify international terrorism.

Protestant Christian Chinese churches, a Muslim high school, and a Christian high school. Further research would reveal that a high percentage of Vancouver residents claim no religious adherence at all. Religious diversity within countries may reflect the degree of toleration that a majority culture affords minority religions. In predominantly Muslim Indonesia (55 percent to 88 percent of the population, depending on the definition), Christian Bataks, Hindu Balinese, and Muslim Javanese for many years lived in peaceful coexistence. By contrast, the fundamentalist Islamic regime in Iran has persecuted and executed those of the Baha’i faith. The world map of religion has other limitations. Data on religious affiliation are imprecise because most nations do not have religious censuses, and religious groups report their membership differently. When communism was supreme in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, official atheism dissuaded many from openly professing or practicing any religion; in nominally Christian Europe and North America, many who are counted as Christians are not active church members and may have renounced religion altogether.

## 5.6 The Principal Religions

Each of the major religions has its own mix of cultural values and expressions, its own pattern of innovation and spatial diffusion (Figure 5.19), and its unique impact on the cultural landscape. Together, they contribute importantly to the worldwide pattern of cultural diversity.

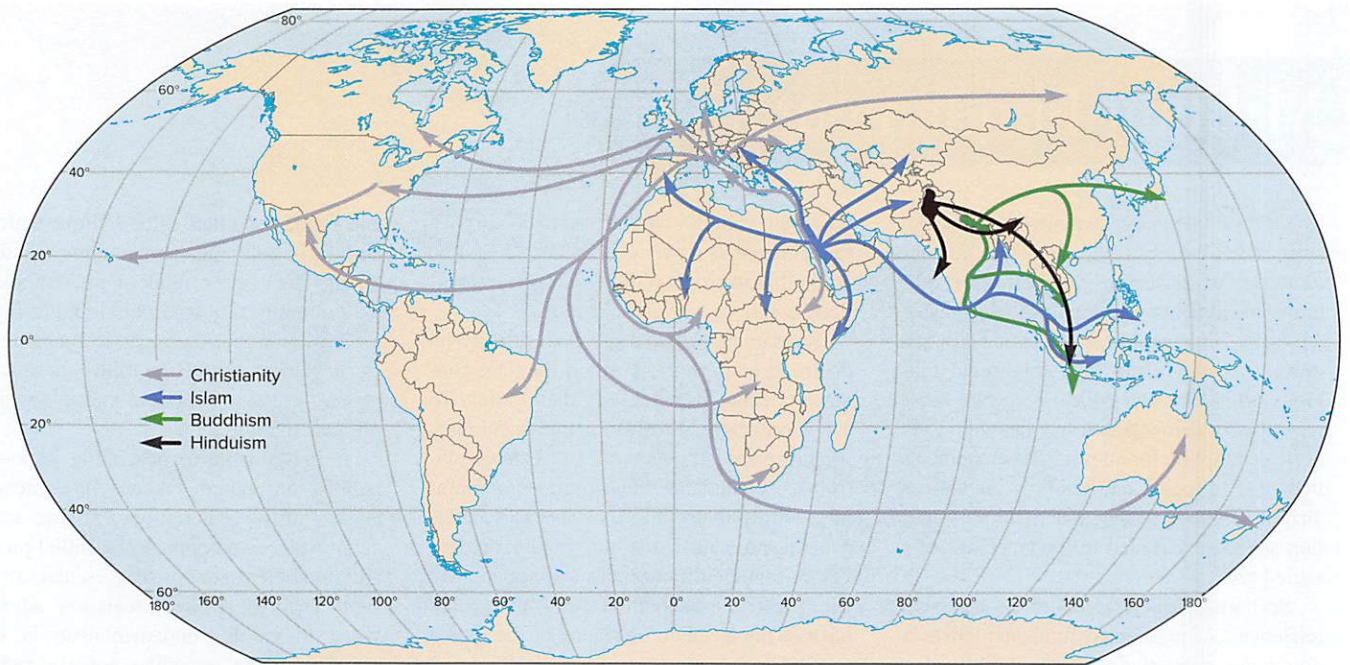
## Judaism

We begin our review of world religions with *Judaism*, whose belief in a single God laid the foundation for both Christianity and Islam. Unlike its universalizing offspring, Judaism is closely identified with a single ethnic group. It emerged some 3,000 to 4,000 years ago in the Near East, one of the ancient culture hearth regions (see Figure 2.15). Early Near Eastern civilizations, including those of Sumeria, Babylonia, and Assyria, developed writing, codified laws, and formalized polytheistic religions featuring rituals of sacrifice and celebrations of the cycle of seasons.

Judaism was different. The Israelites’ conviction that they were a chosen people, bound with God through a covenant of mutual loyalty and guided by complex formal rules of behavior, set them apart from other peoples of the Near East. Theirs became a distinctively *ethnic* religion, the determining factors of which are descent from Israel (the patriarch Jacob), the Torah (law and scripture), and the traditions of the culture and the faith. Early military success gave the Jews a sense of territorial and political identity to supplement their religious self-awareness. Later conquest by a series of empires led to their dispersion (*diaspora*) across much of the Mediterranean world and farther east into Asia by 500 CE (Figure 5.20).

Alternately tolerated and persecuted in Christian Europe, occasionally expelled from countries, and often spatially isolated in special residential quarters (ghettos), Jews managed





**AP Figure 5.19** Innovation areas and diffusion routes of major world religions. The monotheistic (single deity) faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam arose in southwestern Asia, the first two in Palestine in the eastern Mediterranean region and the last in western Arabia near the Red Sea. Hinduism and Buddhism originated within a confined hearth region in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. Their rates, extent, and directions of diffusions are suggested here and detailed on later maps.

to retain their faith. Two separate branches of Judaism developed in Europe during the Middle Ages. The Sephardim were originally based in the Iberian Peninsula and expelled from there in the late 15th century; with ties to North African and Babylonian Jews, they retained their native Judeo-Spanish language (Ladino) and culture. Between the 13th and 16th centuries, the Ashkenazim, seeking refuge from intolerable persecution in western and central Europe, settled in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia (Figure 5.20). It was from Eastern Europe that many of the Jewish immigrants to the United States came during the later 19th and early 20th centuries, though German-speaking areas of central Europe were also important source regions.

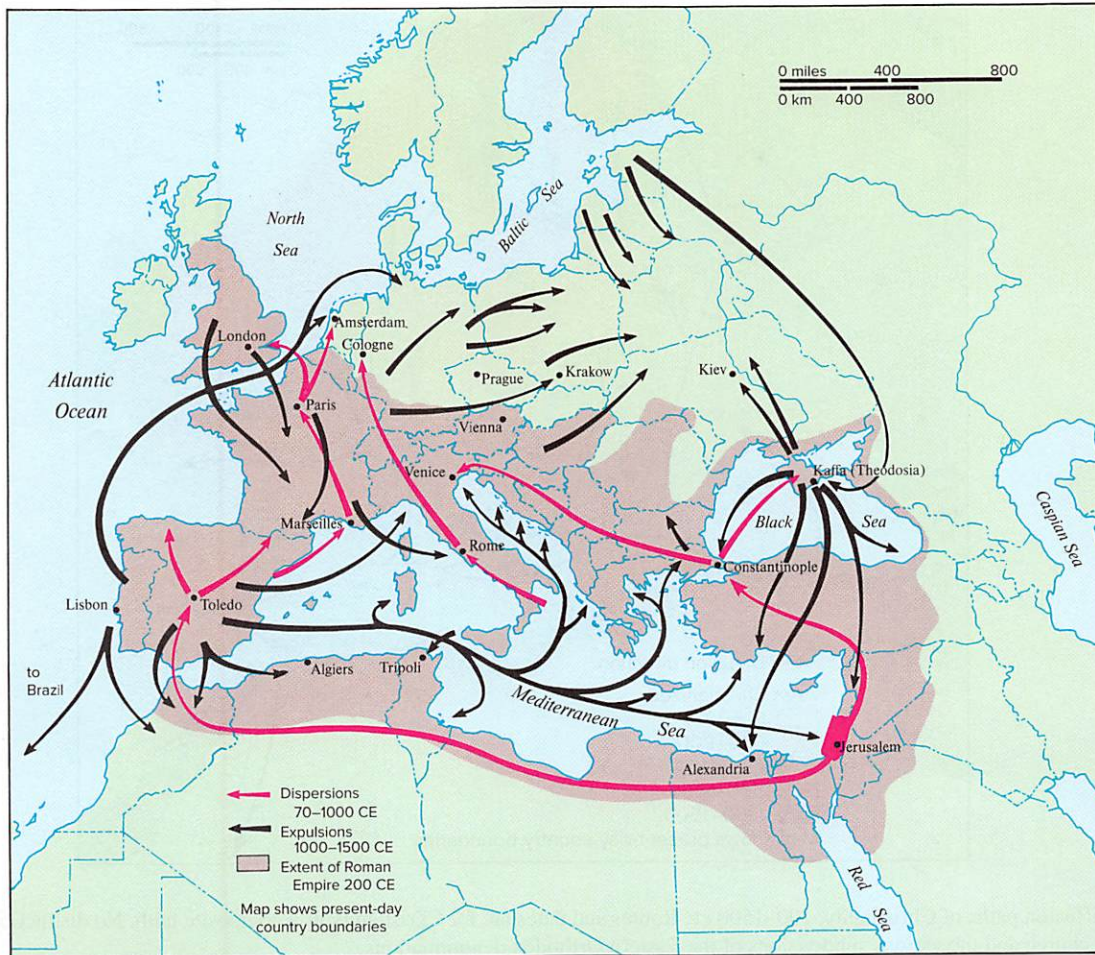
The Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of perhaps one-third of the world's Jewish population, fell most heavily upon the Ashkenazim. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of the goal of *Zionism*, the belief in the need to create an autonomous Jewish state in Palestine. It represented a determination that Jews not lose their identity by absorption into alien cultures and societies. The new state represented a reversal of the preceding 2,000-year history of dispersal and relocation diffusion. Israel became largely a country of immigrants, an ancient homeland again identified with a distinctive people and an ethnic religion. The Sephardim and Ashkenazim are present in roughly equal numbers in Israel. Of the world's 14 million Jews, about 7 million live in Israel and 6 million live in North America, where they are mostly found in the larger urban areas.

