

Ressurecting Russia's Church

Student Name

Institution

Date

### Introduction

Religion, as that practice of observing the sacred rituals, is a great impulse for both coherence as well as meaning. Religion has been known to leave imprints on the landscape both through culture as well as lifestyle, with the religious structures like the worshiping places dominating various landscapes. Religious activities have often had great impacts not only on the environment but also other areas of geography too. As a result therefore, the relationship between religion and geography has drawn much interest from various geographical researchers from all over the world. Due to this, the study of the geography of religion has widely expanded to include various religio-geographic aspects in the world. The country that has been mostly preferred by many researchers for the study on geography of religion is Russia. This is the largest country in the world having an area totaling 17,075,200 sq km hence sharing boundaries with many countries. It is located on the north eastern part of Europe and the northern part of Asia. Moscow, the capital city, is situated at the eastern part of Russia.

The country has a strong religious background and offers a rich history of the way religion greatly impacts on the development of landscapes, infrastructure, demography conservation, and the general environment. The Russian Orthodox Church, the dominant church in Russia, is among the major churches whose development have been deeply linked to geographical transformations around the globe. As such therefore, it is crucial to consider the ways in which religion, the environmental influence and the development of churches in Russia, have impacted on the geography of regions.

Russia.

### The region of Murom

#### Religion and its geographical impacts in Russia, mostly Murom

The impacts of the church activities on the infrastructure are always quite evident as can be seen in the case of the Murom part of Russia. It should be considered that the churches in Murom were terribly ruined by the government during the communist rule, although after the down fall of the communist rule, the Russians were only very happy to embrace the changes that would come with the new Russia as they would be glad to reclaim what was part of their lifestyle. During the communist regime, the buildings that the church had constructed for their worship had been taken away and turned into stores, factories, and warehouses.

After the collapse of the communist rule, the landscape changed greatly for the better as the church reclaimed back the structures that were taken away from it and left dilapidated by the government, thereby rebuilding and turning them into structures that are functional and descent. Such structures that the church built out of this include the schools and worship places. The monument of Christ the Savior cathedral which was destroyed by the orders from Stalin (in 1931) was also rebuilt on the Moscow river bank. Hence as can be seen, the efforts of the church have been fruitful in rehabilitating the infrastructures that the government once wasted, apart from restructuring Russia. The impact of the church in the infrastructure of Murom is so profound in that the churches as well as the monasteries situated on the high bluff over the river have a dramatic change since they are all shining and fully restored. This is in comparison to the treacherous potholes and temporary bridges that the government ought to have permanently solved but have not been able to (Kong, 1990).

Another geographical aspect of religion is the restructuring of the Spassky Monastery. Among the oldest and greatest monasteries in Russia is the Spassky Monastery. Until 1955, this monastery was utilized by the soldiers as their barracks, because it was located in a strategic location suitable for the barracks. It was left in a dilapidated condition. Due to its dilapidated condition, it had to be rehabilitated. As such, Father Kirill Epifanov, a priest who was then very dynamic, was appointed by the orthodox church of Russia to revive the religious centre. The priest built a bakery place for supplying the monks with food. After finding enough labour and the required funding, the churches were rebuilt and the grounds restored by the priest, leaving the place completely stunning. The place became a place of baking

bread as well as a major historic site as pilgrims came in great numbers to admire this medieval splendor. This is just another way in which the effort of the church has reinvented the worth of a wasted space and used that wisely (Schmemmann, 2009).

#### Distribution and dynamics

The religious distribution is always approached right from the global level to the local level. The religions that are stronger in various parts of the globe often receive quite a number of visitors apart from being widespread. The Orthodox faith was widespread across many countries in Europe. The faith had expanded across Europe and became recognized in almost every part of Europe as a major religion.

Russia is dominated with Russian Orthodox Church. However, this faith was borrowed from Greece and implemented in Russia while there was need for religion in Russia. This was to counteract the paganism that was existing in the country by then. As a result a majority of people have been known to worship in the orthodox churches, as in the case of Murom. This can be seen in the case of the revived worship places in Murom that the pilgrims now attend in great numbers to view. Other visitors and faithful have also been known to visit Murom in order to accomplish their religious obligations. There are very frequent visitors from other countries who come to the same place to worship in the churches. The Resurrection of churches in Murom have as well led to the spatial distribution of the churches and the population as a great number of faithful people move both to and from Murom and other countries to accomplish their religious activities. An instance of this is in consideration of the fact that people moved out of Murom when the government was very rigid to the church, in addition to interfering with its activities. The same multitudes of faithfuls were able to come back to Murom and continue with their religious activities after the downfall of the communist regime since the new government acknowledged and appreciated the role of the church (Park, 1994).

The geographical location of places have been known to greatly determine the kind of religions to be adopted by the people, in the case of Russia, this was part of Europe and as a result had to partake in the religion that is most profound in Europe. Majority of places in Europe have Christianity as their dominant religion. However, this is contrary to the countries in the Middle East who use Islam and the Asian continent that use Buddhism as their religion. Hence, as can be seen, a major factor that cannot be ignored in the movement of religious people is accessibility of the place. Most of the time accessibility is always determined by the geographical conditions prevailing in a particular place. Geographical features, geographical conditions, accessibility of the place, as well as availability of resources, all matter in the way a particular religion is distributed around the world. All these factors are the reason as to why Father Kirill had gone for the pilgrimage at the Eastern Orthodox monasteries, which is located at the Mount Athos part of Greece. This is still the reason as to why the orthodox faith was established in Russia (Eade, 1991).

#### Sacred places and spaces

The sacred places as well as the sacred spaces in Murom have often influence the movement pattern of individuals. In a number of religions, individuals are always encouraged to pay a visit to the sacred places, hence leading to pilgrimage. The constant movement of a multitude of pilgrims both to the sacred sites in Murom and from the same sacred sites is always a very unique religious dynamic that often has great impacts on both the environment and the local economy (Gray, 2007).

#### Conclusion

Considering Religion and geography, there are quite a number of interesting and valuable contact points in the two disciplines. The spatial variations found in religions both in and outside countries, as well as the global patterns, are quite interesting since they illustrate the cultural diversity, as is the cases with Russia. These often reflect the interplay in various distinct characters. Religious movements in Murom as well reveal great properties of persistence in people, their tolerance, as well as their motivation. This interest, however, extends above individuals and their system of beliefs since it encompasses sacred spaces as well as sacred locations in Russia, apart from considering the way religious practices with spatial expressions are fuelled by religious beliefs. For instance pilgrimage as well as their visits to the sacred places in Russia. Religion is a very important factor in the distribution of populations across the globe, a major force in transforming the environmental conditions where people live in, and a great determinant of the way people live in a society. Russia, as a country based on the Orthodox faith, has witnessed an influx of visitors and pilgrims from around the globe, the faithful who come to see the sacred and ancient places that were once ruined.

#### Reference

- Schmemmann, S. (2009). Resurrecting Russia's Church: the search for a new, post-soviet identity. *National Geographic*. (4) 215:112-137.
- Park, C. (1994). *Sacred Worlds: an introduction to Geography and Religion*. London: Routledge.

Eade, J. (1991). *Contesting the sacred*. London: Routledge.

Kong, L. (1990). Geography and religion; trends and prospects. *Progress in Human Geography* (14)350-385.

Gray, M. (2007). *Sacred Earth: Places of Peace and Power*. New York: Sterling

Martin Gray (Author) › [Visit Amazon's Martin Gray Page](#)

Find all the books, read about the author, and more.

See search results for this author

Are you an author? [Learn about Author Central](#)

Bottom of Form