

FIGURE 4-1 Vietnamese folk songs. Singers perform Quan Ho folk songs as part of the annual Lim Festival.

culture and in turn constructs landscapes (what geographers call "built environments") that modify nature in distinctive ways.

Geographers observe that popular culture has a more widespread distribution than folk culture. The reason *why* the distributions are different is interaction, or lack of it. A group develops distinctive customs from experiencing local social and physical conditions in a *place* that is isolated from other groups.

Even groups living in proximity may generate a variety of folk customs in a limited geographic area, because of limited communication. Landscapes dominated by a collection of folk customs change relatively little over time. In contrast, popular culture is based on rapid simultaneous global *connections* through communications systems, transportation networks, and other modern technology. Rapid diffusion facilitates frequent changes in popular customs. Thus, folk culture is more likely to vary from place to place at a given time, whereas popular culture is more likely to vary from time to time at a given place.

In Earth's *globalization*, popular culture is becoming more dominant, threatening the survival of unique folk cultures. These folk customs—along with language, religion, and ethnicity—provide a unique identity to each group of people who occupy a specific *region* of Earth's surface. The disappearance of local folk customs reduces *local diversity* in the world and the intellectual stimulation that arises from differences in backgrounds.

The dominance of popular culture can also threaten the quality of the environment. Folk culture derived from local natural elements may be more sensitive to the protection and enhancement of the environment. Popular culture is less likely to reflect the diversity of local physical conditions and is more likely to modify the environment in accordance with global values.

Where Do Folk and Popular Cultures Originate and Diffuse?

- Origin of Folk and Popular Cultures
- Diffusion of Folk and Popular Cultures

Each social custom has a unique spatial distribution, but in general, distribution is more extensive for popular culture than for folk culture. Two basic factors help explain the spatial differences between popular and folk cultures—the process of origin and the pattern of diffusion.

Origin of Folk and Popular Cultures

A social custom originates at a hearth, a center of innovation. Folk customs often have anonymous hearths, originating from anonymous sources, at unknown dates, through unidentified originators. They may also have multiple hearths, originating independently in isolated locations.

In contrast to folk customs, popular culture is most often a product of MDCs, especially in North America, Western Europe, and Japan. Popular music and fast food are good examples. They arise from a combination of advances in industrial technology and increased leisure time. Industrial technology permits the uniform reproduction of objects in large quantities (CDs, T-shirts, pizzas). Many of these objects help people enjoy

leisure time, which has increased as a result of the widespread change for the labor force from predominantly agricultural work to predominantly service and manufacturing jobs.

Origin of Folk Music

Music exemplifies the differences in the origins of folk and popular culture. Folk songs tell a story or convey information about daily activities such as farming, life-cycle events (birth, death, and marriage), or mysterious events such as storms and earthquakes.

In Vietnam, where most people are subsistence farmers, information about agricultural technology is conveyed through folk songs. For example, the following folk song provides advice about the difference between seeds planted in summer and seeds planted in winter:

Ma chiêm ba tháng không già Ma mùa tháng rươi ắt la'không non¹

This song can be translated as follows:

While seedlings for the summer crop are not old when they are three months of age,

Seedlings for the winter crop are certainly not young when they are one-and-a-half months old.

The song hardly sounds lyrical to a Western ear. But when English-language folk songs appear in cold print, similar themes emerge, even if the specific information conveyed about the environment differs.

makers
guitar

acoustic

springsteen

spring

FIGURE 4-2 Popular music "map." This "map," prepared by Marc Smith and Andrew Fiore, shows the hierarchy of popularity of artists and types of music as reflected in the rec.music newsgroup (accessed at http://groups.google.com/group/rec.music.info).

According to a Chinese legend, music was invented in 2697 BC when the Emperor Huang Ti sent Ling Lun to cut bamboo poles that would produce a sound matching the call of the phoenix bird. In reality, folk songs are usually composed anonymously and transmitted orally. A song may be modified from one generation to the next as conditions change, but the content is most often derived from events in daily life that are familiar to the majority of the people.

Origin of Popular Music

In contrast to folk music, popular music is written by specific individuals for the purpose of being sold to a large number of people. It displays a high degree of technical skill and is frequently capable of being performed only in a studio with electronic equipment.

