



**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

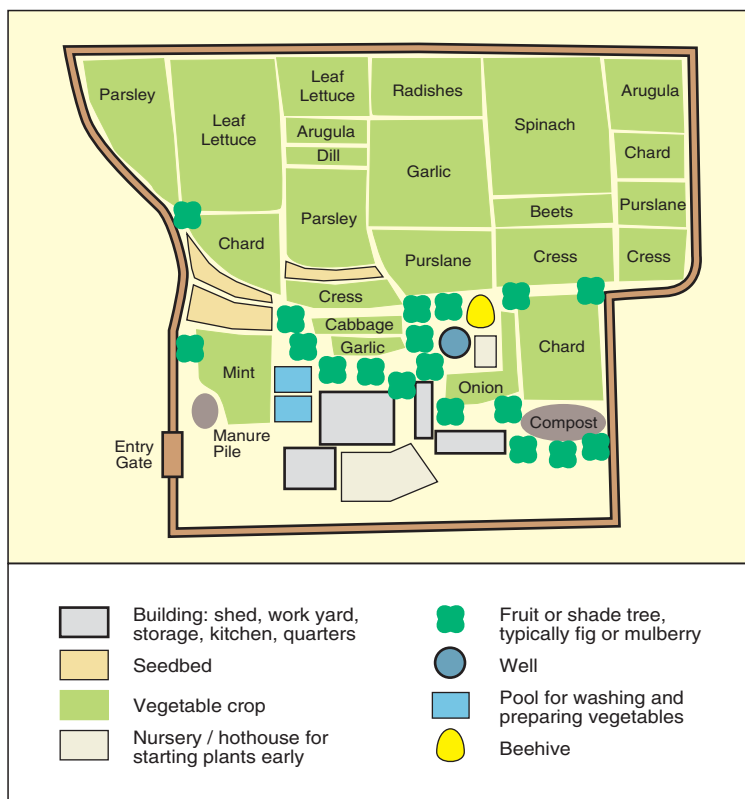
without sinking in. People living in warm and humid climates may not need any footwear if heavy rainfall and time spent in water discourage such use. The custom in the Netherlands of wearing wooden shoes may appear quaint, but it actually derives from environmental conditions. Dutch farmers wear the wooden shoes, which are waterproof, as they work in fields that often are extremely wet because much of the Netherlands is below sea level.

Yet folk culture may ignore the environment. Not all arctic residents wear snowshoes, nor do all people in wet temperate climates wear wooden shoes. Geographers observe that broad differences in folk culture arise in part from physical conditions and that these conditions produce varied customs.

More than clothing, the other two material necessities of daily life—food and shelter—demonstrate the influence of the environment on the development of unique folk culture. Different folk societies prefer different foods and styles of house construction.

## Food Preferences and the Environment

Folk food habits are embedded especially strongly in the environment. Humans eat mostly plants and animals—living things that spring from the soil and water of a region. Inhabitants of a region must consider the soil, climate, terrain, vegetation, and other characteristics of the environment in deciding to produce particular foods.



**FIGURE 4-6** Istanbul vegetable garden. Geographer Paul Kaldjian sketched a typical bostan, a traditional vegetable garden in the center of Istanbul, Turkey. Bostans provide residents of the large city of Istanbul with a source of fresh vegetables.

Bostans, which are small gardens inside Istanbul, Turkey, have been supplying the city with fresh produce for hundreds of years (Figure 4-6). According to geographer Paul Kaldjian, Istanbul has around 1,000 bostans, run primarily by immigrants from Cide, a rural village in Turkey's Kastamonu province. Bostan farmers are able to maximize yields from their small plots of land (typically 1 hectare) through what Kaldjian calls clever and efficient manipulation of space, season, and resources. Fifteen to twenty different types of vegetables are planted at different times of the year, and the choice is varied from year to year, in order to reduce the risk of damage from poor weather. Most of the work is done by older men, who prepare beds for planting, sow, irrigate, and operate motorized equipment, according to Kaldjian. Women weed, and both men and women harvest.

People adapt their food preferences to conditions in the environment. In Asia, rice is grown in milder, moister regions; wheat thrives in colder, drier regions. In Europe, traditional preferences for quick-frying foods in Italy resulted in part from fuel shortages. In Northern Europe, an abundant wood supply encouraged the slow stewing and roasting of foods over fires, which also provided home heat in the colder climate.

Soybeans, an excellent source of protein, are widely grown in Asia. In the raw state they are toxic and indigestible. Lengthy cooking renders them edible, but fuel is scarce in Asia. Asians have adapted to this environmental challenge by deriving foods from soybeans that do not require extensive cooking. These include bean sprouts (germinated seeds), soy sauce (fermented soybeans), and bean curd (steamed soybeans).

