

GEOG 220

Sacred & Profane Space: Cemeteries

Place Space and Identity

Alan Nash

- In today's class – I want to start to go beyond seeing how cultural regions (i.e PLACE) can be created and identified, to another important concept-
- HOW SPACE can be culturally manipulated, shaped, changed.

- To do this, we are going to look at two examples (1) how space is divided into sacred and everyday space (2) how our culture's ideas of aesthetics create different attitudes to landscape
- So, let us turn to sacred space, and look at the first picture ...

Sparta, Greece: roadside shrines awaiting purchase [“ekklisakia”]



Sacred space -- 2 themes to consider

- (1) The geography of religion (the “old-fashioned” way of looking at this)
- (2) Sacred Space– modern human geog way of thinking

- 1. The Geography of religion

World Distribution of Major Religions

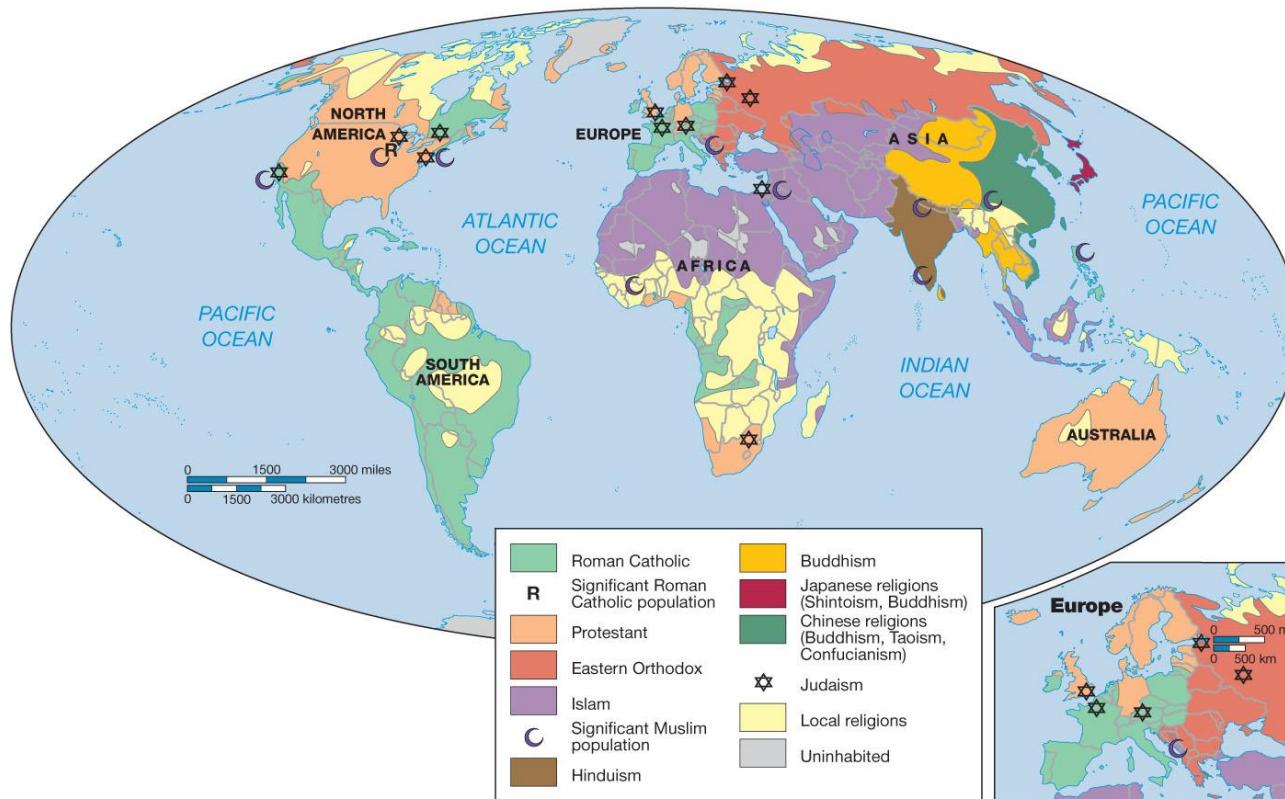


Figure 5.12 World distribution of major religions The map shows a generalized picture of the world's major religions. Most of the world's peoples are members of one of these religions. Not evident on this map are the local variations in practices, as well as the many other different religions that are practised worldwide. (Although known in the West primarily as philosophies, Taoism and Confucianism both also developed religious traditions and so are included on this map.)

