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Religion in Latin America

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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What are indigenous religions?

- Definition: Indigenous religions are usually practised by a small group, follow orally transmitted traditions, and are practiced only in a small part of the world

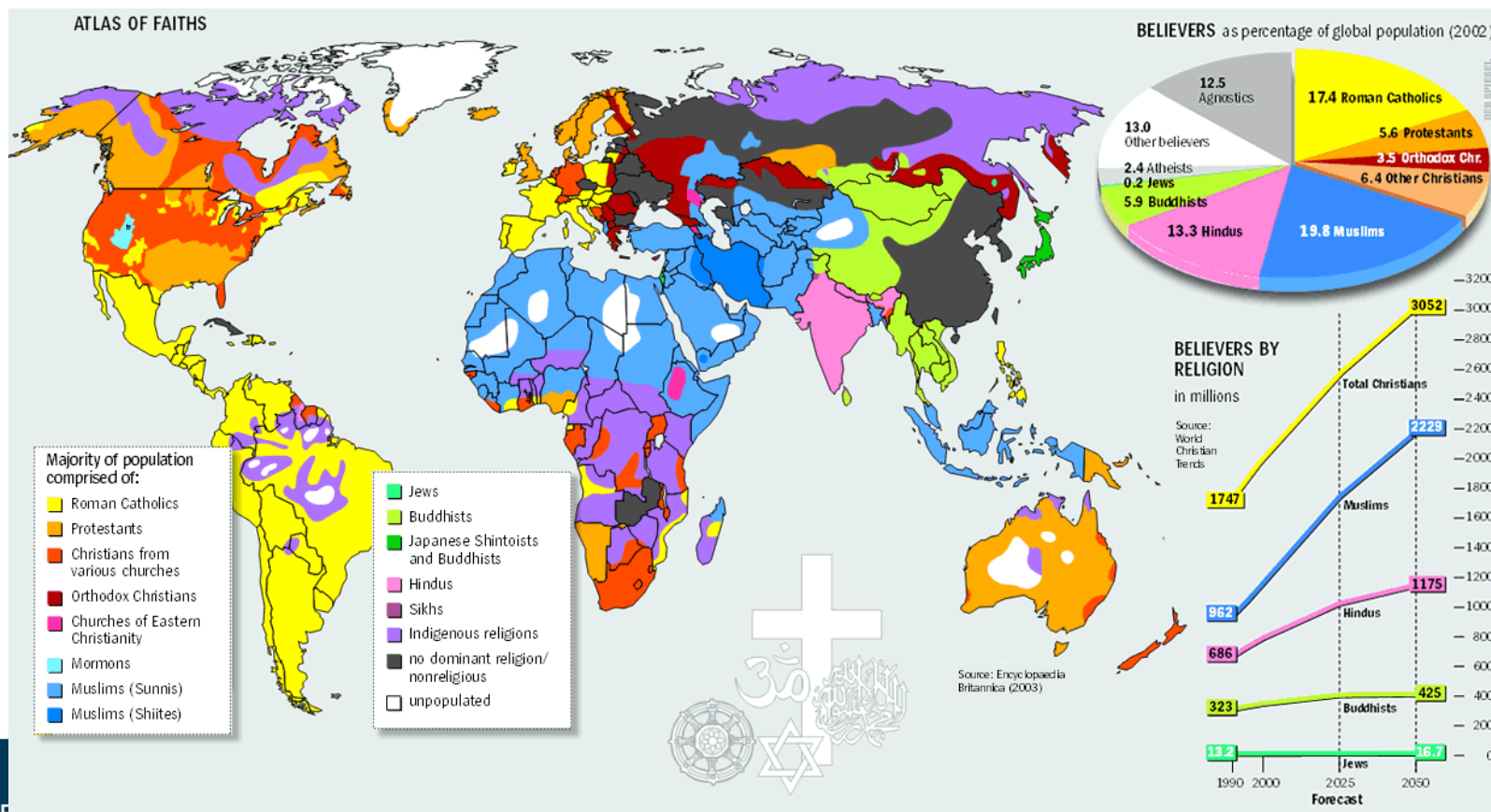
What is indigenous?

- The term **indigenous** can be used for any **ethnic group** who inhabit the **geographic** region with which they have the **earliest historical connection**.

Common characteristics

- A cultural group (and their descendants) who has an historical continuity or association with a given **region**, and who formerly or currently inhabits the region
- who has maintained at least in part their distinct **cultural and social characteristics**
- and **remain differentiated** from the surrounding populations and dominant culture of the nation-state

