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## The spatiality of religion – a geographer’s view

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*“As geographic concepts, territory and territoriality have their roots, their conditions, in other spatial practices; in particular those relating to movements and those that have to do with the embedding of people and their activities in particular places - ideas that are fundamental to contemporary human geography.” Cox, 2002, p. 1*

Scientific geography has been defined as *“the study of struggles over power of the entry of phenomena and events into space and time”* (Hägerstrand, 1986:7 or *“... to place objects and phenomena into the common space, from which they have been disconnected and study their mutual relations”* (Sandler, 1908, in Godlund 2009:32).

This paper will focus on the spatial aspects of religion (s), including membership distribution, cult, symbols and places of worship. Obviously the characteristics of human cult and the artifacts of religion differ considerably in terms of time-space occurrence and stability. Examples will mainly be taken from contemporary or 20th century Europe and from autochthonous variants of cult, with some examples from émigré and immigrant communities as well as from earlier times. The definition and interpretation of religion will vary between different cultures and political systems. This study is part of a multi-disciplinary project *Teaching Religion and Thinking Education on the Baltic-Barents Brim* carried out at Södertörn University, (see [www.sh.se/tratebbb](http://www.sh.se/tratebbb) ).

In his reader *The Geography of Religion* (2008), Roger W. Stump remarks that this sub-discipline of cultural geography “has not received sustained attention from scholars working in the other major subfields of [human] geography”. Stump analyzes spatial aspects of religion from four themes: *Distributions, spatial contextuality, spatial behavior of religious groups* and the *use and meaning of sacred space*. In the sub-discipline of political geography, the connection between geopolitics and religion has been discussed in a few contributions (primarily Agnew and Sidorov) but from an angle of religious ideological arguments for territorial hegemony. In religious studies the interest has mainly focused on membership and cult, whereas the locational aspect until recently, with the ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities, has been less developed, and even now mainly concentrating on metaphorical interpretations of ‘territory’ and ‘border’ (Knott, 2009). The sub-field of ecology of religion is primarily focussed on the impact of the environment on religion, primarily its impact on the image of God, where ritual space is located and the spatial diffusion of cult (Arvidsson, in Svensson & Arvidsson, p. 44). In sociology Georg Simmel, in his chapter on “Space and the spatial organization(s) of society” (*Der Raum und die räumlichen Ordnungen der Gesellschaft*, 1908) devotes much attention to the spatiality of religion, particularly the need for nodes of identification best expressed by the Catholic Church with Rome and monasteries.

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This paper attempts a slightly different human geography approach, starting from different factors influencing spatiality in general, and then analysing different spatial configurations and how they can be exemplified in religion.

Spatial aspects of religion (as well as of other phenomena) include *location* (place), *distribution* (space), *networks*, *core areas*, *frontiers* and *boundaries*. Changes in religious practice (*introduction*<sup>2</sup>) usually also has a strong spatial aspect. These ‘chorological’ aspects can then be related to different influencing factors; *nature*, *demography*, *technique*, *regulation*, *economy*, *socio-cultural coercion* and *conventions*, *symbols and communication* (especially the role of symbols and language), and of course the inherent spatial characteristics of different religious practices. The selection and definition/delimitation of such factors can of course be disputed, but they have been chosen as to represent different types of spatial and social influences (Lundén, 2001, 270 ff). It is also clear that these factors have strong interdependency, with the possible exception of nature if defined as the physical rules of existence.

