

Basis of classification of cultural region

Welcome students

My name is Dixita Shingadi, Assistant Professor in Geography from Government College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Quepem. In this module we will be learning about the basis of classification of cultural regions.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this module you will be able to:

- Define the concept of cultural region.
- Explain the various criteria's use to classify the cultural regions.

Cultural region

Cultural region is a geographical area where cultural traits maintain homogeneity. When cultural characteristics like language, religion, customs and traditions, architecture, food habits, etc. are similar in a particular area, then it is called as Cultural Region. Ex: middle-east cultural region.

World Cultural regions

Based on the homogenous cultural characteristics, there are several cultural regions identified in the world. They are:

1. North America
2. Latin America
3. Middle East
4. Sub-Saharan Africa
5. Europe
6. Russia
7. China
8. South Asia
9. South East Asia
10. Australia
11. Oceania

It is very important to note that all this world cultural regions are the macro level cultural regions.

Basis of classification of cultural region

There are various criteria's used to classify the cultural regions. It includes population, language, religion, history, customs and traditions, art forms and economic activities.

1. Population

There are various facets related to population like race, settlement patterns and other societal characteristics like literacy, health, standard of living which helps in classifying cultural region. For instance, human race; there are various races in the world which are specific to particular geographical area. Example- Mongoloid race in East Asia, Negroid race in Africa, Caucasoid race in Europe helps in identifying Cultural region. Hence race is one parameter which helps us to identify the various cultural regions. Similarly settlement patterns also help to analyse the identification of different cultural regions. For example- Konkan region have a houses with conical structure due to heavy rainfall. Rajasthan have flat rooftops houses due to the low rainfall. Tundra region have the Eskimos who built igloos out of snow. Hence human beings have utilized the natural resources and they have given rise to various settlement patterns. So this settlement pattern also helps us to identify the various cultural regions.

2. Language

Language is very important criteria used for classification of cultural region. It gives a sense of identity to the regions as each region has its own particular type of language. It is very important to note that language as criteria is applicable to classify both micro level and macro level cultural region. But it is more applicable to classify micro level cultural region because at the macro level due to the migration of the people or due to the movement of the people from one part of the world to another, the languages have lost their original identity. For example- English language is used in North American cultural region, Middle East and North Africa speak Arabic language. These are macro cultural region. Similarly Konkani language is spoken in the Konkan region of India, Bengali language is spoken in West Bengal, Orissa and Bangladesh. These are the micro cultural regions.

3. Religion

Religious structures like place of worship, sacred sites or holy places influence the culture of an area which helps in identification of cultural region. In USA and Canada, Christianity is a dominant religion. In sub-Saharan African cultural region, tribal or animist religion is dominant which is not common in other cultural region. If you go to eastern part of the Asia, they have their own sets of religion like Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism which is again different from the rest of the world. Hence religion also helps us to identify the various cultural regions because through religion, people practice their various customs and traditions which helps in shaping the different cultures around the world.

4. History

History of an area leaves distinct marks on the landscapes which help in shaping the culture of an area. Invasion and colonisation in the past has led to spread of culture of one area to another. For example- USA and Canada were British colonies. Similarly Latin America was ruled by Spain and Portugal, even Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia were under the European rule. Hence the similar culture can be identified in all the European colonies. Likewise there are other examples like Middle-east was ruled by Ottoman empire, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh was once ruled by Mughal empire. Goa and Brazil was under the Portuguese rule which exhibits the similar culture which helps to identify the different cultural region.

5. Customs and traditions

A close look at traditions of various places reveals that it differs from place to place. For example-customs and traditions of Latin America is quite different from Middle East region as both of this region follow different religion, had a different history, hence the culture of both the areas are different. Similarly traditions of south Asia and East Asia is completely different from Sub-Saharan African region.

6. Others

Apart from the above mentioned criteria's there are many others which are used in classification of cultural region. They are

- Art forms like artifacts, music, and dance along with economic activities differ from place to place.
- Forms of government- Type of government like democratic, communist or capitalist government varies from place to place.
- Economic activities are used to classify the cultural region. But they are more applicable at micro level cultural region. For example, in India various states have their own type of textile industry like block printing in Rajasthan, Kutch Embroidery in Gujarat, Lucknowi embroidery in Uttar Pradesh, etc.

All these helps in classification of micro cultural region.

Conclusion

Though there are various criteria's that we can use to classify the cultural regions, but it is very difficult to find cultural region with only one or the single factor homogeneity. You will find that all the cultural regions have a combination of all the discussed criteria's which becomes important aid in the identification of various cultural regions. The adoption of technology seems to be the most important criteria in the contemporary world along with the other criteria that we have discussed.

Thank you.