World patterns

- For each religion, these global patterns are obviously the outcome of
 - Historical origins and context
 - Population spread and immigration
 - Proselytization [*to proselyte: to convert*]

Origin Areas and Diffusion of Four Major Religions

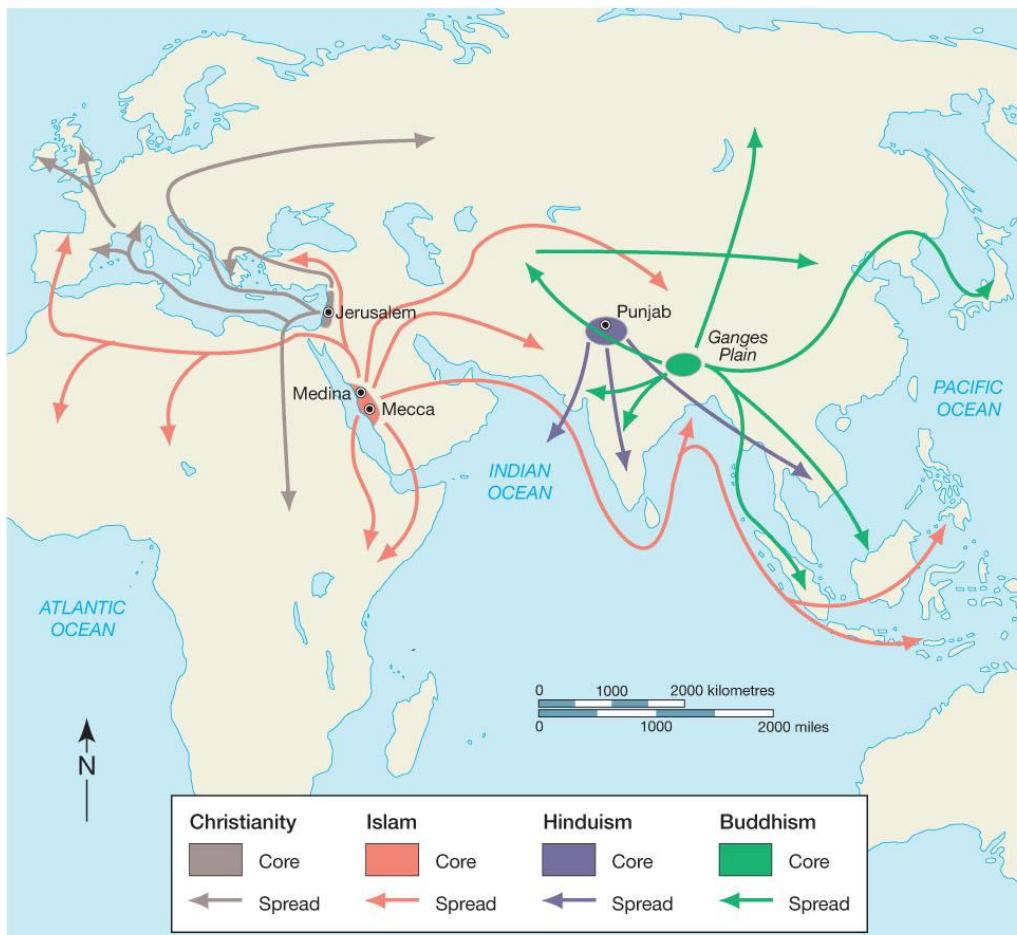


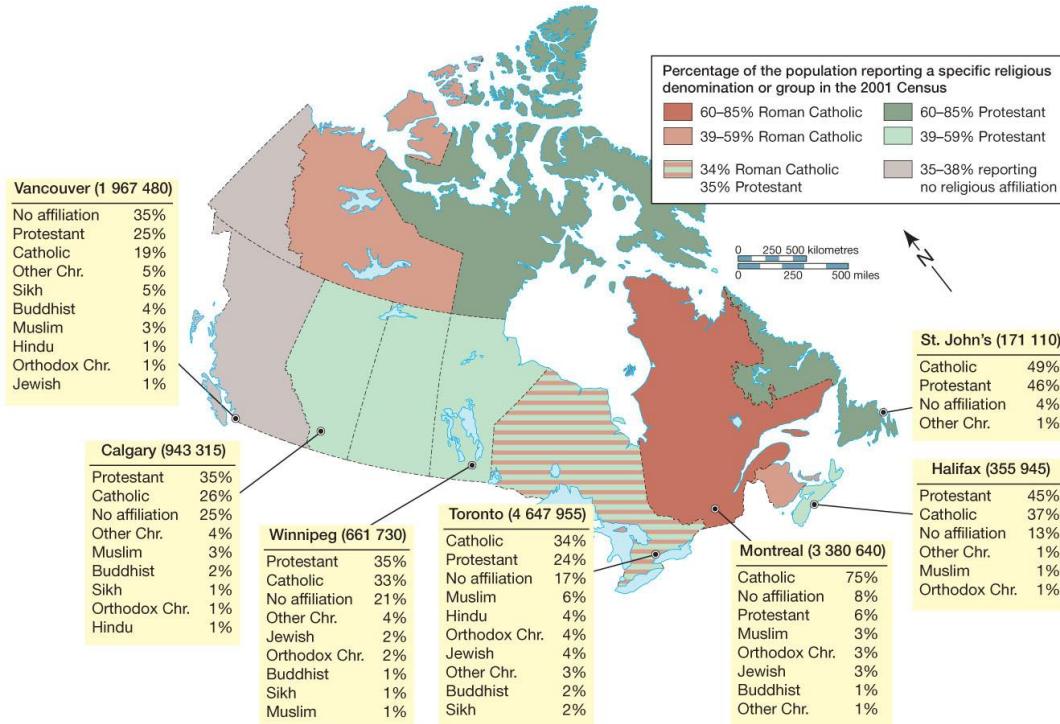
Figure 5.13 Origin areas and diffusion of four major religions

The world's major religions originated in a fairly small region of the world. Judaism and Christianity began in present-day Israel and Jordan. Islam emerged from the western Arabian peninsula (in present-day Saudi Arabia). Buddhism originated in India, and Hinduism in the Indus region of Pakistan. The source areas of the world's major religions are also the cultural hearth areas of agriculture, urbanization, and other key aspects of human development.