#### Examples of relation between factors and spatial characteristics

	location	distribution	network	core	boundary
nature	island, mount	forest			seashore
demos		settlement	diaspora		
technos		transmission	web		
regulation	appointment	(state) territory			definition
market	optimization			centre	
coercion		formalization			
communication	symbol		language		

*Nature*, in its definition as the physical morphology and contents of the earth’s surface, has a varied attraction from the point of view of religion. One is the practicality of a certain location, e.g. the risk for environmental hazards, the other the symbolic value of a location, e.g. on a hill. Nature has a particular meaning in the nomadic cultures of northern Europe, e.g. that of the Sámi, where sacred mountains, stones etc. played an important role, or in the Old Russian veneration of the birch forest. In the Orthodox church of Greece, islands and isolated (sic!) mountains were preferred sites for monasteries ( Meteora, Agion Oros) and islands were also used by Russian Orthodoxy for monastery communities (Valaam, Solovetsk, Kishi). Water obviously has a special significance of purification in the Abrahamic religions, making certain lakes and rivers of special importance especially in Christian Orthodoxy. Another relation between cult and nature is e.g. in a religion’s locational characteristics from the birthplace of its cult, its “geographical definition”. With Muslims settling in northern Scandinavia, the rules of Ramadan have to be interpreted according to the fact that the length of day(light) changes over the year, in northern summer reaching 24 hours of sunshine, which makes a direct interpretation of Ramadan rules impossible

<sup>2</sup> While a change in practices or the use of a device new to the local area may be an *innovation* or even *novation*, it usually represents the ‘insertion’ of it into a new surrounding or situation of a practice known from other circumstances.

(Berglund, 2012), Northern pre-Christian cult was often related to the disappearing and return of the sun, the celebration of *Yule* (midwinter) being transferred into Christmas with the advent of Christianity.

Without resorting to natural determinism, it is clear that different variations of cult within the Scandinavian state churches had rather distinct spatial distributions with some direct or indirect relations to the natural conditions. Some of the most austere versions, the *Schartuan* on the west coast and *Laestadian* in the extreme north including Norway and Finland, had a clear connection to areas of harsh natural specificity, and in Norway the western coastal areas, with a traditional economy of fishing and shipping still have strong and austere forms of religion (Baldersheim & Fimreite, 2005:766, Hoel, 1996). The areas in Sweden with a high proportion of “free churches” usually represent natural conditions of small agricultural holdings, small family related industrial enterprises and a low presence of large estates (Gustafsson, 2000, p. 87).

In the late romantic revival movement of the Swedish State Lutheran Church around 1900, the Nordic landscape was used as a metaphor (‘God in nature’). In the Church of the mining town of Kiruna (1912), in one of the northernmost and most barren areas of Sweden, the large altar piece, by the renowned Swedish painter, Prince Eugen, shows a grove of deciduous trees lit by beams from a cloudy heaven. A picture without any corporeal image of God or Christ, and with a landscape far removed from the actual surroundings of the area – perhaps the paradisiacal antithesis of reality. The placing of religious symbols will be discussed below, but it is obvious that topography and ‘landscaping’ plays an important role, as exemplified by the Forest Cemetery of Stockholm or the mountain location of big Christian crosses in contested areas in the Balkans.

*Demography*, the distribution and statistical characteristics of population, obviously has an impact on the spatial distribution of religion. Differences in birth-rates caused by direct or indirect religious beliefs has caused spatial expansion or exodus of communities, with examples from Mennonites, Mormons and other communities characterised by a strong demographic growth, causing also a spatial redistribution (however, more often caused by political coercion – expulsion and settlement - than by ‘natural’ expansion). Migration of religious groups causes changes in the religious demographic landscape. The present large settlement of ‘Suryoyo’ in Södertälje, Sweden, goes back to an invitation in 1966 by Swedish authorities to 200 Christian refugees from Turkey, Syria and Lebanon to settle in various places in Sweden. After the benevolent reception of one family in Södertälje, many of the 200 and their closest relatives also joined, followed by more distant relatives from Germany, and subsequently from the Middle East (Björklund, 1981). While the Suryoyo centre of the world now in Södertälje can be seen a location by coincidence, the settlement of Soviet Jews (often via Israel) in West Berlin in the 1970-80’s is a combination of voluntary migratory decision and the possibility created by the special status of West Berlin as formally beyond the regulatory control of the Federal Republic.