Judaism's imprint on the cultural landscape has been subtle and unobtrusive. The Jewish community reserves space for the practice of communal burial; the spread of the cultivated citron in the Mediterranean area during Roman times has been traced to Jewish ritual needs; and the religious use of grape wine assured the cultivation of the vine in their areas of settlement. The synagogue as place of worship can take on a wide variety of architectural styles. The essential for a religious service is a community of at least 10 adult males, not a specific structure. Orthodox Jews are a subgroup that adheres to a stricter set of beliefs and practices, one of which forbids driving a car on the Sabbath—the day of worship. This simple rule means that Orthodox Jews tend to live close together in cities. Orthodox Jews often construct *eruvim*, simple wire enclosures strung from utility poles or streetlights that define a home territory for purposes of obeying prohibitions against carrying objects outside the home on the Sabbath. Many non-Jews are surprised to discover they live within an *eruv*.

## Christianity

**Christianity** had its origin in the life and teachings of Jesus, a Jewish preacher of the 1st century of the Common Era, whom his followers believed was the Christ, the savior promised in the Jewish Scriptures. Christians understand their religion as fulfilling the promises of Judaism and extending them to all humankind rather than to just a chosen people.





**Figure 5.20** Jewish dispersions, 70–1500 CE. A revolt against Roman rule in 66 CE was followed by the destruction of the Jewish Temple four years later and an imperial decision to Romanize the city of Jerusalem. Judaism spread from the hearth region by *relocation diffusion*, carried by its adherents dispersing from their homeland to Europe, Africa, and eventually in great numbers to the Western Hemisphere. Although Jews established themselves and their religion in new lands, they did not lose their sense of cultural identity and did not seek to attract converts to their faith.

As a universal religion, Christianity spread quickly in both the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire, carried by missionaries to major cities and ports along the excellent system of Roman roads and sea lanes (Figure 5.21). *Expansion diffusion* followed the establishment of missions and colonies of converts in locations distant from the hearth region. Important among them were the urban areas that became administrative seats of the new religion. For the Western Church, Rome was the principal center for dispersal, through *hierarchical diffusion*, to provincial capitals and smaller Roman settlements of Europe. From those nodes and from monasteries established in pagan rural areas, *contagious diffusion* disseminated Christianity throughout the continent. The acceptance of Christianity as the state religion of the empire by the Emperor Constantine in 313 CE was also an expression of hierarchical diffusion of great importance in establishing the faith throughout the Roman world. Finally, and much later, *relocation diffusion*, missionary efforts, and in Spanish colonies, forced conversion of Native Americans brought the faith to the New World with European settlers (see Figure 5.18).

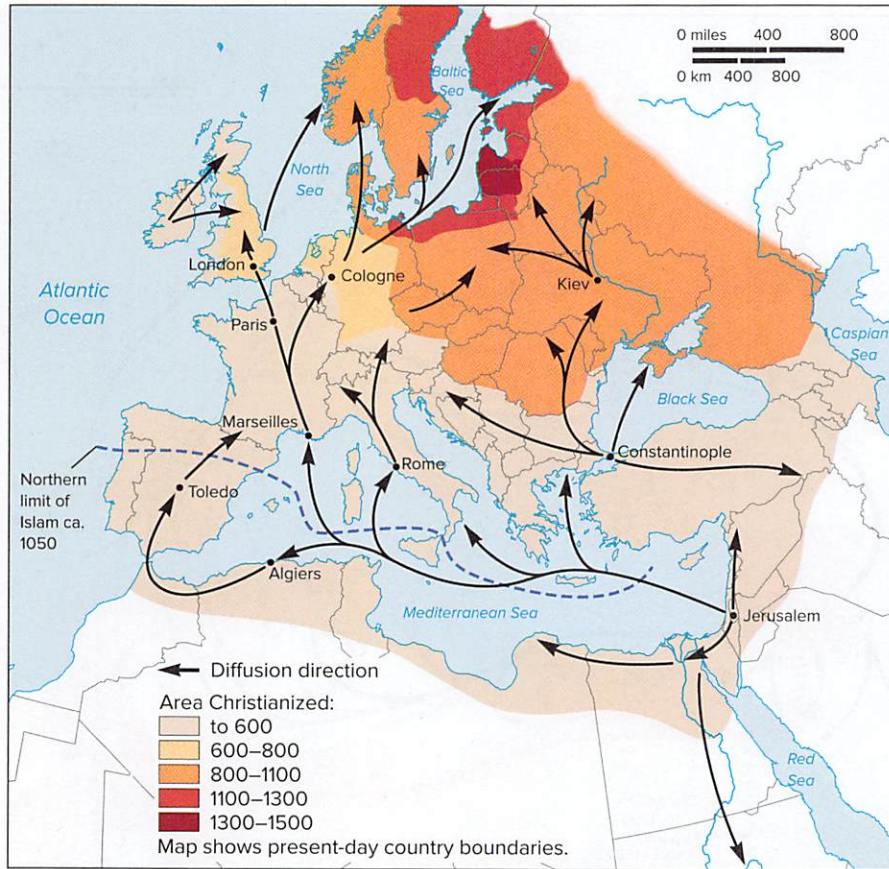
The dissolution of the Roman Empire into a western and an eastern half after the fall of Rome also divided Christianity. The

Western Church, based in Rome, was one of the very few stabilizing and civilizing forces uniting western Europe. Its bishops became the civil as well as ecclesiastical authorities over vast areas devoid of other effective government. Parish churches were the focus of rural and urban life, and the cathedrals replaced Roman monuments and temples as the symbols of the social order (Figure 5.22). Everywhere, the Roman Catholic Church and its ecclesiastical hierarchy were dominant.

Secular imperial control endured in the eastern empire, whose capital was Constantinople. Thriving under its protection, the Eastern Church expanded into the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Near East. The fall of the eastern empire to the Turks in the 15th century opened Eastern Europe temporarily to Islam, though the Eastern Orthodox Church (the direct descendant of the Byzantine state church) remains, in its various ethnic branches, a major component of Christianity.

The Protestant Reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries split the church in the west, leaving Roman Catholicism supreme in southern Europe but installing a variety of Protestant denominations and national churches in western and northern Europe. The split was reflected in the subsequent worldwide dispersion of





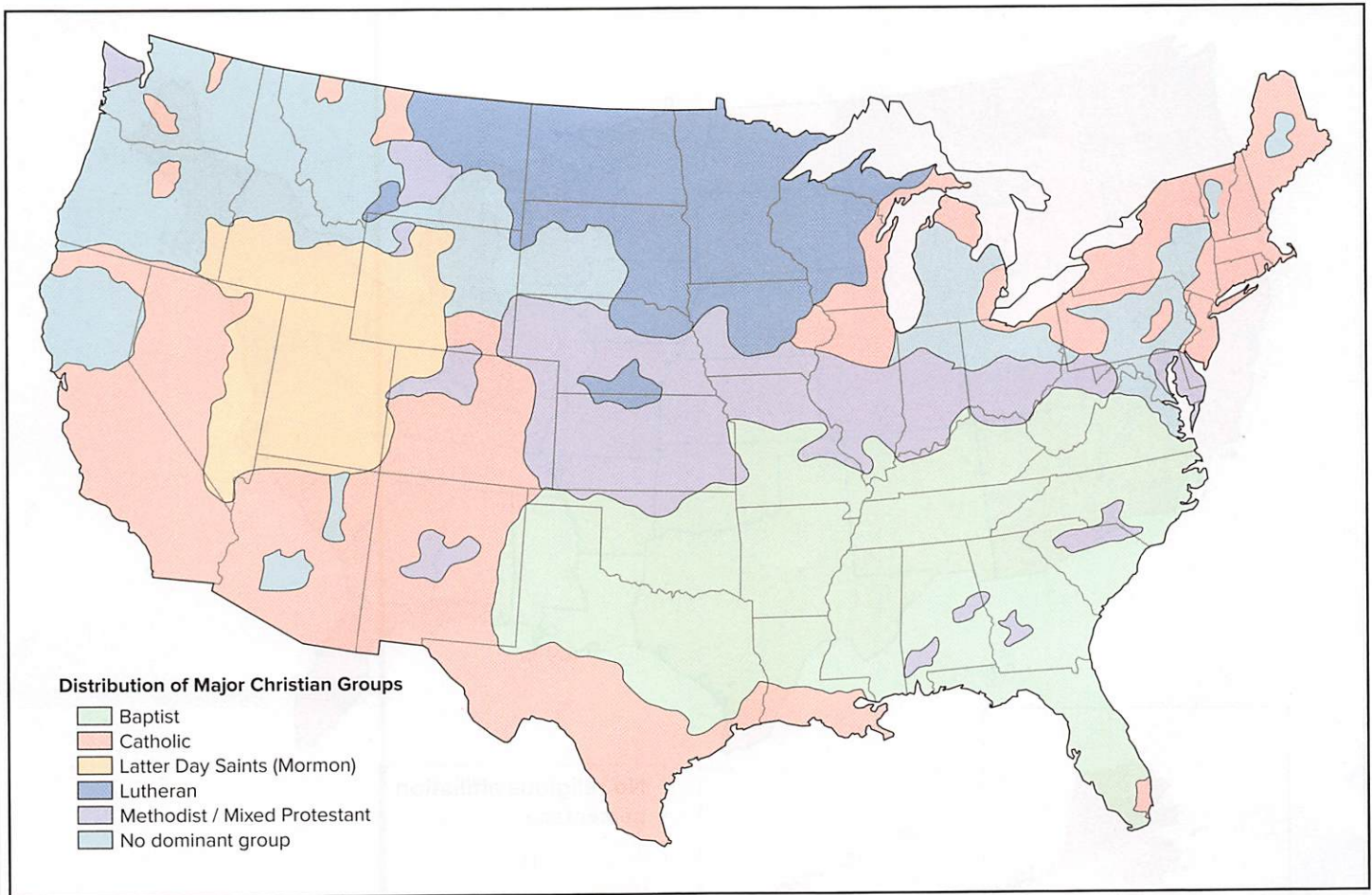
**Figure 5.21** Diffusion paths of Christianity, 100–1500 CE. Routes and dates are for Christianity as a composite faith. No distinction is made between the Western church and the various subdivisions of the Eastern Orthodox denominations.



