

2003

Wilbur Zelinsky: The Cultural Geography of the United States: Study Guide

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Recommended Citation

Samson, Steven Alan, "Wilbur Zelinsky: The Cultural Geography of the United States: Study Guide" (2003). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 104.
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WILBUR ZELINSKY: THE CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNITED STATES: STUDY GUIDE, 2003

Steven Alan Samson

CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS

Review

basic processes of American cultural development
Greater European cultural realm and the Northwest Europe cultural region (hearth area around the North Sea, p. 26)
origin of Anglo-American culture
chain migration
Old-Order Amish and other living museums of earlier European life
differences between English and Spanish colonization
Turner thesis
Doctrine of First Effective Settlement
unusual or nonrandom traits of immigrants
fully domesticated species of plants and animals vs. those derived from the tropics
how to interpret the founding of a "New England"
the Melting Pot

CHAPTER TWO: IDENTITY

Review

language as a paradigm for the totality of culture
isolated rural farmstead
single-family dwelling
chronic antiauthoritarianism of the American people
long-range social and economic planning
culture core
doctrine of individualism
the Frontier Myth
the Success Myth
the Protestant Ethic
balkanization
pervasive themes or motifs of the distinctive character (ethos) of American culture
Individualism
mechanistic world vision
mobility and change
messianic perfectionism
place names
inappropriate modes of cultivation: cotton, tobacco
suburban shopping center
extinction of the pedestrian
clocks and time-saving
rectangular grids and numbered blocks

CHAPTER THREE: PROCESS

Review

cultural system
primary motivation for migration into the United States

artifacts
mentifacts
sociofacts

CHAPTER FOUR: STRUCTURE

Outline

- A. THE ANATOMY OF CULTURE AREAS (114-17)
1. General Principles (Donald W. Meinig): Illustrated by the Mormon Culture Region
 - a. **Core Area:** Centralized zone of concentration
 - b. **Domain:** Where a particular culture is dominant
 - c. **Sphere:** Zone of outer influence or peripheral acculturation
 - d. **Zone of Penetration:** Illustrated by Texan influences outside the state
 - (1) "What is most aberrant about Texas about the Texas culture area is the geography of its core, a bulbous, hollow triangle whose three apices [apexes] – the metropolises of Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio – have interacted complexly and have shared the functions usually confined to a single compact zone."
 2. Characteristics
 - a. Culture areas are slower to respond to agents of change than are economic systems, such as
 - (1) the **American Manufacturing Belt**, which covers parts of three culture areas: New England, the Midland, and the Middle West; and
 - (2) **Megalopolis**, which reaches from southern Maine to northern Virginia
- B. THE MAJOR TRADITIONAL CULTURE AREAS (117-33)
- Historical Note:** "The contemporary map of American culture areas can be explained in terms of the genesis, development, and expansion of the three principal colonial **culture hearths** located along the Atlantic seaboard." Pre-contact aboriginal areas can be ignored, although there is a striking coincidence between the core area of the Iroquois Confederacy in western New York and the "Burned Over District" associated with the Second Great Awakening.
1. **New England:** the most clearly dominant during the first century of national expansion
 - a. Leadership: New England illustrates the capacity of strongly motivated communities to rise above the constraints of a parsimonious environment
 - b. Two Subregions: The older southeastern segment and the northern area. Boston is the chief hub, but it shares leadership with the lower Connecticut Valley (Hartford and New Haven) and the Narragansett Bay region (Providence and Newport)
 - c. Demographic and ideological expansion of New England: zones of penetration included Hawaii, the Caribbean, the Upper Midwest, and the Pacific Northwest
 2. **The South:** the most aberrant of any area with respect to national norms
 - a. Different in motives and social values
 - b. Diffuseness of its origin and spatial structure
 - (1) The rural Chesapeake Bay area in a plausible nuclear hearth
 - (2) Southern coastal strip was colonized directly from Great Britain
 - (3) Charleston and Savannah were connected with the West Indies
 - (4) French Louisiana combines Creole, Acadian (Cajun), West Indian, and African elements
 - (5) South Central Texas grew through a German influx
 - c. Lack of a focal center has meant convergent or parallel evolution
 - d. Chief Subdivisions
 - (1) Upper South is derived from the Chesapeake Bay hearth area and the early Midland (Delaware Valley)
 - (2) Lower South originated principally in the Chesapeake Bay area
 - e. Margins (Outer Limits) of the South
 - (1) Northern boundary is isothermal in character (based on length of frost-free season)