Pre-Columbian Religions in North America



Figure 5.16 Pre-Columbian religions in North America Before European contact, the indigenous populations in North America had developed a range of religious practices. Religious traditions based on agrarian practices diffused from south to north, while those religious traditions based on hunting diffused from north to south. (Source: B.E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America*. New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 15–16.)



Notes: City data are for Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs); population totals are from sources cited.

"Catholic" includes Roman Catholic, Eastern Catholic, Polish National Church, and Old Catholic.

"Other Christian" refers to those respondents to the 2001 Census who reported their affiliation as "Christian" without further elaboration.

"No religious affiliation" includes agnostic, atheist, humanist, "no religion," and other responses to the Census, such as Darwinism.

Religious groups or denominations of less than 1 percent of CMA population are not reported.

Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding of data.

Figure 5.18 The distribution of religions in Canada, by province and territory, 2001 This map shows the leading religious denomination or group in each province or territory, according to the affiliations expressed by the population in the 2001 census. In broad terms, the map shows that the Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations of Christianity still dominate in most parts of the country, except for British Columbia and Yukon, where those individuals expressing "no religious affiliation" form the largest single group in the population. This pattern is repeated at the city level, although a greater diversity of religious affiliation occurs in cities that have become major centres for recent immigration. Indeed, city diversity is greater than can be shown here because some religious affiliations, such as Baha'i, Jain, Rastafarian, Scientology, and Aboriginal spirituality, are too small to be included in the city data (city data do not show groups with less than 1 percent of the CMA's population). Note that on the 2001 census, individuals were asked to report their affiliation to a specific religious denomination or group, even if they were not practising members of that group. These data can therefore show only broad patterns of religious affiliation and not, for example, the proportion attending religious services or functions in Canada or the degree of devotion across the country. (Sources: Map compiled from provincial and territorial data in Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Analysis Series. *Religions in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry, May 2003, Catalogue No. 96F0030XIE2001015, available online at www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products; and from city data, including 2001 CMA population sizes adjusted in 2003, in Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Topic-Based Tabulations: *Religions in Canada*, Table 95F0450XCB2001004, available online at www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes.)

Canada's Religions by Affiliation Numbers, 1991 and 2001 [see p 176 for 2011 data]

TABLE 5.1 Canada's Religions by Affiliation Numbers for Major Religious Denominations, 1991 and 2001

Religious Denomination	2001	%	1991	%	% Change 1991–2001
Roman Catholic	12 793 125	43.2	12 203 625	45.2	4.8
Protestant	8 654 845	29.2	9 427 675	34.9	-8.2
Christian Orthodox	479 620	1.6	387 395	1.4	23.8
Christian*	780 450	2.6	353 040	1.3	121.1
Muslim	579 640	2.0	253 265	0.9	128.9
Jewish	329 995	1.1	318 185	1.2	3.7
Buddhist	300 345	1.0	163 415	0.6	83.8
Hindu	297 200	1.0	157 015	0.6	89.3
Sikh	278 415	0.9	147 440	0.5	88.8
No religion	4 796 325	16.2	3 333 245	12.3	43.9

*Total includes persons who report "Christian" as well as those who report "Apostolic," "Born Again," and "Evangelical."

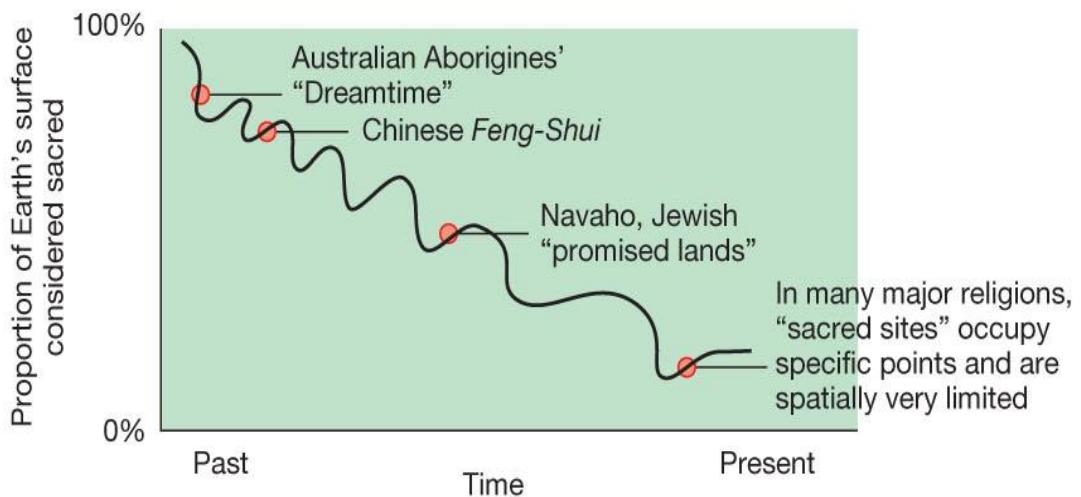
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Analysis Series. *Religions in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry, May 2003, Catalogue No. 96F0030XIE2001015, available online at www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products. 2006 census data will be made available at www12statcan.ca/english/census06 in due course.