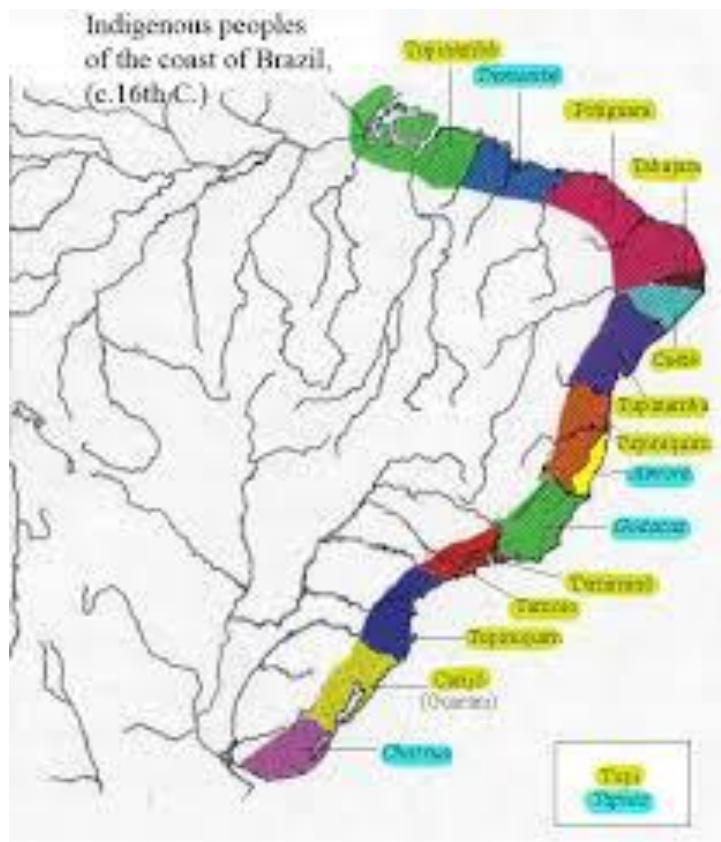
Geographical distribution of religions



Latin America



Brazil



- Indigenous population of the coast of Brazil at the time of conquest

Impact of colonial system

- irreversible impact by colonization
- Though some diversity exists until today



Today

- Wide ranging Christianization with suppression of traditional beliefs and practices
- Nevertheless, some traditions maintained until today

Quechua



- Descendants from the Inca
- Now mixed with Catholicism
- Importance of guardian spirits (called mallkus) who reside in nature, especially in the highest mountains

Yanomami

- Worldview: cosmos consists of four parallel layers.
- The upper-most layer is empty but was once occupied by ancient beings who descended to lower layers.
- The second layer, or sky, is the home of spirits of dead men and women, and it resembles the earth except that the hunting is better, the food tastier, and the spirits of people are young and beautiful.
- The third layer is the earth,
- The fourth layer is below the earth.



Shamans

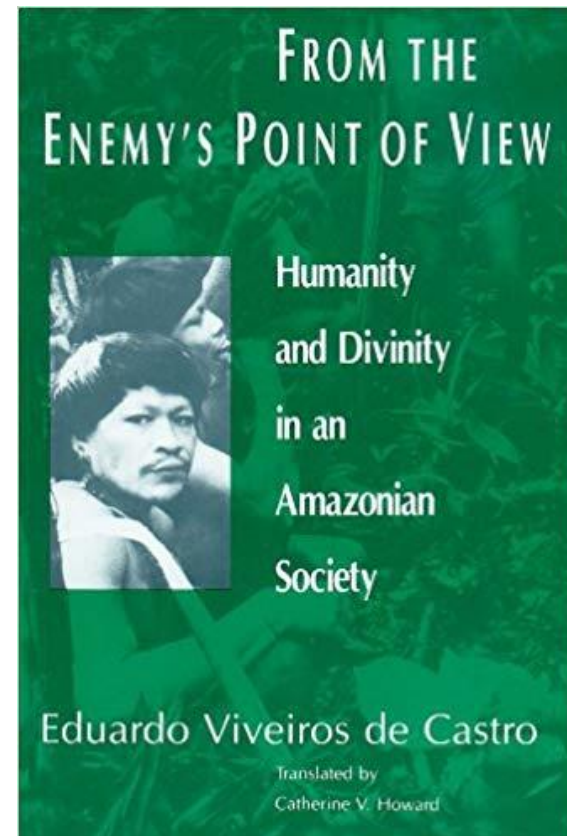
- Shamans communicate with spirits in order to cure illnesses of their patients or other problems
- They are perform ceremonies for the community (as a protection)
- Gender of a shaman depends on the culture. In several cultures in the Amazon shamans are male.

Animism

- belief in spirits
- In many Amazonian religions they believe that the plants and animals around them have spirits
- Humans need to communicate with them

"From the Enemy's Point of View"

- By Eduardo Viveiros de Castro
- About (subtitle)
"Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society"
- About the Araweté, Brazil



Shamans as prophets

- Prophetic visions of “land without evil”
- -> group would follow prophet over hundreds of miles
- Usually to the coast but also to the mountains



Searching for the “Land without Evil”



- Tupi-Guarani live today mainly in Paraguay, Brazil and Bolivia (lowlands of Bolivia)
- In contact with Europeans from the beginning of the conquest
- -> pressure to move inland

- Prophecy linked to shamanic leader
- At destiny group would start to sing and dance, waiting for entry into the land without evil



Journey by foot over hundreds of miles

- Recorded from the beginning of the European conquest of South America to the 20th century
- Probably practised even before
 - Recorded arrival of Indians from the Amazon in the Incan territory in the Andes

The journey would have taken years to cover the area



Ongoing until the 20th century

- Reports of encounter with impoverished Tupi-Guarani at the beginning of the 20th century
- Dream of Land without Evil still important and celebrated in rituals and dances, however, no group would actually begin the journey

Today

- Increased number of indigenous Pentecostal churches since the 1970s
- -> surge of new charismatic churches around the concept of prophecy and land without evil