- (2) Its westward extension fades around the 100th Meridian and a critical decline in annual precipitation
 - f. Subregions
 - (1) A possible emergent Oklahoma subregion
 - (2) **Texas subregion** is large, unmistakable, vigorous, and self-assertive (or as Zelinsky describes Dallas, p. 110, “aggressively narcissistic”)
 - (3) Peninsular Florida
- 3. **The Midland:** “The serious European occupation and development of the Midland Began a generation or more after that of the other major cultural nodes, and after several earlier, relatively ineffectual trials by the Dutch, Swedes, Finns, and British. But, once begun in the late seventeenth century by **William Penn**, the colonization of the area was an instant success.”
 - a. **Philadelphia**, the major port of entry, became preeminent as the economic, social, and cultural capital; the culture area assumed its distinctive form in Southwestern Pennsylvania, first, as a prosperous agricultural society and, then, as a mixed economy with the addition of mercantile and industrial functions.
 - (1) Much of the region acquired an urban character by the middle of the eighteenth century
 - b. Polyglot Ethnicity: more an ethnic mosaic than a melting pot
 - c. Subregions
 - (1) Inner Zone: **Pennsylvanian subregion:** The Teutonic element is Strong and the subregion extends into the Maryland Piedmont, West Virginia, and the Shenandoah Valley
 - (2) Outer Zone: **New York subregion** (New England Extended): a hybrid Place formed mainly from two from two parental strains of almost equal potency
 - (3) First intra-American blending and fusion of regional cultures: the **Burned-Over District** of western New York (north of the Allegheny Plateau) was the seedbed of important religious innovations and a major staging area for western migration
 - d. Western Boundary
- 4. **The Middle West:** “That large triangular region which is justly regarded as the most modal, the section most nearly representative of the national average.”
 - a. Boundaries: The Middle West is bounded roughly by Pittsburgh on the east, Southern Manitoba on the northwest and southern Kansas on the southwest
 - b. Convergence: “We can plausibly conjecture that this culture region must be the progeny of all three Colonial regions and that the fertile union took place in the upper Ohio Valley.” Like the South, it lacks a genuine **focal zone** around which both ideas and commerce were built. [Cincinnati was an important early hub; Chicago became important after the Civil War].
 - c. Subregions
 - (1) Upper (north of the 41st Parallel): influenced by New England with a rich mixture of German, Scandinavian, Slavic, and other non-WASP elements
 - (2) Lower: resembles the South in its predominantly Protestant and British make-up; it also inclines toward nativism
- 5. **The West**
 - a. The concept of an “American West” is strong in the popular imagination, but the Western livestock complex accounts only for a small fraction of the population
 - b. A single, grand Western cultural region does not exist: “The west features
 - c. eight major (and many lesser) nodes of population, separated from each other
 - d. by wide expanses of nearly uninhabited mountain or arid desert.”
 - e. Areas that reveal a genuine cultural identity
 - (1) Upper Rio Grande region: The oldest and strongest sector of Ibero-American activity in the Southwest (Santa Fe); a true traditional region
 - (2) Mormon region: Historically derived from New York and New England
 - (3) Central California: A product of the Gold Rush
 - (4) Southern California: It arose after 1885 with the advent of the

transcontinental railroad and has become “the largest, boldest experiment anywhere in creating a **voluntary region**.”

- (5) The Remainder: Willamette Valley (Oregon), Puget Sound, Inland Empire (Columbia Basin), and Colorado Piedmont (Denver area)

Review

regions and their core or focal cities
core
domain
sphere
zone of penetration
characteristics of the Texas culture
culture hearths
New York subregion
Pennsylvanian subregion
upper vs. lower Middle West
New England
South
Midland
West
Mormon region
Upper Rio Grande region
Central California region
cultural characteristics of the Southern California region

CHAPTER FIVE: AMERICA IN FLUX

Review

early American attitudes about the military
public reaction to crime
events promoting the coalescence of town and countryside
nationalism and religion
competition of newspapers
state
nation
Synthetic Culture Area
nation-state
garrison state
transnationalization
Edge City
galactic city
ruralization
Older Traditional, Latter-Day Traditional, and Voluntary regions
phases of temporal patterning in America
enthusiastic Christianity
Landscape One, Two, Three
vernacular community