



## CULTURAL AREA

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Site Reference : [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_area)

In [anthropology](#) and [geography](#), a **cultural region**, **cultural sphere**, **cultural area** or **culture area** refers to a geography with one relatively homogeneous human activity or complex of activities ([culture](#)). These are often associated with an [ethnolinguistic group](#) and the territory it inhabits. Specific cultures often do not limit their geographic coverage to the borders of a [nation state](#), or to smaller subdivisions of a state. Cultural "spheres of influence" may also overlap or form concentric structures of macrocultures encompassing smaller local cultures. Different boundaries may also be drawn depending on the particular aspect of interest, such as religion and folklore vs. dress and architecture vs. language.

Cultural areas are not considered equivalent to [Kulturkreis](#) (Culture circles).

### □ History of concept

A culture area is a concept in [cultural anthropology](#) in which a geographic region and time sequence ([age area](#)) is characterized by substantially uniform environment and culture.<sup>[1]</sup> The concept of culture areas was originated by museum curators and ethnologists during the late 1800s as means of arranging exhibits. [Clark Wissler](#) and [Alfred Kroeber](#) further developed the concept on the premise that they represent longstanding cultural divisions. The concept is criticized by some, who argue that the basis for classification is arbitrary. But other researchers disagree and the organization of human communities into cultural areas remains a common practice throughout the [social sciences](#). The definition of culture areas is enjoying a resurgence of practical and theoretical interest as social scientists conduct more research on processes of cultural globalization.

## Types

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A formal culture region is an area inhabited by people who have one or more cultural traits in common, such as [language](#), [religion](#), or system of livelihood. It is an area relatively homogeneous with regard to one or more cultural traits. The geographer who identifies a formal culture region must locate cultural borders. Because cultures overlap and mix, such boundaries are rarely sharp even if only one cultural trait is mapped and so there are cultural border zones, rather than lines. The zones broaden with each additional cultural trait that is considered because no two traits have the same spatial distribution. As a result, instead of having clear borders, formal culture regions reveal a center or core, where the defining traits are all present. Away from the central core, the characteristics weaken and disappear. Thus, many formal culture regions display a core-periphery.

In contrast to the abstract cultural homogeneity of a formal culture region, a functional culture region may not be culturally homogeneous; instead, it is an area that has been organized to function politically, socially, or economically as one unit: a [city](#), an independent state, a precinct, a church diocese or parish, a trade area or a farm. Functional culture regions have nodes or central points where the functions are coordinated and directed, such as city halls, national capitols, precinct voting places, parish churches, factories, and banks. In that sense, functional regions also possess a core-periphery configuration, in common with formal culture regions. Many functional regions have clearly defined borders that include all land under the jurisdiction of a particular [urban](#) government that is clearly delineated on a regional map by a line distinguishing between one jurisdiction and another.

Vernacular, popular or perceptual cultural regions are those perceived to exist by their inhabitants, as is evident by the widespread acceptance and use of a distinctive regional name. Some vernacular regions are based on physical environmental features; others find their basis in economic, political or historical characteristics. Vernacular regions, like most culture regions, generally lack sharp borders, and the inhabitants of any given area may claim residence in more than one such region. It grows out of people's sense of belonging and identification with a particular region. An American example is "[Dixie](#)". They often lack the organization necessary for functional regions although they may be centered on a single urban node. They frequently do not display the cultural homogeneity that characterizes formal regions.

Allen Noble gave a summary of the concept development of cultural regions using the terms "cultural hearth" (no origin of this term given), "cultural core" by [Donald W. Meinig](#)<sup>[6]</sup> for

Mormon culture published in 1970 and "source area" by Fred Kniffen (1965) and later Henry Glassie (1968) for house and barn types. Outside of a core area he quoted Meinigs' use of the terms "domain" (a dominant area) and "sphere" (area influenced but not dominant).

## Cultural boundary

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A cultural boundary (also cultural border) in ethnology is a geographical boundary between two identifiable ethnic or ethnolinguistic cultures. A [language border](#) is necessarily also a cultural border, as language is a significant part of a society's culture), but it can also divide subgroups of the same ethnolinguistic group along more subtle criteria, such as the [Brünig-Napf-Reuss line](#) in German-speaking Switzerland, the [Weißwurstäquator](#) in Germany or the [Grote rivieren](#) boundary between Dutch and Flemish culture.

In the [history of Europe](#), the major cultural boundaries are found:

- in [Western Europe](#) between [Latin Europe](#), where the legacy of the [Roman Empire](#) remained dominant, and [Germanic Europe](#), where it was significantly syncretized with [Germanic](#) culture
- in the Balkans, the [Jireček Line](#), dividing the area of dominant Latin ([Western Roman Empire](#)) from that of dominant Greek ([Eastern Roman Empire](#)) influence.

Macro-cultures on a continental scale are also referred to as "worlds," "spheres," or "civilizations," such as the [Muslim world](#).