Popular music as we know it today originated around 1900. At that time, the main popular musical entertainment in the United States and Western Europe was the variety show, called the *music hall* in the United Kingdom and *vaudeville* in the United States. To provide songs for music halls and vaudeville, a music industry was developed in a district of New York that became known as Tin Pan Alley.

Tin Pan Alley was located along 28th Street between Fifth Avenue and Sixth Avenue (now Avenue of the Americas). It later moved uptown to Broadway and 32nd Street and then again along Broadway between 42nd and 50th streets. The district was home to songwriters, music publishers, orchestrators, and arrangers. The name Tin Pan Alley derived from the sound of pianos being furiously pounded by people called song pluggers, who were

demonstrating tunes to publishers. Companies in Tin Pan Alley originally tried to sell as many printed songsheets as possible, although sales of recordings ultimately became the most important measure of success. After World War II, Tin Pan Alley disappeared as recorded music became more important than printed songsheets.

The diffusion of American popular music worldwide began in earnest during World War II, when the Armed Forces Radio Network broadcast music to American soldiers and to citizens of countries where American forces were stationed or fighting. English became the international language for popular music. Today, popular musicians in Japan, Poland, Russia, and other countries often write and perform in English, even though few people in their audiences understand the language (Figure 4-2).

Hip-hop is a more recent form of popular music that also originated in New York (Figure 4-3). Whereas the music industry of Tin Pan Alley originated in Manhattan office buildings, hip-hop originated in the late 1970s in the South Bronx, a neighborhood predominantly

¹From John Blacking and Joann W. Kealiinohomoku, eds., The Performing Arts: Music and Dance (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 144. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

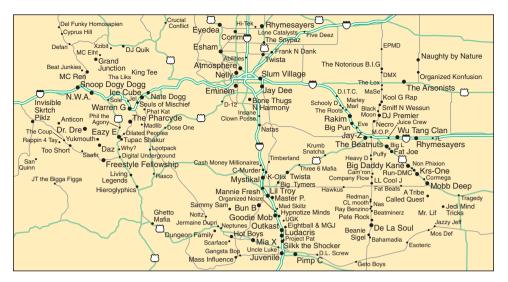


FIGURE 4-3 Hip-hop map. The fictional "map" attempts to place prominent hip-hop performers in proximity to similar performers as well as in the region of the country (Northeast, South, Midwest, West, inner city, suburbs) where they performed or drew inspiration.

populated by low-income African American and Puerto Rican people (a changeover from its predominant population of middle-class white people of European origin). Rappers in other low-income New York City neighborhoods of Queens, Brooklyn, and Harlem adopted the style with local twists—"thug" rap in Queens and clever lines in Brooklyn. Hip-hop remained predominantly a New York phenomenon until the late 1980s, when it spread to Oakland and Atlanta and then to other large cities in the South, Midwest, and West.

Hip-hop demonstrates well the interplay between globalization and local diversity that is a prominent theme of this book. On the one hand, hip-hop is a return to a very local form of music expression rather than a form that is studio manufactured. Lyrics make local references and represent a distinctive hometown scene. The KRS-One song "The Bridge Is Over," for example, was a slam by a South Bronx rapper against Queens (located on the other side of the bridge from the Bronx). At the same time, hip-hop has diffused rapidly around the world through instruments of globalization: The music is broadcast online and sold through Web marketing. Artists are expressing a sense of a specific place across the boundless space of the Internet.

Diffusion of Folk and Popular Cultures

The broadcasting of American popular music on Armed Forces Radio during the 1940s and online today illustrates the difference in diffusion of folk and popular cultures. The spread of popular culture typically follows the process of hierarchical diffusion from hearths or nodes of innovation.

In the United States, prominent nodes of innovation for popular culture include Hollywood, California, for the film industry and Madison Avenue in New York City for advertising agencies. Popular culture diffuses rapidly and extensively through the use of modern communications and transportation.

In contrast, folk culture is transmitted from one location to another more slowly and on a smaller scale, primarily through migration rather than electronic communication. One reason why hip-hop music is classified as popular rather than folk music is that it diffuses primarily through electronics. In contrast, the spread of folk culture occurs through relocation diffusion, the spread of a characteristic through migration.

The Amish: Relocation Diffusion of Folk Culture

Amish customs illustrate how relocation diffusion distributes folk culture. Although the Amish number only about one-quarter million, their folk culture remains visible on the landscape in at least 19 states (Figure 4-4). Shunning mechani-

cal and electrical power, the Amish still travel by horse and buggy and continue to use hand tools for farming. The Amish have distinctive clothing, farming, religious practices, and other customs.