**Figure 5.22** The building of Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris, France, begun in 1163, took more than 100 years to complete. Perhaps the best known of the French Gothic churches, it was part of the great period of cathedral construction in Western Europe during the late 12th and the 13th centuries. Between 1170 and 1270, some 80 cathedrals were constructed in France alone. The cathedrals were located in the center of major cities; their plazas were the sites of markets, public meetings, morality plays, and religious ceremonies. They were the focus of public and private life and the symbol not only of the faith, but of the pride and prosperity of the towns and regions that erected them.

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(a)

**Figure 5.23** (a) Religious affiliation in the conterminous United States. The greatly generalized areas of religious dominance shown conceal the reality of immense diversity of church affiliations throughout the United States. *Major* simply means that the indicated category had a higher percentage response than any other affiliation; in practically no case was that as much as 50 percent.

Christianity. Catholic Spain and Portugal colonized Latin America, taking both their languages and the Roman church to that area (see Figure 5.19), as they did to colonial outposts in the Philippines, India, and Africa. Catholic France colonized Quebec in North America. Protestants, many of them fleeing Catholic or repressive Protestant state churches, were primary early settlers of the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

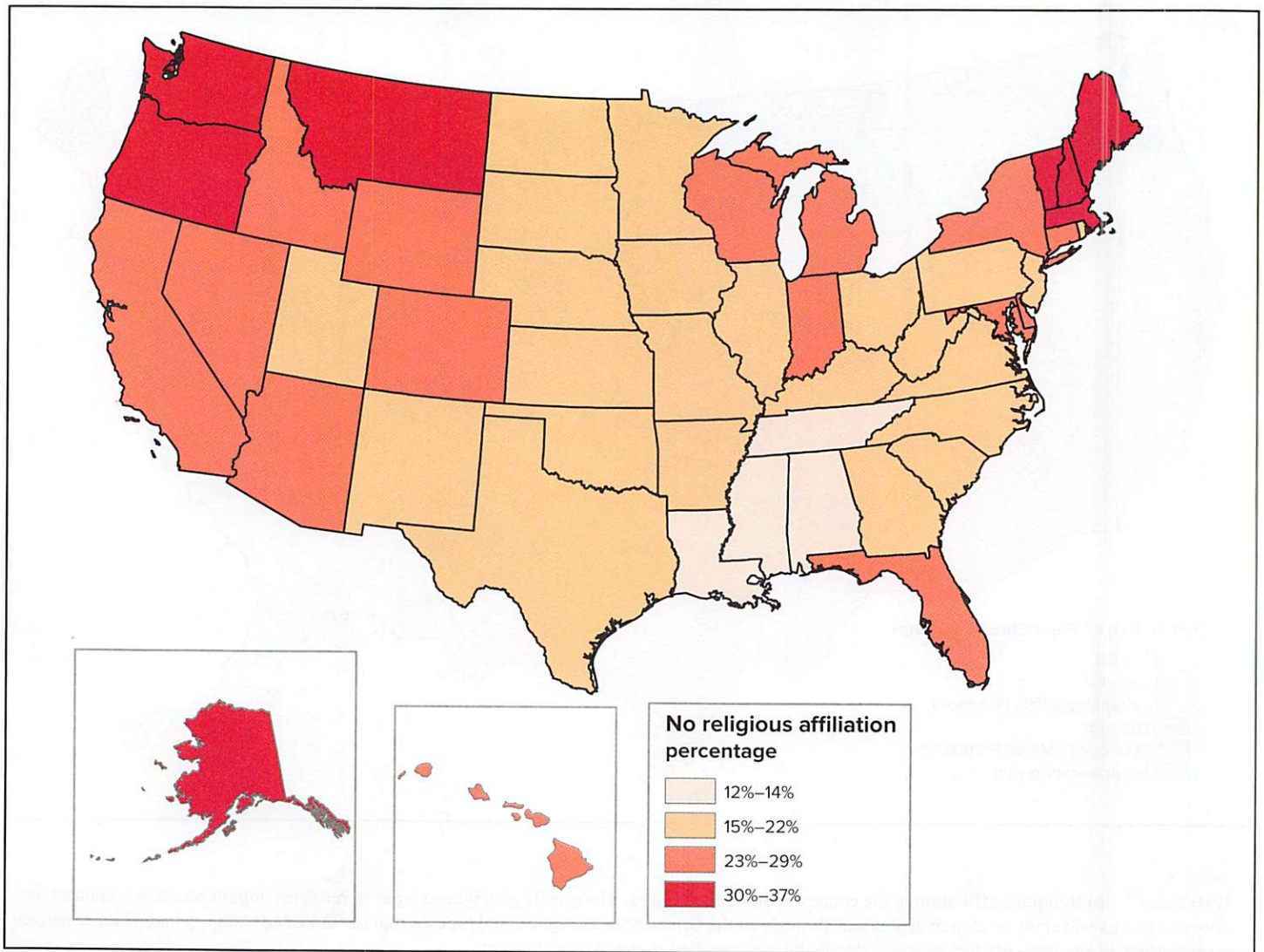
In Africa and Asia, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries attempted to convert nonbelievers. Both achieved success in sub-Saharan Africa, though traditional religions persist and are common in areas that are shown on Figure 5.18 as predominantly Christian. Neither was particularly successful in China, Japan, or India, where strong ethnic religious cultural systems were less permeable to the diffusion of the Christian faith. Although it still accounts for nearly one-third of the world's population and is territorially the most extensive belief system, Christianity has declined in some regions where it once was strongest. It is no longer numerically important in or near its original hearth. Nor is it any longer dominated by Western adherents. In 1900, 93 percent of all Christians lived in Europe and the Americas; in 2010, 37 percent of an estimated 2.1 billion total lived in Africa and Asia.

## Regions and Landscapes of Christianity

All of the principal world religions have experienced theological, doctrinal, or political divisions; frequently these have spatial expression. In Christianity, the early split between the Western and Eastern Churches was initially unrelated to dogma but nonetheless resulted in a territorial separation still evident on the world map. The later subdivision of the Western Church into Roman Catholic and Protestant branches gave a more intricate spatial patterning in Western Europe that can be only generally suggested at the scale shown in Figure 5.18. Still more intermixed are the areal segregations and concentrations that have resulted from the denominational subdivisions of Protestantism.

In the United States and Canada, the beliefs and practices of various immigrant groups and the innovations of domestic congregations have created a particularly varied spatial pattern, though intermingling rather than rigid territorial division is the norm (see Figure 5.1). One observer has suggested a pattern of "religious regions" of the country (Figure 5.23) that reflects a larger cultural regionalization of the United States.





(b)

**Figure 5.23 (Continued)** (b) Percentage reporting “No Religious Affiliation” in 2014. The number of persons claiming no religious affiliation has increased significantly in recent decades. It is most pronounced in New England and the Northwest, both regions with smaller minority populations.

Sources: (a) Based on data or maps from the 2001 “American Religious Identity Survey” by the Graduate School at City University of New York; *Religious Denomination Maps Prepared by Ingolf Vogeler of the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, based on data compiled by the Roper Center for Public Research; and Churches and Church Membership in the United States (Atlanta, Georgia: Glenmary Research Center, 1992).* (b) Based on Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscape Study, 2014.*

Strongly French-, Irish-, and Portuguese-Catholic New England, the Hispanic-Catholic Southwest, and the French-Catholic vicinity of New Orleans (evident in Figure 5.23a) are commonly recognized regional subdivisions of the United States. Each has a cultural identity that includes, but is not limited to, its dominant religion. The Mormon (more properly, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or LDS) culture region centered on Utah is a prominent feature. The Baptist presence in the South and that of German and Scandinavian Lutherans in the Upper Midwest (see Figure 5.23a) help determine the boundaries of other distinctive religious regions. The zone of cultural mixing across the center of the country from the Middle Atlantic states to the western LDS region—so evident in the linguistic geography of the United States (see Figure 5.11)—is again apparent on the map of religious affiliation. No single church or denomination dominates, which

is also a characteristic of the Far Western zone. The northeastern and northwestern parts of the United States are home to the highest proportion of people claiming no religious identification. In Canada, the three top Christian groups are Roman Catholic, the United Church of Canada, and Anglican, together comprising 60 percent of the country’s population. The “No Religion” category ranks second with 16 percent. Muslims comprise about 2 percent, and Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhist are each about 1 percent.

The mark of Christianity on the cultural landscape has been prominent and enduring. In pre-Reformation Catholic Europe, the parish church formed the center of life for small neighborhoods of every town, and the village church was the centerpiece of every rural community. In York, England, with a population of 11,000 in the 14th century, there were 45 parish churches, one for each 250 inhabitants. In addition, the central cathedral



served simultaneously as a glorification of God, a symbol of piety, and the focus of religious and secular life. The Spanish Laws of the Indies (1573) perpetuated that landscape dominance in the New World, decreeing that all Spanish American settlements should have a church or cathedral on a central plaza (Figure 5.24a).

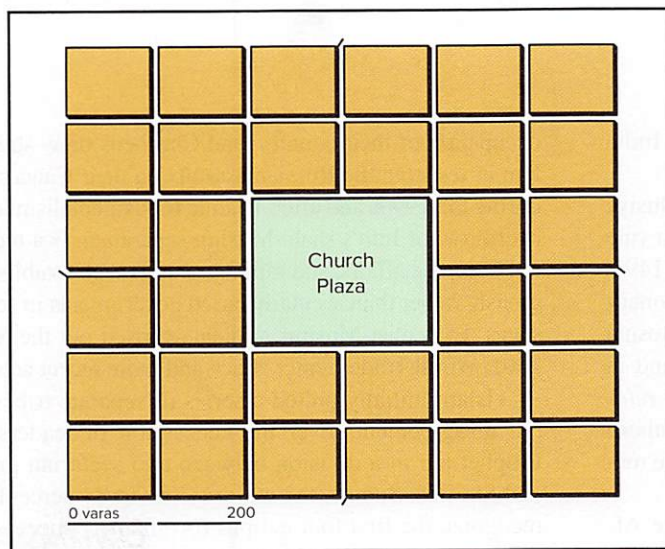
While in Europe and Latin America a single dominant central church was the rule, North American Protestantism placed less importance on the church edifice as a monument and urban symbol. The structures of the principal denominations of colonial New England were, as a rule, clustered in the village center, and that centrality remained a characteristic of small-town America to the present day (Figure 5.24b). Church architecture in North America is highly diverse, ranging from stone or brick revivals of European styles to modern or nondescript styles. In earlier periods, churches were often adjoined by a cemetery, for Christians—in common with Muslims and Jews—practice burial in areas reserved for the dead. In Christian countries in particular, the cemetery—whether connected to the church or separate from it—has traditionally been a significant land use within urban areas. Frequently, the separate cemetery, originally on the outskirts of the community, becomes surrounded by urban growth distorting or blocking the growth of the city.