In a modern context, a cultural boundary can also be a division between subcultures or classes within a given society, such as [blue collar](#) vs. [white collar](#) etc.

- See also: [Isogloss](#)

## Role in conflict

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Cultural boundaries sometimes define the difference between friend and foe in political and military conflicts. [Ethnic nationalism](#) and [pan-nationalism](#) sometimes seek to unify all native speakers of a particular language, who are conceived of as a coherent ethnic group or [nation](#), into a single [nation-state](#) with a unified culture. The association of an ethnolinguistic group with a nation-state may be written into [nationality laws](#) and [repatriation laws](#), which establish eligibility for citizenship based on ethnicity, rather than place of birth.

In other cases, attempts have been made to divide countries based on cultural boundaries by [secession](#) or [partition](#). For example, the [Quebec sovereignty movement](#) seeks to separate French-speaking province from English-speaking Canada to preserve its unique language and culture, and the [Partition of India](#) created separate majority-Hindu and majority-Muslim countries.

## Examples

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- [East–West dichotomy](#): The [Western civilization](#) and [Western world](#) contrasting with the [Orient](#) and [Eastern world](#).
- [North–South divide](#): The North–South divide is broadly considered a socio-economic and political divide.
- [Global South](#)
- Geographic
  - [Americas](#) [see also [Americas \(terminology\)](#)]
    - [Caribbean](#)
    - [Central America](#)
    - [Mesoamerica](#)
    - [North America](#)
    - [Northern America](#)
    - [South America](#)
  - [British Isles](#)
  - [Eastern world](#)
    - [Far East](#)
    - [Middle East](#)
    - [Near East](#)
  - [Indian subcontinent](#)
  - [Maghreb](#)
  - [Southeast Asia](#)
    - [Mainland Southeast Asia](#) and [Indochina](#)
    - [Maritime Southeast Asia](#)
  - [Turkestan](#)

- Based on language or language families:
  - Arab World, Arab-speaking world, and Arab diaspora
  - Celts and Celtic Europe
  - English-speaking world (Anglophone)
  - Baltic Finns
  - Francophonie (see also Françafrique)
  - German language in Europe
  - Germanic-speaking Europe
  - Hindi Belt (Hindi-Urdu Region)
  - Hispanidad
  - Hispanophone
  - Indigenous peoples of the Americas
    - Indigenous peoples of South America
    - Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast
    - Native Americans in the United States
  - Latin America
    - French America
    - Hispanic America
    - Ibero-America
    - Lusophone
  - Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic area
  - Latin Europe
  - Sinophone
  - Slavic Europe
  - Russian world
- Based on cultures
  - Anglosphere
  - Arab World
  - East Asian cultural sphere (Sinosphere)
  - Greater China
  - Greater India and Indosphere

- [Greater Iran](#) (Greater Persia)
- [Greater Middle East](#)
- [Lusosphere](#)
- [Nordic countries](#) (speaking [North Germanic languages](#))
- [Russian world](#)
- Based on [religious beliefs](#)
  - [Buddhism by country](#)
  - [Christendom](#) (Christian world)<sup>[8]</sup>
    - [Christianity by country](#)
  - [Hinduism by country](#)
  - [Islamic state](#)
    - [Islamic republic](#)
    - [Islamic monarchy](#)
  - [Muslim world](#)
    - [Islam by country](#)

Further information: [Category:Cultural regions](#) and [Category:Cultural spheres of influence](#)

## Music

A **music area** is a cultural area defined according to musical activity. It may or may not conflict with the cultural areas assigned to a given region. The world may be divided into three large music areas, each containing a "cultivated" or [classical musics](#) "that are obviously its most complex musical forms," with, nearby, [folk](#) styles which interact with the cultivated, and, on the perimeter, [primitive](#) styles:<sup>[9]</sup>

- [Europe](#) and [Sub-Saharan Africa](#)
  - based on shared [isometric](#) materials, [diatonic scales](#), and [polyphony](#) based on [parallel thirds](#), [fourths](#), and [fifths](#).
  - would usually use the natural [major scale](#) and [minor scale](#), and [Dorian](#), [Lydian](#) and [Mixolydian](#) modes.
- [North Africa](#), [Southwest Asia](#), [Central Asia](#), [South Asia](#), [Indonesia](#) and parts of [Southern Europe](#).
  - based on shared small [intervals](#) in [scales](#), [melodies](#), and polyphony.
  - would usually use the [harmonic minor](#) scale and the [Phrygian](#) scale.

- American Indian, East Asia, Northern Siberian, and Finno-Ugric music
  - based on shared large steps in pentatonic and tetratonic scales.

However, he then adds that "the world-wide development of music must have been a unified process in which all peoples participated" and that one finds similar tunes and traits in puzzlingly isolated or separated locations throughout the world.<sup>[9]</sup>