The distribution of Amish folk culture across a major portion of the U.S. landscape is explained by examining the diffusion of their culture through migration. In the 1600s, a Swiss Mennonite bishop named Jakob Ammann gathered a group of followers who became known as the Amish. The Amish originated in Bern, Switzerland; Alsace in northeastern France; and the Palatinate region of southwestern Germany. They migrated to other portions of northwestern Europe in the 1700s, primarily for religious freedom. In Europe, the Amish did not develop distinctive language, clothing, or farming practices and gradually merged with various Mennonite church groups.

Several hundred Amish families migrated to North America in two waves. The first group, primarily from Bern and the Palatinate, settled in Pennsylvania in the early 1700s, enticed by William Penn's offer of low-priced land. Because of lower land prices, the second group, from Alsace, settled in Ohio, Illinois, and Iowa in the United States and Ontario, Canada, in the early 1800s. From these core areas, groups of Amish migrated to other locations where inexpensive land was available.

Living in rural and frontier settlements relatively isolated from other groups, Amish communities retained their traditional customs, even as other European immigrants to the United States adopted new ones. We can observe Amish customs on the landscape in such diverse areas as southeastern Pennsylvania, northeastern Ohio, and east-central Iowa. These communities are relatively isolated from each other but share cultural traditions distinct from those of other Americans.

Amish folk culture continues to diffuse slowly through interregional migration within the United States. In recent years, a number of Amish families have sold their farms in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania—the oldest and at one time largest Amish community in the United States—and migrated to Christian and Todd counties in southwestern Kentucky. According to Amish tradition, every son is given a farm when he is an adult,

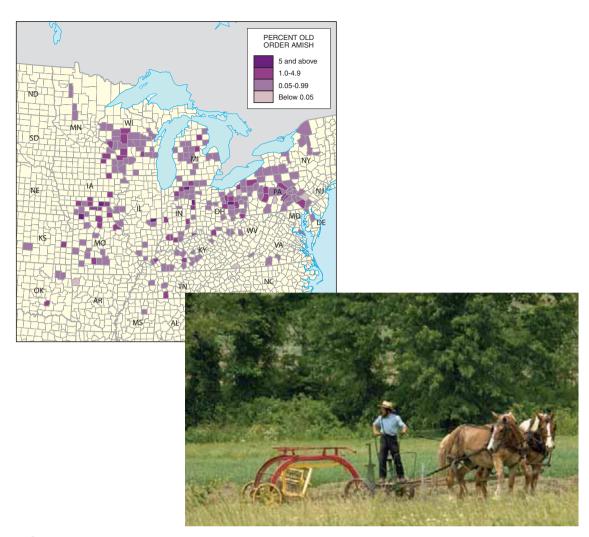


FIGURE 4-4 Distribution of Amish. Amish settlements are distributed throughout the northeastern United States. Amish farmers minimize the use of mechanical devices.

but land suitable for farming is expensive and hard to find in Lancaster County because of its proximity to growing metropolitan areas. With the average price of farmland in southwestern Kentucky less than one-fifth that in Lancaster County, an Amish family can sell its farm in Pennsylvania and acquire enough land in Kentucky to provide adequate farmland for all their sons. Amish families are also migrating from Lancaster County to escape the influx of tourists who come from the nearby metropolitan areas to gawk at the distinctive folk culture.

Sports: Hierarchical Diffusion of Popular Culture

In contrast with the diffusion of folk customs, organized sports provide examples of how popular culture is diffused. Many sports originated as isolated folk customs and were diffused like other folk culture, through the migration of individuals. The contemporary diffusion of organized sports, however, displays the characteristics of popular culture.

FOLK CULTURE ORIGIN OF SOCCER. Soccer (called *football* outside North America) is the world's most popular sport. Its origin is obscure. The earliest documented contest

took place in England in the eleventh century. According to football historians, after the Danish invasion of England between 1018 and 1042, workers excavating a building site encountered a Danish soldier's head, which they began to kick. "Kick the Dane's head" was imitated by boys, one of whom got the idea of using an inflated cow bladder.

Early football games resembled mob scenes. A large number of people from two villages would gather to kick the ball. The winning side was the one that kicked the ball into the center of the rival village. In the twelfth century, the game—by then commonly called football-was confined to smaller vacant areas, and the rules became standardized. Because football disrupted village life, King Henry II banned the game from England in the late twelfth century. It was not legalized again until 1603 by King James I. At this point, football was an English folk custom rather than a global popular custom.