## Islam

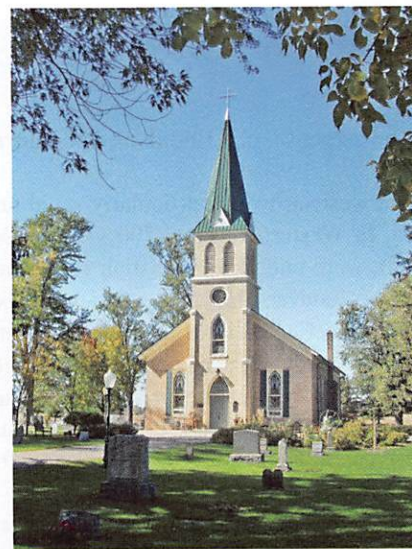
Islam—the word means “submission” (to the will of God)—springs from the same Judaic roots as Christianity and

embodies similar monotheistic beliefs. Muhammed is revered as the prophet of Allah (God), succeeding and completing the work of earlier prophets of Judaism and Christianity, including Moses, David, and Jesus. The Koran, the holy book of the Muslims, contains not only rules of worship and doctrine, but also instructions on the conduct of human affairs. All Muslims are expected to observe the five pillars of the faith: (1) repeated saying of the basic creed; (2) prayers five times daily at appointed times; (3) a month of daytime fasting during Ramadan; (4) almsgiving; and, (5) if possible, a pilgrimage to Mecca. Two of the five pillars of Islam are explicitly geographical: prayers are done facing Mecca and the pilgrimage to the sacred city of Mecca is among the world’s greatest gatherings (Figure 5.25). To pray facing Mecca, the direction known as Qiblah, has traditionally required Muslim scholars to calculate a great circle route. Thus, for example, most North American Muslims pray facing northeast because that is the shortest route to Mecca (try it by stretching a string from North America to Saudi Arabia on a globe).

Islam unites the faithful into a brotherhood that crosses boundaries of race, ethnicity, language, and social status. That law of brotherhood served to unify an Arab world sorely divided by tribes, social ranks, and multiple local deities. Muhammed was a resident of Mecca but fled in 622 CE to Medina, where the Prophet proclaimed a constitution and announced the universal mission of the Islamic community. By the time of Muhammed’s death in 632 CE, all of Arabia had joined Islam. The new religion swept quickly by expansion diffusion outward from that source region over most of central



(a)

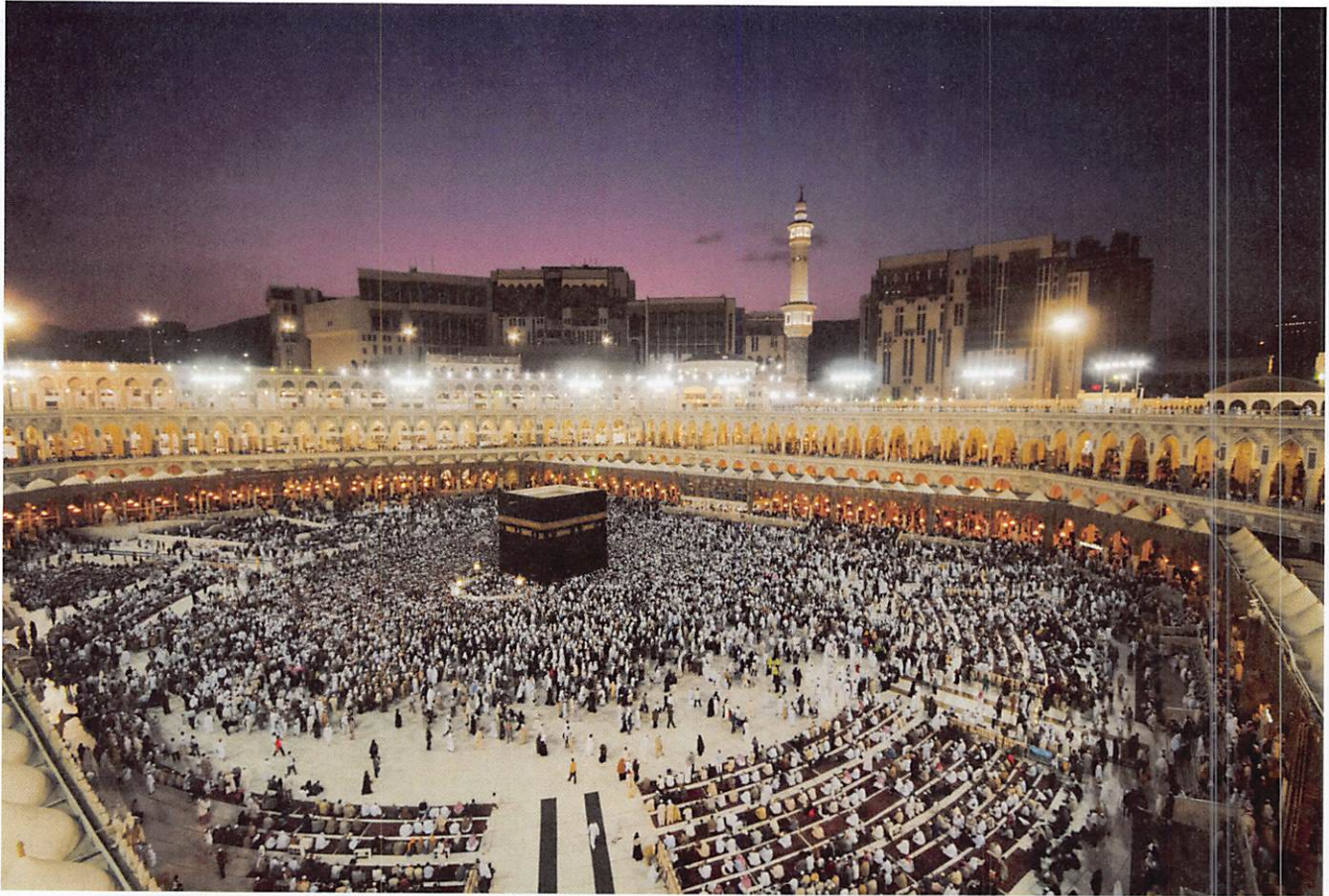


(b)

**Figure 5.24** In Christian societies, the church assumes a prominent central position in the cultural landscape. (a) By royal decree, Spanish-planned settlements in the New World were to focus on a cathedral and a plaza centered within a gridiron street system. (b) Individually less imposing than the central cathedral of Catholic areas, the multiple Protestant churches common in small and large U.S. and Canadian towns collectively constitute an important land use, frequently seeking or claiming space in the center of the community. This Protestant church in Minnesota was built by Swedish Lutheran immigrants. The church’s steeple is the tallest and most prominent structure in the village while the church yard serves as the place of burial for the dead.

(b) ©Mark Bjelland





**Figure 5.25** Worshipers gathered during hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The black structure is the Ka'ba, the symbol of God's oneness and of the unity of God and humans. All able-bodied Muslims are expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime, if possible. As many as 3 million Muslims converge on Mecca for the *hajj*.

©AHMAD FAIZAL YAHYA/Shutterstock

Asia and, at the expense of Hinduism, into northern India (Figure 5.26).

The advance westward was particularly rapid and inclusive in North Africa. In Western Europe, 700 years of Muslim rule in much of Spain were ended by Christian reconquest in 1492. In Eastern Europe, conversions made under an expansionary Ottoman Empire are reflected in Muslim components in Bosnia and Kosovo, regions of former Yugoslavia, in Bulgaria, and in the 70 percent Muslim population of Albania. Later, by *relocation diffusion*, Islam was dispersed into Indonesia, southern Africa, and the Western Hemisphere. Muslims now form the majority population in 49 countries.