Another aspect of demographic influences is the life trajectories of people ‘officially’ involved in religion, above all ordained clergy, monks and nuns etc. Depending on the type of religious community and its relation to the territorial state, the whole time-space story of its

actors will vary, from the almost life-long location into a monastery to the itinerant life of a Mormon missionary. In his study of a US-American Baptist community with the very appropriate title, *Chains of opportunity* (1970), H.C. White has analysed the life lines of individual clergy in a hierarchic ladder of 'livelihood positions' (Hägerstrand, 1975) where, from the theological seminary and onwards, different locations have to be chosen according to the vacancies and prospects for advancements, in his covering an area of the whole territory of the USA and perhaps also Canada. In a state church the selection of opportunities may differ and aspects of hierarchical administration can be more important than status and charisma of the local community and the individual, but in essence it is also a spatial game of supply and demand.

*Technique* can be defined as an ordered system or sequence of artefacts and/or actions that are coordinated in order to reach a specified goal. Technical devices are usually spatially defined. Has *technique* any relation at all to the spatial aspects of religion? Well at least the technology of war has strongly contributed to the differential spread of religion(s), including the Islamic expansion from Arabia, the 30 years' war in Europe and the short-lived but disastrous advance of Nazi Germany. Technique is also used for the propagation or maintenance of religion, e.g. during the first decades after World War II, when short wave broadcasting was used to keep in contact with listeners beyond the Iron Curtain or in countries with state radio monopolies. Radio Vatican served both purposes, while e.g. IBRA radio transmitting from the international city of Tangier (since 1956 integrated into Morocco) served members of Pentecostal sects in several languages of Europe. Contemporary web net based media has helped spatially dispersed religious communities (particularly diaspora groups) to communicate in spite of physical distance.

Transportation, housing and physical infrastructure can also be seen as aspects of technique. In the sparsely populated areas of northern Europe (and under the strict Lutheran regulation of church-going), so called 'church towns' were built in northern Sweden, in order to make it possible for inhabitants in distant villages to make mandatory visits to the church, spending 1-2 nights in a family cottage near the church (Bergling, 1964).

*Regulation*, organized authority, implies a decision valid for all members of a group of people, usually defined by the territory they inhabit or visit. Political regulation is almost always territorially defined, and usually hierarchical, from the territorial state to the individual land holding. The state is probably the most important regulator of religious practices, artefacts and symbols, even if this regulation is not always successful and often creates counter movements.

For parts of Europe, the relation between authority and religion was defined in the Peace of Augsburg 1555 as *Cuius regio, eius religio*, indicating the role of the territorial state in the representation of religion. In the peace of Westphalia 1648 the supremacy of the territorial state over its inhabitants was recognized by the signatory states. In the contemporary world states have different relations to religion, differing from autarchic theocracy (Vatican, Iran) to a total formal separation of state and religion (USA, Turkey, France). In the areas of Lutheran State religion, churches were located across each country in a pattern strongly

related to the lowest administrative districts (parishes). The state church also carried more secular obligations, e.g. to keep population registers and to disseminate new regulations and information. The clergy was also instructed to teach its parishioners to read, religious literature, making Sweden a leader in public literacy already by the end of the 17th century (Hartman, 2007). Through its educational system, the state regulates curricula, and not only in the subjects of religion and civics, but also in geography and history, indoctrinates its young citizens into taking the nation state and its 'contents' for granted, whereas e.g. structures (including religious practices) that overlap state borders are neglected (Lundén 2011b).

The geography of religion in Europe is thus heavily influenced by the territorial states, not only in their regulation of cult, but also in its presentation, usually divided into the geopolitical mosaic of state territories. Whereas there is no distinct border between Protestantism and Catholicism in Central Europe, due to the former division of the area into small states (Italy, Germany) and conglomerate empires (Habsburg, Ottoman), the common dividing line towards Orthodoxy was for a long time quite sharp. There is even an example of where a religious symbol, the chapel of Boris Gleb originating in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Russian Orthodox mission to the Fennoscandian north, helped to determine the state border between the Russian Empire and Norway in the 1826 treaty between Norway-Sweden and Russia, in a very conspicuous and geometrically complicated way (Norges Traktater, 1826, International Boundary Study, 1978).

