



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.

KEY ISSUE 1

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

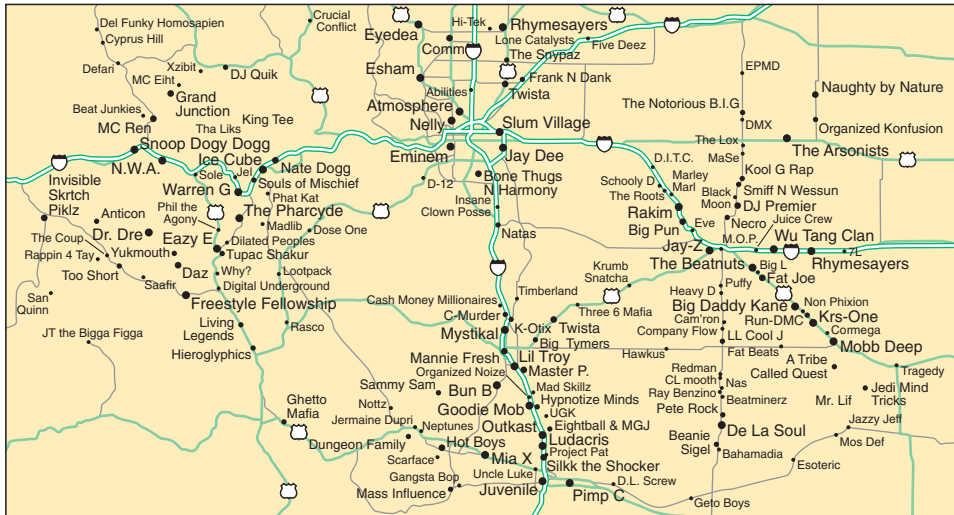


FIGURE 4-3 Hip-hop map. The fictional “map” attempts to place prominent hip-hop performers in proximity to similar performers as well as in the region of the country (Northeast, South, Midwest, West, inner city, suburbs) where they performed or drew inspiration.

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 mechanical

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 inter-regional 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,

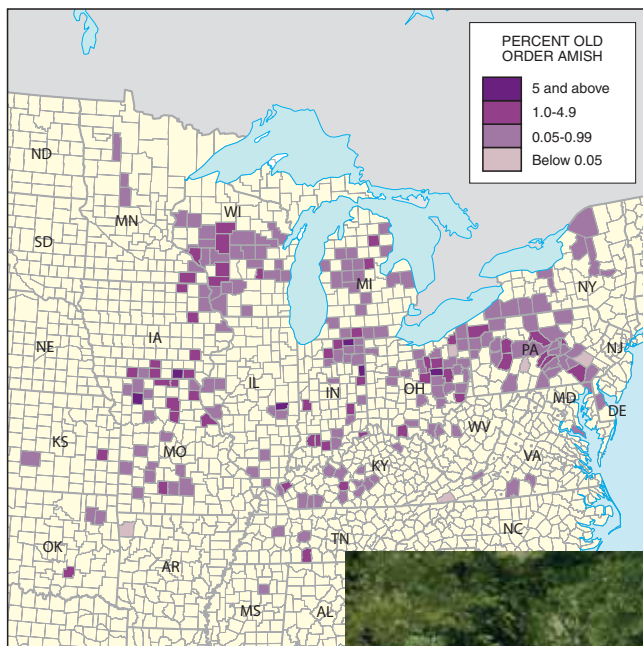


FIGURE 4-4 Distribution of Amish. Amish settlements are distributed throughout the northeastern United States. Amish farmers minimize the use of mechanical devices.

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 north-eastern 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.

KEY ISSUE 2

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