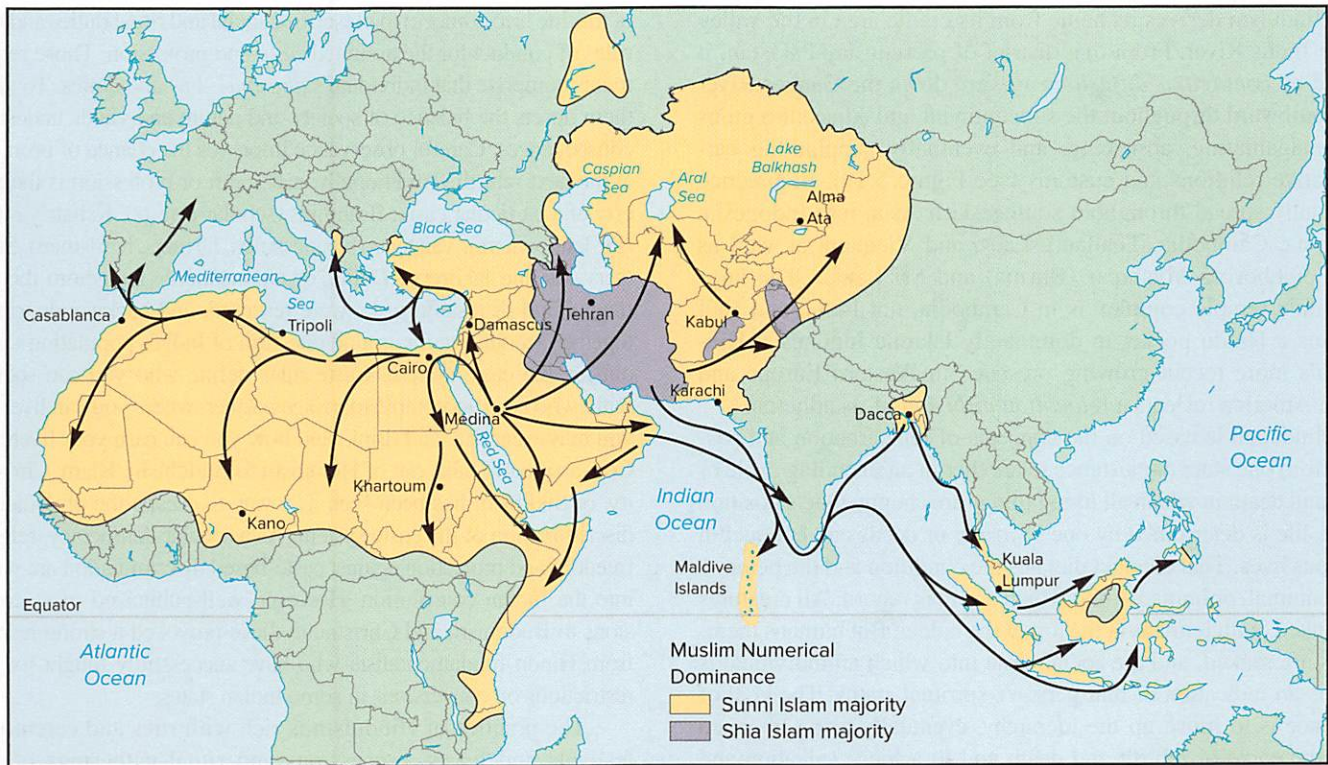
Asia has the largest absolute number of Muslims while Africa has the highest proportion of Muslims among its population. Through immigration, high birth rates, and conversions, Islam is growing rapidly in Europe and North America. Although second to Christianity in absolute numbers, it is growing faster than any other major world religion due to high rates of natural increase. Islam, with an estimated 1.6 billion adherents worldwide, has been a prominent element in recent and current political affairs. Sectarian divisions fueled the 1980–1988 war between Iran and Iraq as well as recent internal conflicts in Iraq and Syria. Afghan mujahideen—“holy warriors”—found inspiration in their faith to resist Soviet

occupation of their country, and Chechens drew strength from Islam in resisting the Russian assaults on their Caucasian homeland during the 1990s and after. Islamic fundamentalism led to the 1979 overthrow of Iran's shah. Muslim separatism is a recurring theme in Philippine affairs, and militant groups seek establishment of religiously rather than secularly based governments in several Muslim states. Extremist Muslim militants carried out the September 11, 2001, World Trade Center attack and more recent acts of terrorism.

Islam initially united a series of separate tribes and groups, but disagreements over the succession of leadership after the Prophet led to a division between two sectarian groups, Sunnis and Shi'ites. Sunnis, the majority (80 to 85 percent of Muslims) recognize the first four caliphs (originally, “successor” and later the title of the religious and civil head of the Muslim state) as Muhammad's rightful successors. The Shi'ites reject the legitimacy of the first three and believe that Muslim leadership rightly belonged to the fourth caliph, the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, and his descendants. Sunnis constitute the majority of Muslims in all countries except Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, and perhaps Yemen.

The mosque—place of worship, community clubhouse, meeting hall, and school—is the focal point of Islamic communal life and the primary imprint of the religion on the cultural landscape. Its principal purpose is to accommodate the Friday





**Figure 5.26** Spread and extent of Islam. Islam predominates in 49 countries along a band across northern Africa to central Asia, and the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. Still farther east, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population of any country. Islam’s greatest development is in Asia, where it is second only to Hinduism, and in Africa, where it trails only Christianity. Current Islamic expansion is particularly rapid in the Southern Hemisphere.

prayer service mandatory for all male Muslims. United by the use of Arabic for prayers and readings, many mosques in North America draw worshippers from diverse immigrant groups and multiple native tongues. The mosque is a sacred space with rules pertaining to proper conduct and dress. It is typically a gendered space with certain spaces reserved for men and others for women. Rooms are usually oriented so that worshippers face Mecca along a precisely calculated great circle route. The distinctive mosque architecture found throughout the world of Islam draws upon Roman, Byzantine, and Indian design elements. With its perfectly proportioned, frequently gilded or tiled domes, geometric artwork, graceful, soaring towers and minarets (from which the faithful are called to prayer), and delicately wrought parapets and cupolas, the carefully tended mosque is frequently the community’s most elaborate and imposing structure (**Figure 5.27**).

## Hinduism

**Hinduism** is the world’s oldest major religion. Though it has no datable founding event or initial prophet, some evidence traces its origin back 4,000 or more years. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion woven into an intricate web of philosophical, social, economic, and artistic elements that comprise a distinctive Indian civilization. Its estimated 800 million adherents are largely confined to India, where it claims 80 percent of the population.



**Figure 5.27** The common architectural features of the mosque, with its dome and soaring minaret towers, make it an unmistakable landscape evidence of the presence of Islam in any local culture. The visual dominance and symbolism of minarets has drawn attention to new mosques and provoked controversies about the place of Islam in western societies. Some newer mosques in Europe and North America have forgone the minaret towers to better blend in. The Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, would not be out of place architecturally in Muslim Malaysia or Indonesia.

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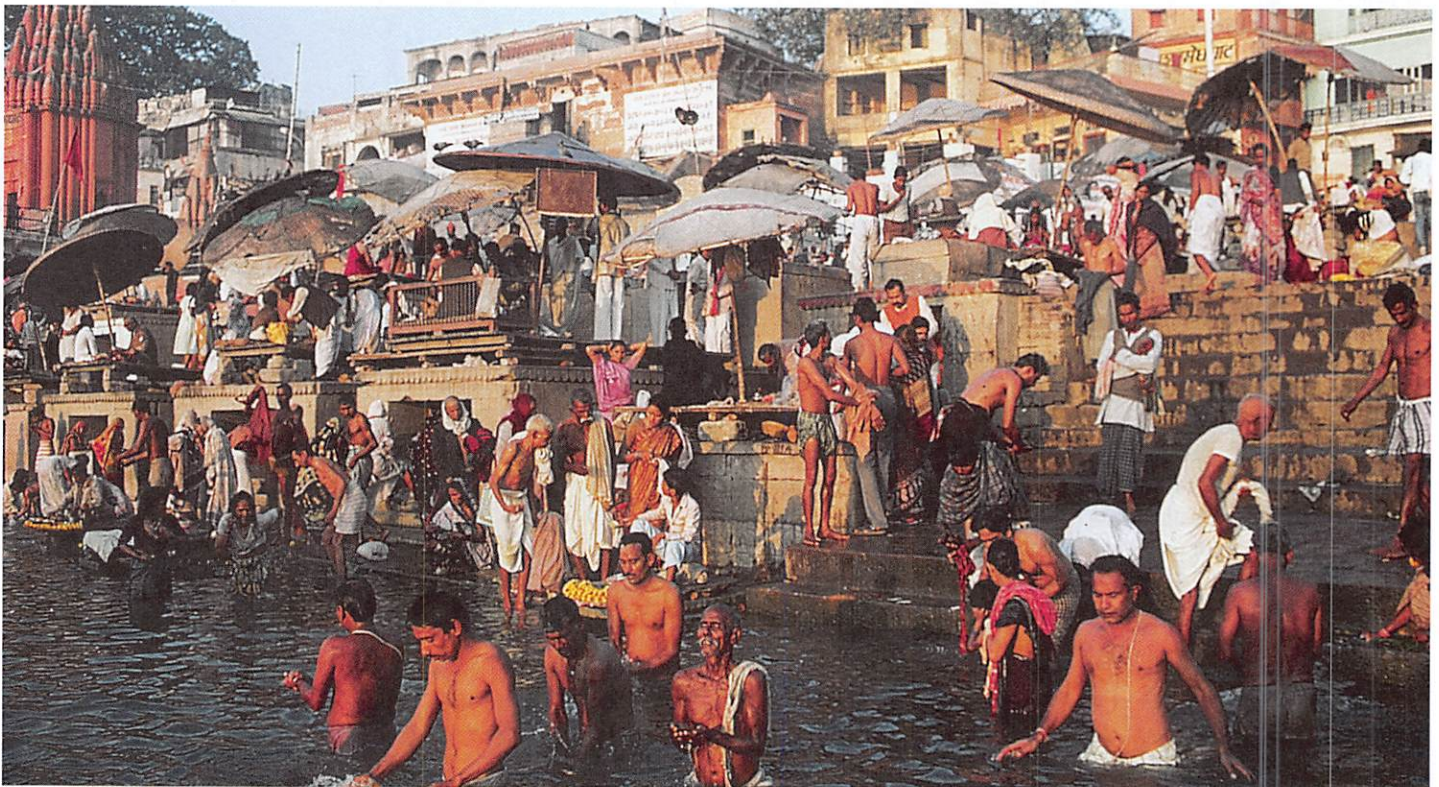
Hinduism derives its name from its cradle area in the valley of the Indus River. From that district of present-day Pakistan, it spread by *contagious diffusion* eastward down the Ganges River and southward throughout the subcontinent and adjacent regions by amalgamating, absorbing, and eventually supplanting earlier native religions and customs (see Figure 5.19). Its practice eventually spread throughout southeastern Asia, into Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, as well as into neighboring Myanmar (Burma) and Sri Lanka. The largest Hindu temple complex is in Cambodia, not India, and Bali remains a Hindu pocket in dominantly Islamic Indonesia. Hinduism's more recent growing presence in Western Europe and North America reflects a *relocation diffusion* of its adherents.

Hinduism is based on the concepts of reincarnation and passage from one state of existence to another in an unending cycle of birth and death in which all living things are caught. One's position in this life is determined by one's *karma*, or deeds and conduct in previous lives. That conduct dictates the condition and the being—plant, animal, or human—into which a soul is reborn. All creatures are ranked, with humans at the top of the ladder. But humans themselves are ranked, and the social caste into which an individual is born is an indication of that person's spiritual status. The goal of existence is to move up the hierarchy, eventually to be liberated from the cycle of rebirth and death and to achieve salvation and eternal peace through union with the Brahman, the universal soul.