GLOBALIZATION OF SOCCER. The transformation of football from an English folk custom to global popular culture began in the 1800s. Football and other recreation clubs were founded in Britain, frequently by churches, to provide factory workers with organized recreation during leisure hours. Sport became a subject that was taught in school.

Increasing leisure time permitted people not only to view sporting events but also to participate in them. With higher incomes, spectators paid to see first-class events. To meet public demand, football clubs began to hire professional players. Several British football clubs formed an association in 1863 to standardize the rules and to organize professional leagues. Organization of the sport into a formal structure in Great Britain marks the transition of football from folk to popular culture.

The word *soccer* originated after 1863, when supporters of the game formed the Football Association. Association was shortened to assoc, which ultimately became twisted around into the word soccer. The terms soccer and association football also helped to distinguish the game from rugby football, which permits both kicking and carrying of the ball. Rugby originated in 1823, when



FIGURE 4-5 Iroquois lacrosse. Iroquois Nationals reached the finals of the 2007 World Indoor Lacrosse Championships, but lost to Canada in overtime. Canada forced overtime when Gavin Prout, wearing number 9, scored the tying goal with 3 seconds to play.

a football player at Rugby School (in Rugby, England) picked up the ball and ran with it.

Beginning in the late 1800s, the British exported association football around the world, first to continental Europe and then to other countries. Football was first played in continental Europe in the late 1870s by Dutch students who had been in Britain. The game was diffused to other countries through contact with English players. For example, football went to Spain via English engineers working in Bilbao in 1893 and was quickly adopted by local miners. British citizens further diffused the game throughout the worldwide British Empire. In the twentieth century, soccer, like other sports, was further diffused by new communication systems, especially radio and television.

SPORTS IN POPULAR CULTURE. Each country has its own preferred sports. Cricket is popular primarily in Britain and former British colonies. Ice hockey prevails, logically, in colder climates, especially in Canada, Northern Europe, and Russia. The most popular sports in China are martial arts, known as *wushu*, including archery, fencing, wrestling, and boxing. Baseball, once confined to North America, became popular in Japan after it was introduced by American soldiers who occupied the country after World War II.

Lacrosse has fostered cultural identity among the Iroquois Confederation of Six Nations (Cayugas, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras) who live in the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada (Figure 4-5). As early as 1636, European explorers observed the Iroquois playing lacrosse, known in their language as *guhchigwaha*, which means "bump hips." European colonists in Canada picked up the game from the Iroquois and diffused it to a handful of U.S. communities, especially in Maryland, upstate New York, and Long Island. The name *lacrosse* derived from the French words *la crosse*, for a bishop's crosier or staff,

which has a similar shape to the lacrosse stick.

In recent years, the Federation of International Lacrosse has invited the Iroquois National team to participate in world championships, along with teams from the United States, Canada, and other countries. Although the Iroquois have not won, they have had the satisfaction of hearing their national anthem played and seeing their flag fly alongside those of the other participants.

Despite the diversity in distribution of sports across Earth's surface and the anonymous origin of some games, organized spectator sports today are part of popular culture. The common element in professional sports is the willingness of people throughout the world to pay for the privilege of viewing, in person or on TV, events played by professional athletes.

Why Is Folk Culture Clustered?

- Influence of the Physical Environment
- **Isolation Promotes Cultural Diversity**

Folk culture typically has unknown or multiple origins among groups living in relative isolation. Folk culture diffuses slowly to other locations through the process of migration. A combination of physical and cultural factors influences the distinctive distributions of folk culture.

Influence of the Physical Environment

Recall from Chapter 1 that a century ago environmental determinists theorized how processes in the environment caused social customs. Most contemporary geographers reject environmental determinism. Nonetheless, the physical environment does influence human actions, especially in folk culture.

Folk societies are particularly responsive to the environment because of their limited technology and the prevailing agricultural economy. People living in folk cultures are likely to be farmers growing their own food, using hand tools and animal power.

Customs such as provision of food, clothing, and shelter are clearly influenced by the prevailing climate, soil, and vegetation. With regard to clothing, for example, residents of arctic climates may wear fur-lined boots, which protect against the cold, and snowshoes, with which to walk on soft, deep snow