(2) Sacred Space

- **Sacred space** --definition
 - “an area recognized by individuals or groups as worthy of special attention as a site of special religious experiences or events”

- It may be helpful to imagine sacred space over time
- The following graph tries to do this.
- We start at some very early date, and imagine that some people might have seen the whole world as holy
- As time goes on – and as society becomes more secular – so less places on the world's surface are holy – sacred space has diminished

A Model of Sacred Space



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Figure 5.25 A model of sacred space

This diagram shows how changes over time may have affected society's changing views of sacred spaces.

- So – at the earliest dates, we can think of groups like the Australian Aborigines who saw the whole earth as sacred (the “Songlines” of the Dreamtime), or the Chinese practice of feng-shui (recall that from one of our first classes) sees energy lines – a measure of sacredness – across the earth’s surface

- Then - we find some groups whose religion taught them that they had been given some part of the earth (which means that the bit they did not get, was not so special or sacred)

- Finally, we can perhaps see that in modern western industrial secular society, virtually almost nowhere is sacred – except perhaps a religious building.
- We therefore try to connect with those small rare places through pilgrimage—
- Or (as one student very perceptively told me last term) the holy comes to us – through travelling missionaries etc

Sacred space

- If our simple model is any indication of what has happened over time, we have moved from a situation where
 - (1) Less of the overall surface of the earth is seen as sacred [i.e. a decline of *sacred space*]
 - (2) More of a focus on specific sacred sites [i.e. *sacred places*]
 - These become sites of pilgrimage or special reverance

Sacred Sites of Hindu India

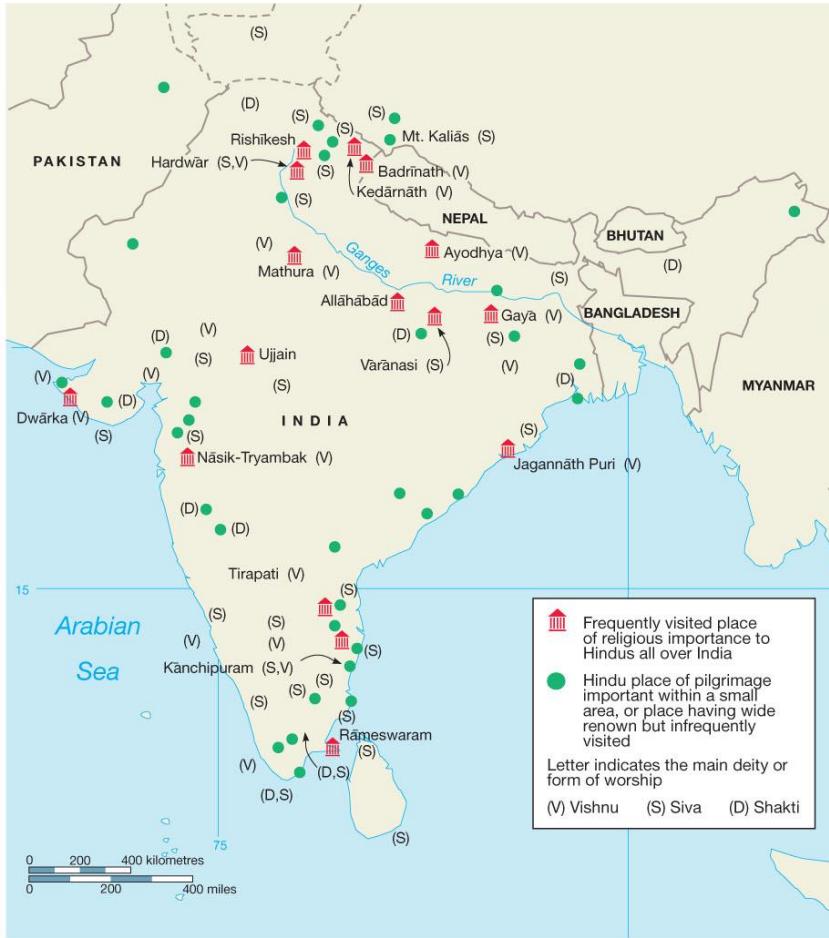
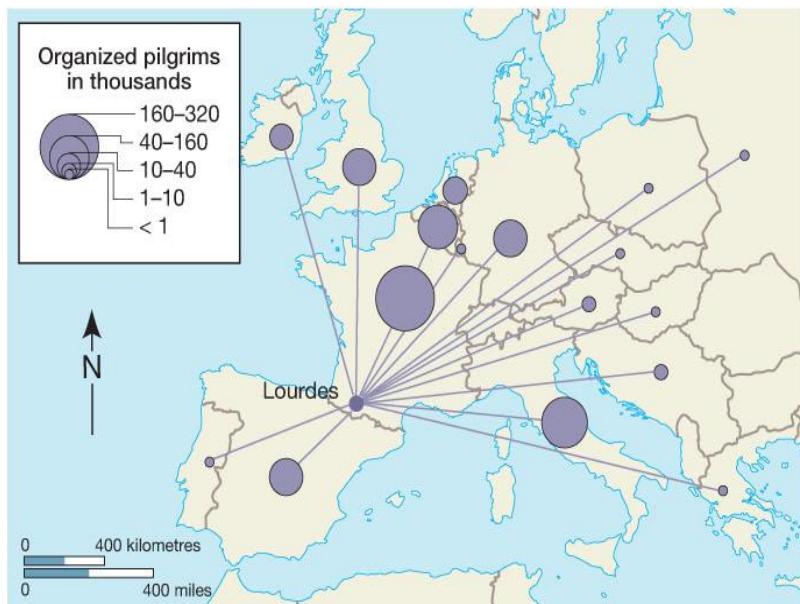