The **caste** (meaning "birth") structure of society is an expression of the eternal transmigration of souls. For the Hindu, the primary aim

of this life is to conform to prescribed social and ritual duties and to the rules of conduct for the assigned caste and profession. Those requirements comprise that individual's *dharma*—law and duties. To violate them upsets the balance of society and nature and yields undesirable consequences. Careful observance improves the chance of promotion at the next rebirth. Traditionally, each craft or profession is the property of a particular caste: Brahmins (scholar-priests), Kshatriyas (warrior-landowners), Vaishyas (businessmen, farmers, herdsman), Sudras (servants and laborers). Dalits, or *untouchables* for whom the most menial and distasteful tasks were reserved, and backwoods tribes—together accounting for around one-fifth of India's population—stand outside the caste system. Caste rules define who you can socialize with, who is an acceptable marriage partner, where you can live, what you may wear, eat, and drink, and how you can earn your livelihood. Conversion of Dalits out of Hinduism to Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, or Sikhism has been seen as a way to escape the prejudice and discrimination of the caste system. As a secular democracy, religious freedom and protection against caste-based discrimination are written into the Indian constitution. However, well-publicized mass conversions to Buddhism and Christianity have provoked a strong response from Hindu fundamentalists who have successfully fought for legal restrictions on conversions in some Indian states.

The practice of Hinduism is rich with rites and ceremonies, festivals and feasts, processions and ritual gatherings of literally millions of celebrants. Pilgrimages to holy rivers and sacred places are thought to secure deliverance from sin or pollution and to preserve religious worth (Figure 5.28). In what is perhaps



**Figure 5.28** Pilgrims at dawn worship in the Ganges River at Varanasi (Banares), India, one of the seven most sacred Hindu cities and the reputed Earthly capital of Siva, the Hindu god of destruction and regeneration. Hindus believe that to die in Varanasi means release from the cycle of rebirth and permits entrance into heaven.

©PORTERFIELD-CHICKERING/Science Source



the largest periodic gathering of humans in the world, millions of Hindus of all castes, classes, and sects gather about once every 12 years for a ritual washing away of sins in the Ganges River near Allahabad. Worship in the temples and shrines and making offerings to secure merit from the gods are requirements for Hindus. The doctrine of ahimsa—also fundamental in Buddhism—instructs Hindus to refrain from harming any living being.

Temples and shrines are everywhere. Within them, innumerable icons of deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, and Ganesha are enshrined, the objects of veneration, offerings, and daily care. All temples have a circular spire as a reminder that the sky is the real dwelling place of the god who resides only temporarily within the temple (Figure 5.29). The temples, shrines, daily rituals and worship, numerous specially garbed or marked holy men and ascetics, and the ever-present sacred animals mark the cultural landscape of Hindu societies—a landscape infused with religious symbols and sights that are part of a total cultural experience.

Numerous reform movements have derived from Hinduism over the centuries, some of which have endured to the present day as major religions on a regional or world scale. Jainism, begun in the 6th century BCE as a revolt against the authority of the early Hindu doctrines, rejects caste distinctions and modifies concepts of karma and transmigration of souls; it counts perhaps 5 million adherents. Combining elements of Hinduism and Islam, *Sikhism* developed in the Punjab area of northwestern India in the late 15th century CE. Sikhism is an ethnic religion with an estimated 24 million adherents. The great majority of Sikhs live

in India, mostly in the Punjab, though substantial numbers have settled in the United Kingdom and Canada.

## Buddhism

The largest and most influential of the dissident movements within Hinduism has been Buddhism, a universalizing faith founded in the 6th century BCE in northern India by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (*Enlightened One*). The Buddha's teachings were more a moral philosophy that offered an explanation for evil and human suffering than a formal religion. He viewed the road to enlightenment and salvation to lie in understanding the “four noble truths”: existence involves suffering; suffering is the result of desire; pain ceases when desire is destroyed; the destruction of desire comes through knowledge of correct behavior and correct thoughts. The Buddha's message was open to all castes, raising Buddhism from a philosophy to a **universalizing religion**.

*Contagious diffusion* spread the belief system throughout India, where it was made the state religion in the 3rd century BCE. It was carried elsewhere into Asia by missionaries, monks, and merchants. While expanding abroad, Buddhism began to decline at home as early as the 4th century CE, slowly but irreversibly reabsorbed into a revived Hinduism. By the 8th century, its dominance in northern India was broken by conversions to Islam; by the 15th century, it had essentially disappeared from the Indian subcontinent.

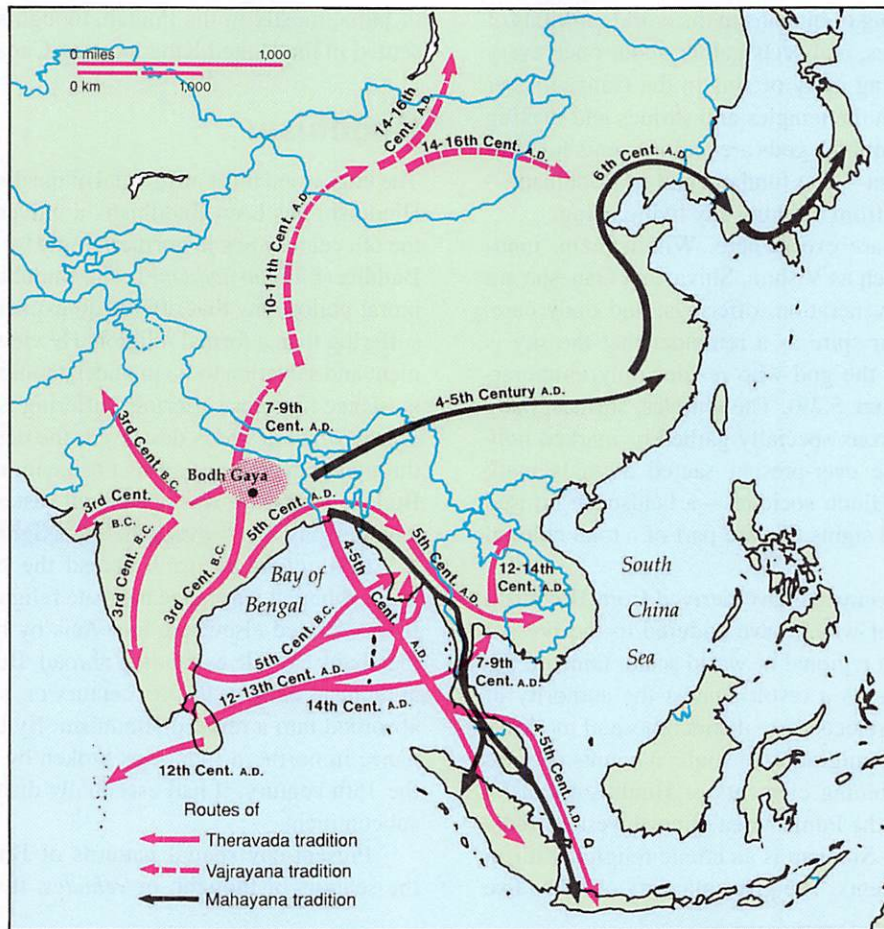
Present-day spatial patterns of Buddhist adherence reflect the schools of thought, or *vehicles*, that were dominant during



**Figure 5.29** The Hindu temple complex at Belur, Karnataka in southern India. The creation of temples and the images that they house has been a principal outlet of Indian artistry for more than 3,000 years. At the village level, the structure may be simple, containing only the windowless central cell housing the divine image, a surmounting spire, and the temple porch or stoop to protect the doorway of the cell. The great temples, of immense size, are ornate extensions of the same basic design.

©Sudarshan v/Getty Images





**Figure 5.30** Diffusion paths, times, and “vehicles” of Buddhism.

different periods of dispersion (**Figure 5.30**). Earliest, most conservative, and closest to the origins of Buddhism was *Theravada* (Vehicle of the Elders) Buddhism, which was implanted in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia beginning in the 3rd century BCE. Its emphasis is on personal salvation through the four noble truths; it mandates a portion of life to be spent as monk or nun.

*Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle) was the dominant tradition when Buddhism was accepted into East Asia—China, Korea, and Japan—in the 4th century CE and later. Itself subdivided and diversified, Mahayana Buddhism considers the Buddha divine and, along with other deities, a savior for all who are truly devout. It emphasizes meditation (contemplative Zen Buddhism is a variant form), does not require service in monasteries, and tends to be more polytheistic and ritualistic than does Theravada Buddhism.

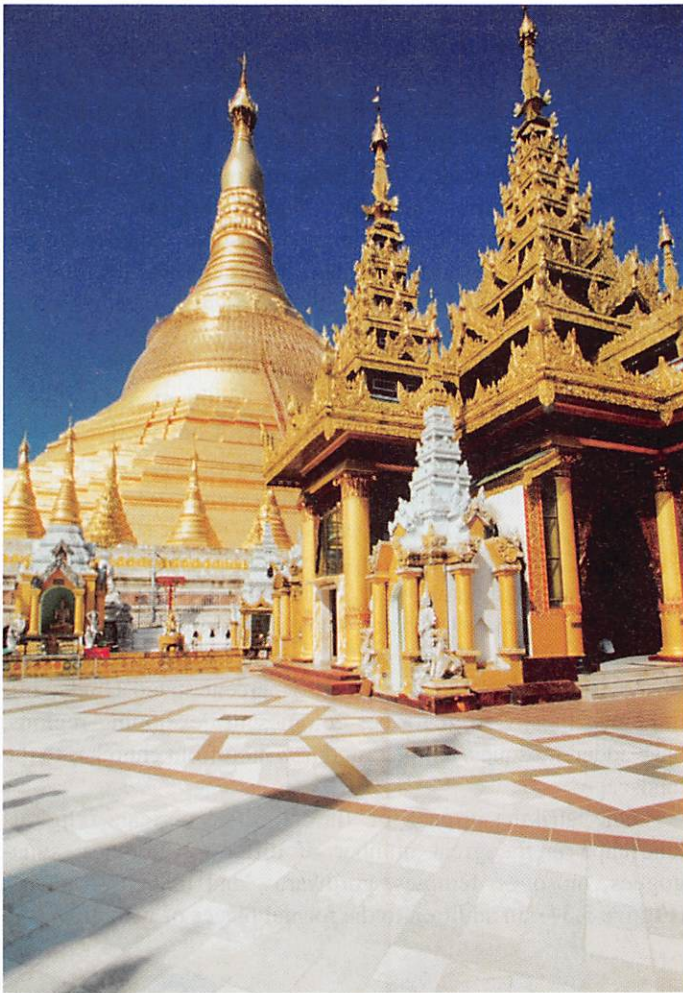
*Vajrayana* (the Diamond Vehicle) was dominant when the conversion of Tibet and neighboring northern areas began, first in the 7th century and again during the 10th and 11th centuries as a revived Lamaist tradition. That tradition originally stressed self-discipline and conversion through meditation and the study of philosophy, but it later became more formally monastic and ritualistic, elevating the Dalai Lama as the reincarnated Buddha, who became both spiritual and temporal ruler. Before Chinese conquest and the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959, as many as

one out of four or five Tibetan males was a monk whose celibacy helped keep population numbers stable. Tibetan Buddhism was further dispersed, beginning in the 14th century, to Mongolia, northern China, and parts of southern Russia.