Most European states have formal religious freedom but a historical bond between state and one particular religion. As these relations and their regulation differ from state to state, a geopolitical mosaic is created, where especially border areas stick out as ostentatious showings of state-religion relations. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century the Swedish realm of Lutheran Protestantism included Finnish-speaking Orthodox believers in present day Finland and north-western Russia, and a large group of Orthodox moved to Russia and settled in and around the town of Tver to form a significant population group, keeping their language for many generations (Saloheimo, 2010, Riikonen & Tuovinen, 2010:22).

The fundamental changes in the number and territorial extent of European states especially since World War I, has left a palimpsest of religious fossils in the form of buildings, cemeteries and symbols with little relation to the new religious and political environment. During the russification period of the Russian Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of Orthodox churches were built in areas dominated by Lutheran, Catholic, Uniate or Jewish populations. In Helsinki, however, where the Lutheran cathedral, dating from the early period of the Grand Duchy of Finland under the Russian tsar, was placed in the main square with an insignificant orthodox church behind, a new Orthodox cathedral was built 1868 in a conspicuous location between the harbour and the central administration quarters. In Reval/Tallinn, the new Orthodox cathedral (1894-1900), also in a pretentious setting, was given the name of Saint Aleksander Nevsky, a knight who defended Orthodox Russia from the German Order and a Swedish army during the Catholic era (Brüggemann, 2008). In the late 1930's in the formerly Imperial Russian areas of eastern Poland a campaign was launched to destroy a number of Orthodox churches built during the Russian territorial supremacy (Flaga, 2011). The present Estonian side of the border towards Russia

is full of religio-political statements, exemplified by the symbolic crosses at the destroyed but reconstructed German war cemetery (Lundén, 2011 a).

Even within a political territory the location of cult can be regulated. While in the Ottoman Empire different variants of Christian and Jewish religions were admitted (the *millet* system), their places of worship had to be placed in insignificant settings. When in 1774 the King of Sweden admitted a limited group of non-Lutheran believers, Catholics and Jews, into Sweden, they had to be confined to a few designated towns their cemeteries located at the outskirts. In the conglomerate Russian Empire there are several settlements of Old Order Orthodox in the new western provinces who felt safer under the more liberal rules of the Estlandian Gubernia with privileges from the Swedish reign or in eastern Latvia formerly of the tolerant Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth than in Imperial Russia proper. In other cases, certain towns were proclaimed open to believers of different denominations, e.g. Friedrichstadt in present Germany in 1621 by the ruler Friedrich III of Schleswig-Gottorf, (<http://www.friedrichstadt.de/de/portrait/stadtgeschichte.php>) or to a specific group, as e.g. the Bohemian Brothers coming as refugees to the Herrnhut Colony near Dresden in Saxony in 1722 and later (1773) invited to build Christiansfeld in Slesvig by decision by King Christian of Denmark (<http://www.christiansfeldcentret.dk/00037/>, 2011-12-28). Even within cities certain religious groups were politically confined to certain areas, e.g. the ghettos of medieval Europe, not to mention the forced agglomerations of Jews before final extermination during Nazi regime (Book & Stier, 2004)

*Economy.* The economic market has no boundaries, only transaction costs and regulation limit the spatial scope. Considerations of pecuniary values obviously play an important role even in religion. Particularly in liberal political regimes, where there is free competition for location, cities tend to form patterns of spatial differentiation, based on market competition. The location of churches and other places of cult will then be a matter of the financial power of each community in relation to its interest in a particular location.

In Helsinki of the 1880's "*the division of the city into two symbolic environments, the 'better' and the 'poorer' is clear from the institutional location. Not only were the Jewish believers' institutions located in the northwestern periphery. Here the Muslims had their mosques; here were the houses of prayer of the free churches*" (Åström 1957, p. 287, translation from Swedish by TL).