Figure 5.23 Sacred sites of Hindu India
India's many rivers are holy places within Hindu religion, and so it is not surprising that sacred sites are located along the country's many riverbanks. Apparently, those shrines closer to the rivers are holier than those farther away. (Source: Adapted from Ismail Ragi al Farugi and David E. Sopher, *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World*. New York: Macmillan, 1974.)

Source Areas for Pilgrims to Lourdes



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Figure 5.24 Source areas for pilgrims to Lourdes This map shows the points of origin of European, group-organized pilgrims to Lourdes in 1978. These represent only about 30 percent of all pilgrims to Lourdes, most of whom travel to the shrine on their own. Improved transportation (mainly by train) and the availability of organized package trips have contributed to a marked increase in the number of pilgrims visiting. Many of the 5 million pilgrims who visit the town each year do so in the hope of a miraculous cure for medical ills at a grotto where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared before 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous in a series of 18 visions in the year 1858. (Source: C.C. Park, *Sacred Worlds*. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 284.)



John Bunyan
Bunhill Field
London
2016

One special case of “sacred and profane” space is the cemetery

- One particular place of reverence is the cemetery, a Space that has been widely studied as a phenomenon by cultural geographers for many reasons e.g.
 - 1. We experience cemeteries as ‘**liminal spaces**’ [liminal = “boundary”] – they are spaces that are both sacred and everyday (“profane”) *at the same time*
 - *The idea of liminal space is important – shopping malls are another example of spaces that are both public (the world of commerce) and private (we sit, hang out, have coffee, try things on, don’t buy ...)*

Geography of cemeteries

- 2. We can see how different attitudes to death affect the landscape (i.e. 19th Century ideas of nature led to the more natural “garden cemetery” of Montreal’s Mount Royal) – an example of changing landscape **aesthetics** we will talk more about later
- 3. We can look at the **diffusion** of images/sculptures (Yes! Diffusion –remember that!!)
- Anyway, just to get us into this, lets look at a few cemeteries around the world

City Cemetery, Basseterre St Kitts (West Indies)



Feb 2018

City Cemetery, Fort-de-France, Martinique (French West Indies)



Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal



Cemeteries and the famous: Ingrid Bergman (d. 1982)



Stockholm
June 2017

Cemeteries and the famous: Alfred Nobel



Stockholm
June 2017

As in life, so in death ... the more wealthy can afford more.

Basseterre, St Kitts



Feb 2018

Mount Royal, Montreal



Oct 2017

Wealthy people's graves past and present (Stockholm June 2017)



Many different traditions are used in gravestones – these are from Sweden



Ways of commemorating



Lamb: 19C symbol of mourning

Led Zeppelin: more personal 21C



Both Mount Royal Cemetery Oct 2017

Nineteenth-century technology



London
Ontario
1999

21st Century technology

Vaxholm: June 2017



Stockholm: June 2017



Maps! (Montreal Oct 2017)



- As examples of the type of work being done on cemeteries, let me offer two examples:
 - 1. The New England “school” of work
 - New England
 - Caribbean
 - 2. Philippe Ariès’ model of difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant cemeteries

The New England school –

the classics (but you do not have to read them)

Society for American Archaeology

Death's Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries

Author(s): Edwin Dethlefsen and James Deetz

Source: *American Antiquity*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Apr., 1966), pp. 502-510

Published by: [Society for American Archaeology](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2694382>

Accessed: 14/03/2014 10:15

Some Social Aspects of New England Colonial Mortuary Art

Author(s): James Deetz and Edwin N. Dethlefsen

Source: *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology*, No. 25, Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices (1971), pp. 30-38

Published by: [Society for American Archaeology](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25146710>

Accessed: 14/03/2014 10:12

New England School

- Deetz and Dethlefsen observed across New England a simple chronology of change in the designs of images (iconography) on gravestones:
 - **Death's head** – (1700-1770s in Boston)
 - **Cherub** – (1770-1800 in Boston)
 - **Urn and willow** – (1800-1830s in Boston)
 - This simple sequence is all you need !
- The key is then to add from our knowledge of diffusion – these changes will move outwards (from Boston) as a **series of changes in gravestone design over time and space.**

From Deetz and Dethlefsen's classic 1966 paper



FIG. 1. Eastern Massachusetts, showing cemetery locations.