Buddhism imprints its presence vividly on the cultural landscape. Buddha images in stylized human form began to appear in the 1st century CE and are common in painting and sculpture throughout the Buddhist world. Equally widespread are the three main types of buildings and monuments: the *stupa*, a commemorative shrine; the temple or pagoda enshrining an image or relic of the Buddha; and the monastery, some of them the size of small cities (**Figure 5.31**). Common, too, is the *bodhi* (or *bo*) tree, a fig tree of great size and longevity. Buddha is said to have received enlightenment seated under one of them at Bodh Gaya, India, and specimens have been planted and tended as an act of reverence and symbol of the faith throughout Buddhist Asia. Sacred places for Buddhists are largely associated with key events in the life of the Buddha—many of which are in areas that are no longer predominantly Buddhist.

Buddhism has suffered greatly in Asian lands that came under communist control: Inner and Outer Mongolia, Tibet, North Korea, China, and parts of Southeast Asia. Communist governments abolished the traditional rights and privileges of the monasteries. In those states, Buddhist religious buildings were





**Figure 5.31** The golden stupas of the Shwedagon pagoda, Yangon, Myanmar (formerly known as Rangoon, Burma).

©Medioimages/Photodisc/Getty Images

taken over by governments and converted into museums or other secular uses, abandoned, or destroyed. As a consequence, the number of Buddhists is uncertain, with world totals estimated to be 485 million.

## East Asian Ethnic Religions

When Buddhism reached China from the south some 1,500 to 2,000 years ago and was carried to Japan from Korea in the 7th century, it encountered and later amalgamated with already well-established belief systems. The Far Eastern ethnic religions are **syncretisms** (combinations of different beliefs and practices). In China, the union was with Confucianism and Taoism, themselves becoming intermingled by the time of Buddhism's arrival. In Japan, it was with Shinto, a polytheistic animism and shamanism.

Chinese belief systems address more ethical or philosophical questions than religious ones, having little interest in the hereafter. Confucius (K'ung Fu-tzu), a compiler of traditional wisdom who lived about the same time as the Buddha, emphasized the importance of proper conduct—between ruler and subjects and

among family members. The family was extolled as the nucleus of the state, and children's respect for their parents was the loftiest of virtues. There are no places of worship or clergy in **Confucianism**, though its founder believed in a Heaven seen in naturalistic terms, and the Chinese custom of ancestor worship as a mark of gratitude and respect was encouraged. After his death, the custom was expanded to include worship of Confucius himself in temples erected for that purpose. That worship became the official state religion in the 2nd century BCE, and for some 2,000 years—until the start of the 20th century CE—Confucianism, with its emphasis on ethics and morality rooted in Chinese traditional wisdom, formed the basis of the belief system of China.

It was joined by, or blended with, **Taoism**, an ideology that according to legend was first taught by Lao-tzu in the 6th century BCE. Its central theme is *Tao*, the Way, a philosophy teaching that eternal happiness lies in total identification with nature and deploring passion, unnecessary invention, unneeded knowledge, and government interference in the simple life of individuals. Beginning in the 1st century CE, this philosophical naturalism was coupled with a religious Taoism involving deities, spirits, magic, temples, and priests. Buddhism, stripped by Chinese pragmatism of much of its Indian otherworldliness and defining a *nirvana* achievable in this life, was easily accepted as a companion to these traditional Chinese belief systems. Along with Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism became one of the honored Three Teachings, and to the average person, there was no distinction in meaning or importance between a Confucian temple, Taoist shrine, or Buddhist stupa.

Buddhism also joined and influenced Japanese **Shinto**, the traditional religion of Japan that developed out of nature and ancestor worship. Shinto—the Way of the Gods—is a set of customs and rituals rather than an ethical or moral system. It observes a complex set of deities, including deified emperors, family spirits, and the divinities residing in rivers, trees, certain animals, mountains, and, particularly, the sun and moon. Buddhism eventually intertwined with traditional Shinto with Buddhist deities seen as Japanese gods in a different form. More recently, Shinto divested itself of many Buddhist influences and became, under the reign of the Emperor Meiji (1868–1912), the official state religion, emphasizing loyalty to the emperor. The centers of worship are the numerous shrines and temples in which the gods are believed to dwell and which are approached through ceremonial *torii*, or gateway arches (**Figure 5.32**).

## Secularism

One cannot assume that all people within a mapped religious region are adherents of the designated faith, or that membership in a religious community means active participation in its belief system. **Secularism**, a weakening of the influence of religion and an indifference to or rejection of religious belief, is an increasing part of many modern societies. The population of nonreligious persons is most pronounced in the industrialized nations and those now or formerly under communist regimes. In Britain, for example, about half the population attended church regularly in 1851 but that figure is now about 8 percent. While the Church of England's parish churches are an enduring feature of the rural landscape, vacant churches are also a common landscape feature,





**Figure 5.32** Floating torii gate at Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima Island, Japan.

©GeoStock/Photodisc/Getty Images

especially in urban areas. It is not uncommon to see once-grand churches converted to arts facilities, stores, or restaurants, or simply boarded up (Figure 5.33). Two-thirds of the French describe themselves as Catholic, but less than 5 percent regularly go to church. Even in devoutly Roman Catholic South American states, church attendance rates of less than 20 percent in most countries attest to the rise of at least informal secularism. Estimates put the world number of the nonreligious at 1.0 billion. In societies undergoing secularization, responsibility for governance, education, health care, and social services is often transferred from religious bodies to nonreligious institutions. In its stronger form, secularism is openly anti-religious and may involve restricting the practice of religion and destroying places of worship. Official governmental policies of religious neutrality (as in the cases of the United States or India, for example) are, of course, distinct from personal secular or nonreligious beliefs.

## Change and Diversity in the Geography of Religion

The map of principal world religions is continually changing as religions grow, diffuse, and recede. One of the most dramatic recent changes is the expansion of the universalizing religions of Christianity and Islam in areas of Africa once primarily associated with traditional religions. Although traditional African religions

have receded from much of the map, traditional religious practices such as fortune-telling or ceremonies honoring ancestral spirits still are widely practiced and are frequently blended with Islam or Christianity. The fault line between expanding Islam and Christianity runs through a number of countries, including Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, and has triggered episodic violence. In the former unified Sudan, this religious fault line coincided with ethnic divides, which together led to the overwhelming vote in 2011 for independence for South Sudan.

While Europe is the continent most closely associated with Christianity, it has witnessed dramatic religious shifts in the past century. The most dramatic changes are the secularization of large portions of European society and the rise of new religions brought by immigrants, primarily Islam and Hinduism. In the 2011 census in the United Kingdom, 59 percent stated that they were Christian, 25 percent reported that they had no religion, 5 percent stated Muslim, and 1.5 percent stated Hindu. Im-

migrants, mostly from former colonies in developing regions, have added mosques, temples, and new storefront churches to the landscape.

One striking aspect of the North American religious landscape is the great number of different churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, gurdwaras, and related structures (Figure 5.34). In addition to the formal places of worship of the



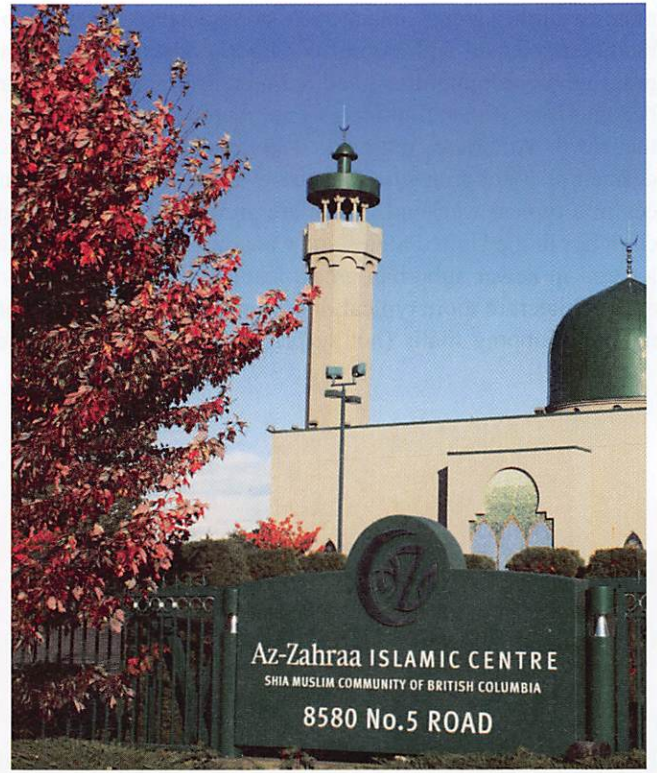
**Figure 5.33** A vacant, boarded-up church in Cardiff, Wales symbolizes the rise of secularism in Europe.