The location of compact settlements of religious believers within or near cities is often a matter of a combination of political regulation and market forces. The Jewish ghettos in the medieval and early modern towns of Italy and Central Europe were often placed at the outskirts, but inside the town wall, areas of low value and esteem (Book & Stier, 2004). In the decaying mining areas of southern Wales the chapels of independent religious communities were pulled down, replaced or transferred to secular uses, even to car garages.

However, the locations of buildings and e.g. cemeteries usually have a longer life than the location of their believers. Functionally obsolete 'sacred' buildings and other religious

symbols of 'official religions' tend to be classed as cultural heritage (regulation principle) and can thus be found in places not any longer motivated by market principles.

Economic reasoning can also be found in the spatial strategy for the recruitment of proselytes, e.g. mission stations in alien surroundings and the selection of places of large passing of people for distributors of religious tracts and journals and for the collection of charity, often at railway stations, in some countries even on the trains. In the locational strategies ideas of economic geography are used unintentionally, even if some activities seem more spurred by internal coercion than by a genuine drive for recruitment.

*Socio-cultural coercion and conventions:* Coercion is (here) defined as an urge within a religious community to behave in a particular way. Religion implies cult, the exertion of rituals or actions. Some of these actions or chores have a particular spatial importance, including processions and ritualized spatial behaviour, e.g. the itineraries of Mormon recruiters and the gathering of believers in certain places to show their publications to the passers-by. Some religions involve direct actions with a strong spatial content. Sacred places like Lourdes, Fátima, Częstochowa and more recently Međugorje derive their attraction from revelation. Like paths of pilgrimage (e.g. to Mecca, Rome and Santiago de Compostela, but increasingly even in Lutheran areas), they create great side effects of (secular) services that resemble those of ordinary tourism.

Religious acts may also change by imitation, introduction or innovation. In Swedish Lutheran tradition where somewhat paradoxically All Saint's Day was reintroduced in the 20th century, (mostly as a holiday for non-religious reasons), a tradition of lighting candles at the graves of family members during the holiday spread very quickly across the country and spilling over to the other Nordic countries (Rehnberg 1965).

*Symbols and communication:* Symbols, as pointed out by Karl W. Deutsch (1955, p. 38), cover a wide range of aspects including abstractions, pictorials, persons (heroes, saints), places, organizations and others. In the physical landscape religious symbols range from direct messages of denomination (e.g. places of worship, graveyards, shrines etc.) to more indirect messages such as flags or coats of arms of states with symbols of religion or even the indirect results of religious practices (vineyards, pig farms or the orientation of sacred buildings). Their messages range from fossilized markers of historical events to direct dichotomization of in-group-out-group. Symbols are often markers of domination of a territory or of the 'translation' of one domain into another, as at physical boundaries (Lundén, 2011a).

In some cases the religious symbolism is less visible, but even stronger if seen from a cultural perspective. In Pskov, one of Russia's border towns towards Estonia there is a recent, enormous statue of Aleksander, prince of Novgorod who was given the name Nevsky when in 1240 he defeated an army of Swedish crusaders at the River Neva. Two years later he won a battle against the German Order on the ice of Lake Peipus (in Russian Chudskoye Ozyoro, Lake of the 'Finns' i.e.strangers). Nevsky is a saint in the Russian Orthodoxy, and seen as the border guard of the Holy Religion. He was also depicted as a



hero defending the holy Russian soil against the Germanic Crusader invaders in Sergei Eisensteins's film from 1938.

The spatially uneven spread of Enlightenment and its reaction in culture nationalism resulted in different relations between state, religion and ethnicity depending on who defined the group; the group itself, the state of domicile or 'the ethnic homeland'. In the border area between southern Estonia and the Pechory/Petseri area in the Pskov region, Russia, lives a group called the Seto **Erreur ! Signet non défini.** They speak a Finno-Ugric dialect with strong influence from Russian, coloured by their Orthodox faith. During the inter-war period 1920-1940 Petseri belonged to Estonia. The Setos were accepted as a religious minority but ethnically a slightly different part of the Estonian people. After the annexation by the Soviet Union in 1940/1944 the boundary was moved west, most of the Seto were on the RSFSR side, and they were not regarded as a nationality. After 1991, Estonia has formally claimed its legal right to the Petseri area, and the Setos are depicted as an Estonian and/or Seto ethnic group in *de facto* Russia. Because of better living conditions in Estonia many young Seto people are leaving their local area crossing the boundary to Estonia where they have good possibilities to become citizens. The ethnic self-image of the Seto is weak; religion seems to play a more important role than language (Berg). The monastery of the border town Pechory now in Russia is seen as the centre and symbol of Seto identity (Kaiser & Nikofoorova, p. 929, Assmuth, 2011).