FIG. 2. Universal motifs. a, death's head; b, cherub; c, urn and willow.

- So – basically in the first time period (1700s) the most fashionable design (the death's head – macabre I know, but they were Puritans and wanted us to know life was short and a reckoning was coming) – was the stone design to use in Boston
- As time went on, that design became old-fashioned. People in Boston switched to newer designs, and the old ones were only still used in those places that were further out (more remote) from Boston – until, some years later, they too might have caught up with Boston fashion,
- In other words, we see a pattern of diffusion working as an innovation wave across time and space
 - Deetz and Dethlefsen show this pattern with a type of sideways on graphs they call “battleship profiles” (because they look like the shape of old battleships)
 - Anyway, hopefully you can see evident of spread over time in the next slides...

The battle ship graphs from Deetz and Dethlefsen 1966 paper – the nearer Boston (in time and space) you are, you get the new designs first; the further out, the later you are switching to the next fashionable design

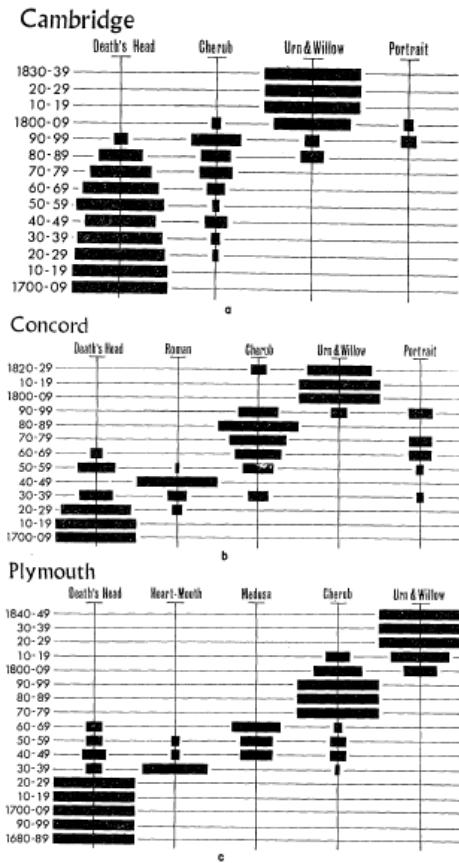
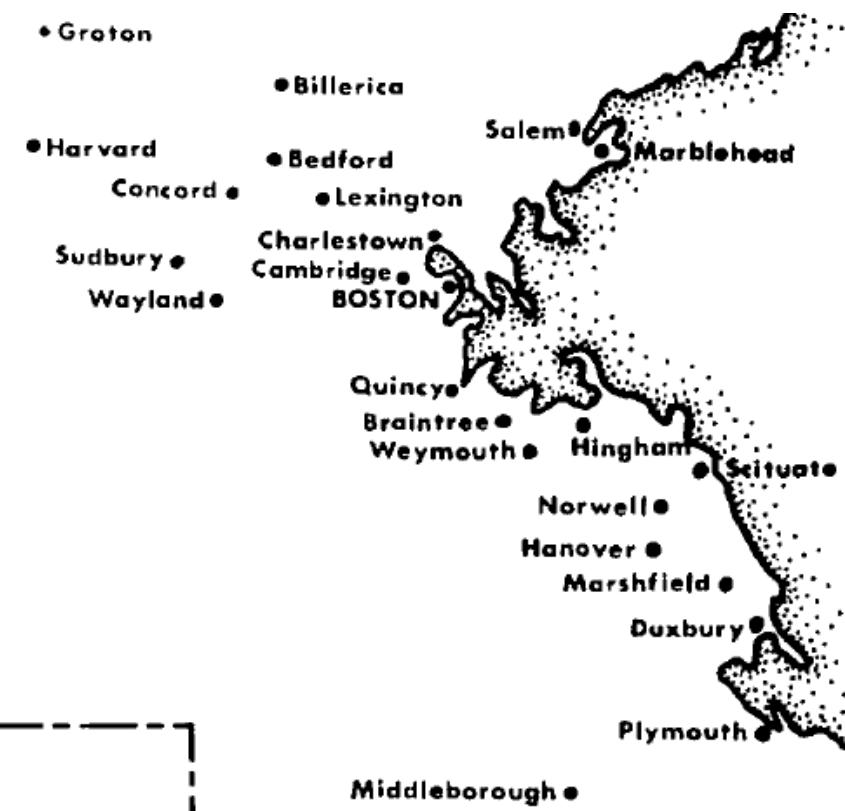


Fig. 3. Graphs showing stylistic sequences in three cemeteries.



- And now some pictures to show the patterns from some previous students in this course who have given me permission to use their photos (and for which I thank them – and if you have any – now's the chance – send them in!)