©Mark Bjelland

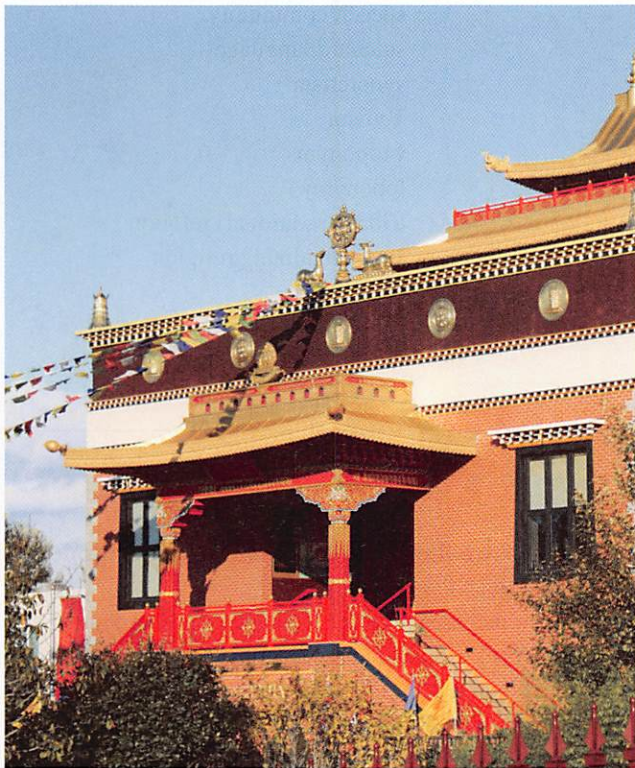




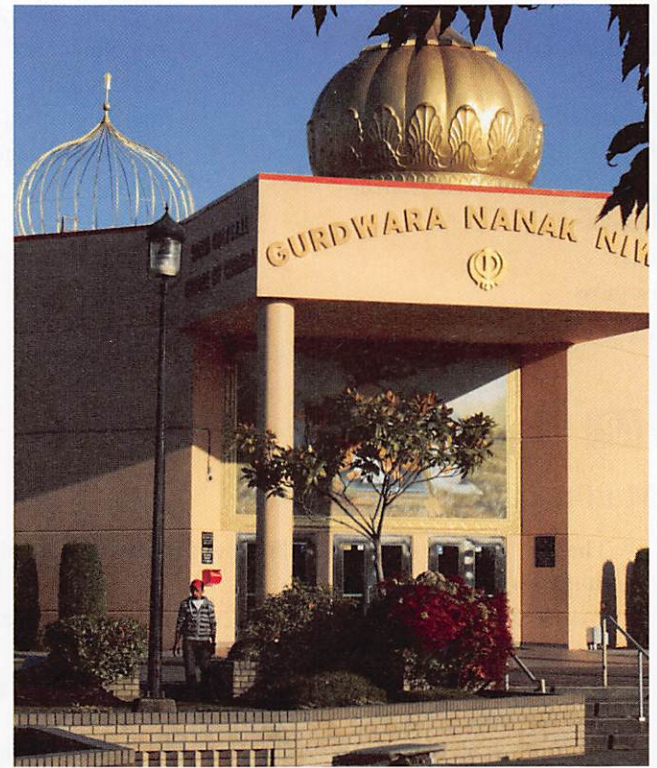
(a)



(c)



(b)



(d)

**Figure 5.34** Diverse religious landscapes in the United States and Canada. (a) A Christian megachurch in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. Megachurches often resemble a combination of a shopping mall, convention center, and concert hall. Locations near highways and vast parking lots are usually essential to megachurch success. (b) The Thrangu Buddhist monastery on Number 5 Road in the suburb of Richmond, British Columbia, in Canada is built in a traditional Tibetan style. (c) Also on Number 5 Road in Richmond is this Islamic center, mosque, and Muslim school. The distinctive minarets are crowned with the traditional crescent moon. (d) Next door to the mosque is the Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) and Indian Cultural Centre.

(a,b,c,d) ©Mark Bjelland



more established groups, innumerable storefront places of worship—mainly associated with poorer neighborhoods, changing immigrant ethnic communities, and splinter Protestant sects—have become part of the American scene. Another recent feature on the North American religious landscape is the megachurch, defined as a congregation that draws more than 2,000 attendees in a typical weekend. There are an estimated 1,250 megachurches in the United States and Canada. Megachurches, often located in newer suburban areas, feature massive parking lots and architecture more typical of convention centers, sports arenas, or shopping malls (not surprisingly, because many meet

in converted buildings once used for those purposes). Also, distinctively (though not exclusively) American is the proliferation of religious and denominational signage (see **Figure 5.1**) on city buildings, storefronts, or highway billboards. Compared with more secularized Europe, the religious diversity and vitality of the United States is remarkable. Some scholars attribute this vitality to the lack of an established state religion and to the successive waves of immigrants, most of whom are religious and have found that creating a religious congregation of their own is a way to be American while preserving their ethnic identity.

## AP KEY WORDS

Use the terms below with a **I** to focus your study of AP Human Geography key words in this chapter.

animism	Judaism	sacred places
bilingualism	<b>I</b> language	secularism
Buddhism	<b>I</b> language family	shamanism
caste	<b>I</b> lingua franca	Shinto
Christianity	linguistic geography	speech community
Confucianism	monolingual	standard language
<b>I</b> creole	monotheism	syncretism
<b>I</b> dialect	multilingualism	Taoism
<b>I</b> ethnic religion	official language	<b>I</b> toponyms
geographic (regional) dialect	pidgin	toponymy
Hinduism	polytheism	tribal (traditional) religion
Islam	protolanguage	<b>I</b> universalizing religion
isogloss	religion	vernacular

## AP TEST PRACTICE

### Multiple Choice Questions

- The fact that the nearly 8 billion people on earth speak many thousands of languages
  - contributes to the sense of place in different areas and shapes the global cultural landscape.
  - explains why there have been numerous wars throughout human history.
  - makes it almost impossible for concepts to become globally accepted.
  - has led the majority of people to learn English.
  - contributes to the homogenization of culture around the world, especially in Africa.
- All of the following are true of the Indo-European protolanguage EXCEPT that
  - it includes both the Romance and Germanic branches.
  - it is the largest language cluster in the world, spoken by about half of the world's population.
  - it originated somewhere in Eastern Europe, the Ukrainian steppes, or possibly central Turkey.
  - its people never managed to get across the Hindu Kush mountains into India.
  - it does not include Native American or African languages.



3. **The fact that people in France wear *les blue jeans* and listen to music by *les rappeurs*, and people in Germany practice *das Bodybuilding* and use *der Computer* is evidence of**
- (A) the development of similar words for things in different languages at the same time.
  - (B) the spread of English as the lingua franca.
  - (C) language transfer by relocation diffusion.
  - (D) the modification of words from a less dominant language.
  - (E) the takeover of the languages of developing countries by those of developed countries.
4. **Different dialects of a language**
- (A) often use different words for the same thing, such as saying “pop” or “soda” when ordering a carbonated beverage, but do not include differences in rhythm and speed.
  - (B) never coexist in the same geographic space.
  - (C) are often taught in school and used in government documents instead of the standard version of the language.
  - (D) are often spoken by people who are bilingual.
  - (E) include differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, and speed.
5. **A pidgin language develops into a creole language when**
- (A) it becomes the first language of a group of people who have lost their native language.
  - (B) it becomes more simplified and is only used for certain work-related tasks.
  - (C) it is adopted by only small isolated groups of people within a country.
  - (D) it is used by multilingual groups of people to communicate in a third language.
  - (E) it develops a less complicated vocabulary in which people can express simple ideas.
6. **Believers in religious fundamentalism adhere to all of the following EXCEPT the idea that**
- (A) there are many possible ways of worship that are correct.
  - (B) correct beliefs are manifested in a specific, sacred text.
  - (C) traditional cultural and social values must be regained and publicly institutionalized.
  - (D) secular tendencies of modernity must be rejected since they are a threat to religious beliefs.
  - (E) they must counteract the cultural changes that undermine religious faith and traditional religious values.
7. **Ethnic and tribal (traditional) religions differ from universalizing religions in that**
- (A) one becomes a member of an ethnic or tribal religion simply by making a declaration of faith.
  - (B) ethnic and tribal religions do not tend to be associated with a specific territory.
  - (C) tribal religious beliefs are often closely tied to nature and include shamanism and animism.
  - (D) ethnic and tribal religions send out missionaries to convert others.
  - (E) the members of ethnic religions do not form a closed community or associate themselves with a specific ethnic group or political community.
8. **Study the map in Figure 5.18 on page 154. Which of the following is true about the spatial distribution of religions?**
- (A) The main religion of Central and South America is animism.
  - (B) The majority of Protestants live in the eastern United States and Australia.
  - (C) Hinduism is found on every continent.
  - (D) Western Europe is mainly Muslim due to the large number of immigrants.
  - (E) The majority of people in China are Buddhist.
9. **The spread of Islam can be attributed to all of the following EXCEPT**
- (A) relocation diffusion, as Muslims have migrated to Indonesia, southern Africa, and the Americas.
  - (B) expansion diffusion throughout the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and northern India.
  - (C) refugees moving into Western Europe in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
  - (D) the belief that anyone can become a Muslim if they follow the Five Pillars of Islam.
  - (E) the Reconquest of Spain in 1492.
10. **Study the photo of the Ka’ba in Figure 5.24 on page 162 and the photo of the Ganges River in Figure 5.28 on page 164. These images are similar in that they both depict**
- (A) rituals of a universalizing religion.
  - (B) major geographic elements of the faith.
  - (C) pilgrimage sites that are seen as sacred spaces.
  - (D) actions taken by only a few members of the faith.
  - (E) the funeral traditions of Islam and Hinduism.



## Free Response Questions

### 1. Answer Parts A, B, and C below.

- (A) Define the word *toponym* and give an example based on the geography, history, or culture of an area.
- (B) Explain and give an example of how a toponym can be reflective of the political culture of a time period.
- (C) Give two instances in which the toponym of a place has changed and explain why this happened.

### 2. Answer Parts A, B, and C below.

- (A) Give an example and explain the process by which one language is replaced by another.
- (B) Give an example in which, instead of taking over, two or more languages came to coexist within one country.
- (C) Give an example of a place in which a dying language has been revived and explain two ways this has been accomplished.

### 3. Answer Parts A, B, and C of the following question using examples from Europe, the Middle East, or Asia.

- (A) Explain one way in which the culture of a place is affected by the religion.
- (B) Explain two ways in which religious use of space affects the cultural landscape.
- (C) Explain why and give one example of how religious change has caused political or cultural problems to arise.