In former German East Prussia now Russian Kaliningrad protestant churches are decaying, reflecting Soviet atheism but also a nationalistic denial of a non-Russian heritage. Also in the former German areas taken over by Poland, some protestant churches were left in ruins after the war, many were converted into Catholic use, but in general German gravestones were demolished (Opilowska, 2010). In some cases, however, some stones have been found and put back as memories of the past.

If the Baltic area mainly reflects the juxtapositions of the aftermath of World War II, former Yugoslavia is a vivid example of a war of religious symbols, often visible in the landscape. In Vukovar, Croatia, which was severely destroyed by Serbian forces, a big Catholic cross has been built at the Danube riverside, facing Serbian territory. The Serbian cemetery in Vukovar is not attended to and partly destroyed. In Mostar, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, officially one town but ethnically divided between Croats and Bosniaks on the western (right) side of the Neretva river, Croats have built a giant Christian cross on the mountain southwest of the city, visible especially to the Bosniak (Muslim) side, officially to commemorate the Millennium. A new catholic church has a steeple higher than the minarets of mosques. In a poor country where in reality few people actively pursue their religion, this showing off has become a major way of spending money and marking the boundary zone between 'us and them' (Lundén, 2011 a).

While cult can be communicated through symbols and symbolic acts, *language* serves both as a symbol and a means of communication of religion. While the most frequent ascription of minority status is related to language, some groups use religion as a strong marker of ethnicity. In the Russian-Swedish borderland of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, religion – Lutheran or Orthodox - was usually a stronger marker of 'nationality' Swedish or Russian) than

language, but minority groups of Finno-Ugric speech and Orthodox religion were seen as possible cases of 're-conversion' into Lutheranism, while Russian speakers were regarded aliens within the Swedish realm (Katajala, 2006, 350 f.) In the case of Poland, the political subordination of Polish-speakers during the 'long 19<sup>th</sup> century' and during the Communist authoritarianism meant an association of 'Polishness' with the Catholic church (Davies, p. 300), in turn resulting in the 'ethnic delimitation' towards Protestant, Jewish Orthodox and Uniate (Greek Catholic) speakers of native Polish (Pasięka, 2012, 72-74). In Poland, ethnicity is strongly tied to religion, so that native speakers of Polish with evangelical protestant religions were seen and referred to as "Germans" (Kossert 2002, v.Wedel 2010: 31-32). There is thus a divide in religion, not only in denomination, but also in the social and nation-forming role of the church (Marody and Mandes, 2008: 10-12). In other cases, a religious practice deviating from the surroundings may have helped to preserve an ethnic-linguistic distinction, as in the cases of the Catholic Sorbs and the Orthodox Setu, perhaps also the Karaims of Lithuania (Csató, 2006). According to Walde, the separate linguistic development between the Catholic and Evangelic Sorbs can be explained by the different structures of the two churches. While the Evangelical church was a *Landeskirche*, a church of the realm, (and the rulers of the *Länder* always German-speaking), the Catholic Church was in its ultramontane version always multi-national. Since the germanisation policy carried out from the 17th century the near relation between the Evangelical Church and the state had a negative impact on the Sorbian linguistic area. In the Catholic Church the mother tongue was seen as a gift from God, and to abandon it would be a sin (Walde, 2006).