Death's Head (Boston. Photo: Samantha Mailhot 2014)



Death's Head (Boston)

Photo: Samantha
Mailhot 2014)



Urn and Willow (Boston. Photo: Samantha Mailhot 2014)



An aside ... The willow as symbol

- Interestingly, the weeping willow only becomes a symbol of mourning in this third phase – and I learned this only last year!!!
- Partly this is because the tree was only available as a symbol from the 1770s when the tree itself was being introduced into Europe and N.Am from China, and the symbol therefore became widely known
 - Yes – another example of the spread of plant around the globe (as we have seen in previous classes)

Hilltop Cemetery, Westport, Nova Scotia (Photo Allison Ryan 2014)



- Can we see this “New England pattern” happening elsewhere??
- I am glad you asked that.
- Answer is yes – as New England merchants involved, for example, with far-off places in the Caribbean.
- Let us look at some examples ...

Death's Heads in the Caribbean: Curaçao (Caribbean)



Curaçao's Old Jewish Cemetery



Curaçao's Jewish cemetery dates from 18th Century

Cemetery located NW of
city core

Death's head iconography



Curaçao's Jewish cemetery

Death's Head



Tree of life cut down



Elsewhere in the Caribbean

- [Here I shamelessly talk about some of my own research – well, if I don't use this opportunity, who else is going to listen – besides which the university expects us all to be busy doing some real research – so with that note of warning, here goes ...]

- I have found a nice example of a New England style death's head on the island of St Vincent.(see following slides)
- Not so surprising really as we know of examples in St Eustatius (work of Paonessa) and on Barbados ... people traded with those islands some died there – indeed the St Vincent person is one of the first in the cemetery there.

St Vincent: Ochterlony stone

1765



St Vincent: Ochterlony stone

1765

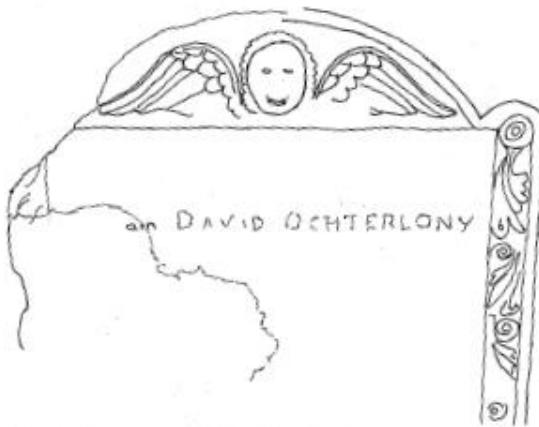


Figure 1. Ochterlony's gravestone 1765 (author's sketch).

*Here lies the body of the honest, generous & friendly
Captain David Ochterlony
Of Boston in New England
He was descended from a
very respectable family in North Britain
He lived Justly beloved & Esteemed by all good people
for his real Merit ...[illegible]...
died August 13 1765 aged 42*

St Eustatius: 2 New England style stones of 1737, 1750



Figure 3. St. Eustatius Ebenezer Havens of Shelter Island 1737.



Figure 4. St. Eustatius Captain William Bennett of Rhode Island, 1750.

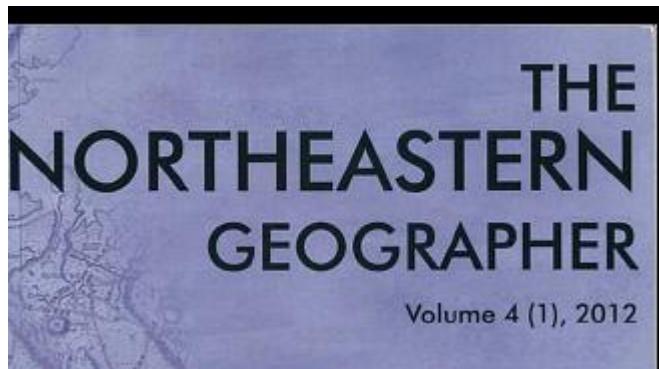
St Eustatius: Shipton 1751



- This stone, carved for the Shipton family in 1751, was made by William Grant of “Newark, East Jersy” as we can see from this line at the bottom



My work in the Caribbean



FROM BOSTON TO THE CARIBBEAN: A Case Study of the Southern Limits of New England's Late Eighteenth-Century Mortuary Iconography

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ABSTRACT

The presence of the gravestone of the Boston-based mariner, Captain David Ochterlony (1723-1765), in a cemetery on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, raises a number of intriguing questions. Clearly carved according to the prevailing fashion for mortuary iconography in late eighteenth-century New England and transported from Boston to St. Vincent, this stone and the details of the person it commemorates make a small but important contribution to the work of historical geographers and gravestone scholars by showing that New England's colonial-era gravestones had spread much further beyond that region's confines than was once thought. In this respect, the paper concludes, as the most southerly known New England gravestone reported in the literature, the Ochterlony stone not only enables scholars to begin to fix more precisely the southernmost limits of the area reached by the New England gravestone tradition, but also enables us to appreciate the relatively rapid speed with which stones from New England were able to reach far into the Caribbean.

Keywords: *mortuary iconography, New England gravestone tradition, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, David Ochterlony.*

As another aside, the 19thC goes on,
other designs become popular

- One example is the “clasped hands” design
 - Yes – this is a design I have also been researching... but lets look at the classic work on this

Foster & Freeland (2007) carefully describe the details of these types of clasped hand gravestones

Hand from left is
always front &
never clasped: “all
fingers extended,
as if a *death hand*
...of deceased”

p134



Gendered sleeve:
“the gender of the
death sleeve ...
reflects the sex of
the deceased”

p. 140



*Photo. 1: Clasped hands motif, with index finger of life hand extended.
(Photograph by Charles Freeland, Art Department, Eastern Illinois University.)*

Variations always
occur with hand from
right – the hand of the
survivor, the *life hand*



Perhaps an extreme example

- **Source:**

Limburg, Holland. Grave of Colonel Van Gorcum [Protestant] and wife J van Afferden [Roman Catholic](d 1880; 1888) not allowed in same cemetery [source: Unusualplaces .org]



The second example of design change is

- Philippe Ariès, Western Attitudes toward Death (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974)
 - He argues a fundamental difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant types of cemetery
 - 1. Roman Catholic gravestones have a much greater use of statues and images
 - 2. Protestant gravestones far less imagery and much plainer stones

I use the chronology developed by Philippe Ariès in this recent 2018 paper... [do not read, unless interested...!!]

Article



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'That this too, too solid flesh would melt...': Necrogeography, gravestones, cemeteries, and deathscapes

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Abstract

Physical geographers have long shown an interest in necrogeography – the spatial study of human burial practices (especially cemeteries, gravestones, and memorials) – to the extent that their study has informed investigations concerning processes of landscape change, biogeographic developments, or environmental alteration. This paper argues that such contributions can be enhanced if set within the wider study of the commemoration of death. Since the influential work of Philippe Ariès on Western attitudes towards death, scholars have been alerted to the physical implications of cultural changes in burial practices. Alternatively, others have more recently used the concept of the 'deathscape' to place such changes within their analyses. The paper concludes that physical geography's contribution to the study of necrogeography could be enhanced by the adoption of such broader frameworks.

1. Roman Catholic gravestones have a much greater use of statues and images
- Let us look at some examples of the first type

Buenos Aires – Roman Catholic

(Photo: Patricia Thornton 2003)



Recolleta:

A Roman
Catholic
Cemetery

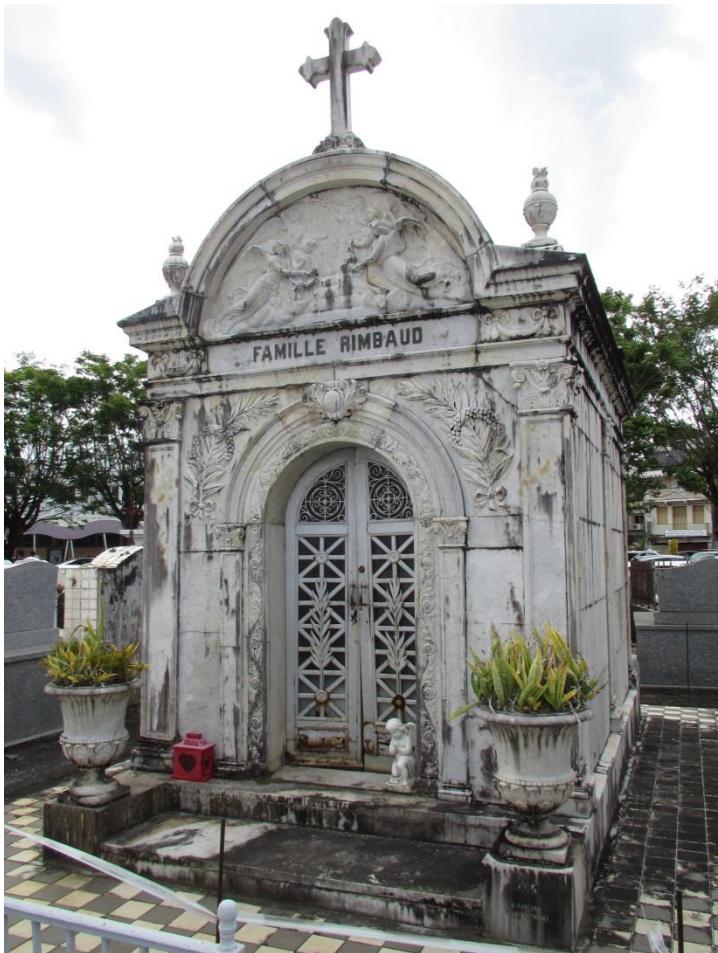
Sicily {Roman Catholic}



Sicily {Roman Catholic}



Martinique – Roman Catholic



Martinique – Roman Catholic



And now the second major type

- 2. Protestant gravestones far less imagery and much plainer stones
 - We see this nicely from some of my Icelandic fieldwork ...

Iceland's NW peninsula: Protestant - Lutheran



Iceland's NW peninsula: near Isafjordur

Iceland's NW peninsula



Iceland's NW peninsula



Iceland: South-west



Eyarbakki

Thorvaldsen's "Night" and "Morning" in Icelandic Cemeteries, by Date of First Occurrence



Iceland – cemeteries as a nature reserve - trees



Shaking
hands



On the road
to Akureyri