In the Lutheran tradition, where preaching and reading were important, the definition of what is a language became crucial. In the Swedish realm, the autochthonous language of the area was usually chosen for preaching. For Finnish, Estonian and Latvian and even Sámi, the language was strengthened through the translation of the Bible and other religious literature. In northern Germany, Bibles in the Low German language were produced already in 1524-34 but its use was soon turned out through the official political use of High German (Kloss, 1952, 69). Sorbian (see above) was regarded alien whereas in the Netherlands Dutch but not Frisian was regarded 'biblical' (Kloss, 1952; 63). In the Danish - Norwegian kingdom only Danish was used in printing, but eventually after Norwegian independence 1814 a movement grew towards linguistic purification mostly based on the peripheral and less 'Danish' dialects of Western Norway with strong links to religious awakening and teetotalism (Baldersheim & Fimreite 2005, 766, Hoel, 1996).

### **The interconnectedness of influencing factors**

Factors influencing the location of religious activities and artefacts obviously have strong interconnections. In his study of changes in religious practices (Rehnberg, 1965), ethnologist Mats Rehnberg found no single factor explaining the location of acceptance in Sweden or in Europe in general. With the more or less spontaneous introduction of light candles on graves in Lutheran areas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, several factors played a role. Contacts with Catholic and Orthodox traditions seem to have spurred individual initiatives (but not on a frontier of introduction, rather as a seemingly irrational dispersion, with the exception of certain areas of resistance). In Finland two factors seem to have been important for the introduction of the new custom: The graves of soldiers dead in battle ('hero graves'), and the resettlement of orthodox Karelian Finns over Finland after the annexation

in 1944 by the Soviet Union of Eastern Finland (Rehnberg, 1965, for the resettlement see Riikonen 2011:50-51). In Sweden, a short film about Christmas customs shot in winter at a church with an exceptional old tradition of grave candles was shown in parish houses etc. during the 1940's and might have spurred the growth. In two other introductions, the use of white dresses (instead of black ones) for the first communion, and placing Christmas trees on graveyards, Rehnberg finds similarities with the dispersed pattern of the candle tradition. In all three, there is a tendency of urban introduction, but with rural areas around Stockholm and middle Sweden (north of the capital), while especially the west coast area with its austere *Schartauan* traditions is a laggard (Rehnberg, 1965, 268-273). This area later became one of the strongholds in the resistance towards female clergy.

A traditional spatial difference in the acceptance of religious change is also found in Franzén's study (2004) of the replacement of church buildings and the changes in parish territories during the 19<sup>th</sup> century state church in Southern Sweden in two areas, one in the forest area of Småland where demographic growth was extremely strong after the introduction of vaccination and other medical innovations (*technique*), while in the area south of Stockholm, large estates with a limited number of peasants kept the population stagnant. In this case the usually 'traditional' south-western areas were more prone to change as bishops put more emphasis on the building of new larger churches than the more modernizing eastern area near Stockholm, where estate owners acted as guardians of old churches with their family sepulchres. The explanation is thus found in *nature, demography and land ownership* (i.e. regulation). Even a '*market principle*' can be found as influencing the location of parish administration and new churches near the new population centres (Franzén, 2004).

### **Spatial factors in religion: conclusions.**

In his concluding chapter, *Religion and human geography*, Roger W. Stump discusses the declining interest within human geography since the 1960 as a result of a general idea among social scientist that due to secularization, religion was not a viable field of study. This conclusion may be true, but it does not explain why religion, or any other part of culture, should not be interesting from a spatial point of view.

The problem with the geography of religion is rather that its object takes many forms, ranging from fossilized, formerly sacred artefacts to the spatial behaviour of vendors of The War Cry or of groups of Hare Krishna. There is no simple locational theory for this multitude of forms and functions. However, the citations at the outset indicate a definition of geography as a science studying the earth as a surface of differing opportunities where certain locations and spatial forms under certain time conditions match with the requirements and implementation abilities of a specific interest. Religion then is just one competitor out of many in the fight for a locational existence. This in turn means that the geography of religion must learn both from the intrinsic rules of religion and from the competing factors beyond the border of faith and cult.

Religion has a spatial dimension, not only vertical but also horizontal.

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