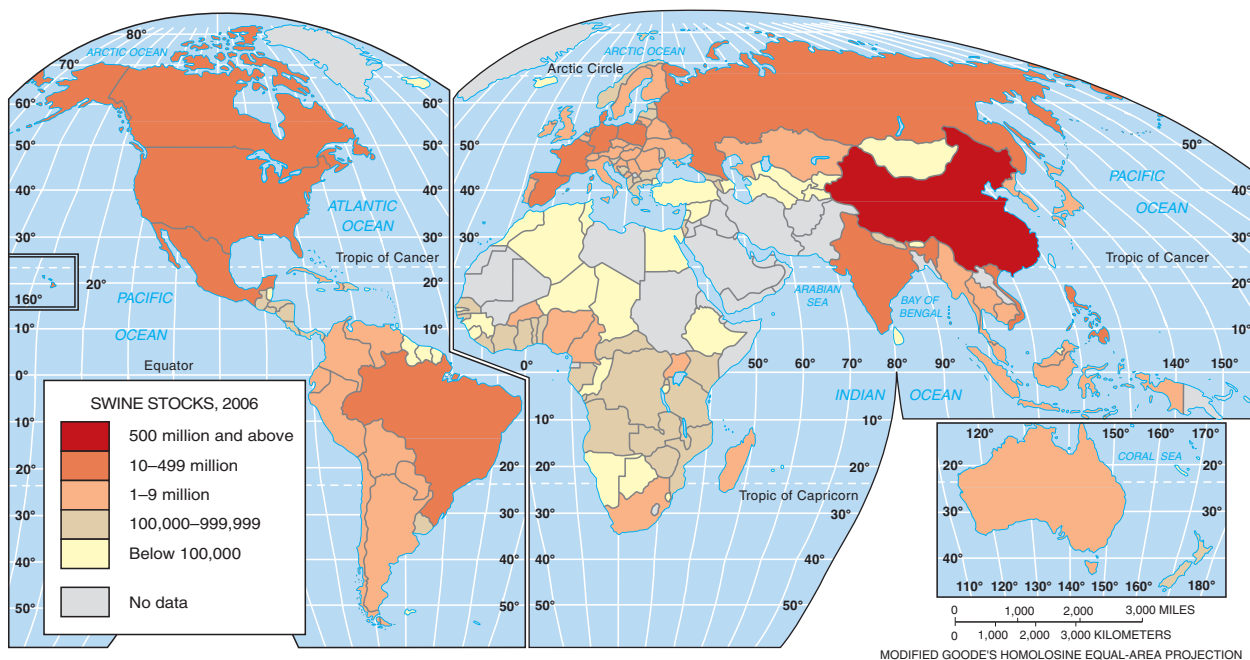
According to many folk customs, everything in nature carries a signature, or distinctive characteristic, based on its appearance and natural properties. Consequently, people may desire or avoid certain foods in response to perceived beneficial or harmful natural traits.

People refuse to eat particular plants or animals that are thought to embody negative forces in the environment. Such a restriction on behavior imposed by social custom is a **taboo**. Other social customs, such as sexual practices, carry prohibitions, but taboos are especially strong in the area of food. Some folk cultures may establish food taboos because of concern for the natural environment. These taboos may help to protect endangered animals or to conserve scarce natural resources. To preserve scarce animal species, only a few high-ranking people in some tropical regions are permitted to hunt, whereas the majority cultivate crops.

Relatively well-known taboos against consumption of certain foods can be found in the Bible. The ancient Hebrews were prohibited from eating a wide variety of foods, including animals that do not chew their cud or that have cloven feet and fish lacking fins or scales (Figure 4-7). These taboos arose partially from concern for the environment by the Hebrews, who lived as pastoral nomads in lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean. The pig, for example, is prohibited in part because it is more suited to sedentary farming than pastoral nomadism and in part because its meat spoils relatively quickly in hot climates, such as the Mediterranean. These biblical taboos were developed through oral tradition and by rabbis into the kosher laws observed today by some Jews.



**FIGURE 4-7** Kasher McDonald's. The restaurant is located in Tel Aviv, Israel, to serve Jews who keep the kosher dietary laws. The sign says "McDonald's" in Hebrew.



**FIGURE 4-8** Swine stock. The number of swine produced in different parts of the world is influenced to a considerable extent by religious taboos against consuming pork. Swine are scarce in predominantly Muslim regions, such as northern Africa and southwestern Asia. China has more than one-half of the world's swine stock.

Similarly, Muslims embrace the taboo against pork, because pigs are unsuited for the dry lands of the Arabian Peninsula (Figure 4-8). Pigs would compete with humans for food and water without offering compensating benefits, such as being able to pull a plow, carry loads, or provide milk and wool. Widespread raising of pigs would be an ecological disaster in Islam's hearth.

Hindu taboos against consuming cows can also be partly explained by environmental reasons. Cows are the source of

oxen (castrated male bovine), the traditional choice for pulling plows as well as carts. A large supply of oxen must be maintained in India because every field has to be plowed at approximately the same time—when the monsoon rains arrive. Religious sanctions have kept India's cow population large as a form of insurance against the loss of oxen and increasing population.

But the taboo against consumption of meat among many people, including Muslims, Hindus, and Jews, cannot be

explained primarily by environmental factors. Social values must influence the choice of diet, because people in similar climates and with similar levels of income consume different foods. The biblical food taboos were established in part to set the Hebrew people apart from others. That Christians ignore the biblical food injunctions reflects their desire to distinguish themselves from Jews. Furthermore, as a universalizing religion, Christianity was less tied to taboos that originated in the Middle East (see Chapter 6).

The contribution of a location's distinctive physical features to the way food tastes is known by the French term **terroir**. The word comes from the same root as *terre* (French word for land or earth), but *terroir* does not translate precisely into English; it has a similar meaning to the English expressions "grounded" or "sense of place." *Terroir* is the sum of the effects of the local environment on a particular food item. The term is frequently used to refer to the combination of soil, climate, and other physical features that contribute to the distinctive taste of a wine.

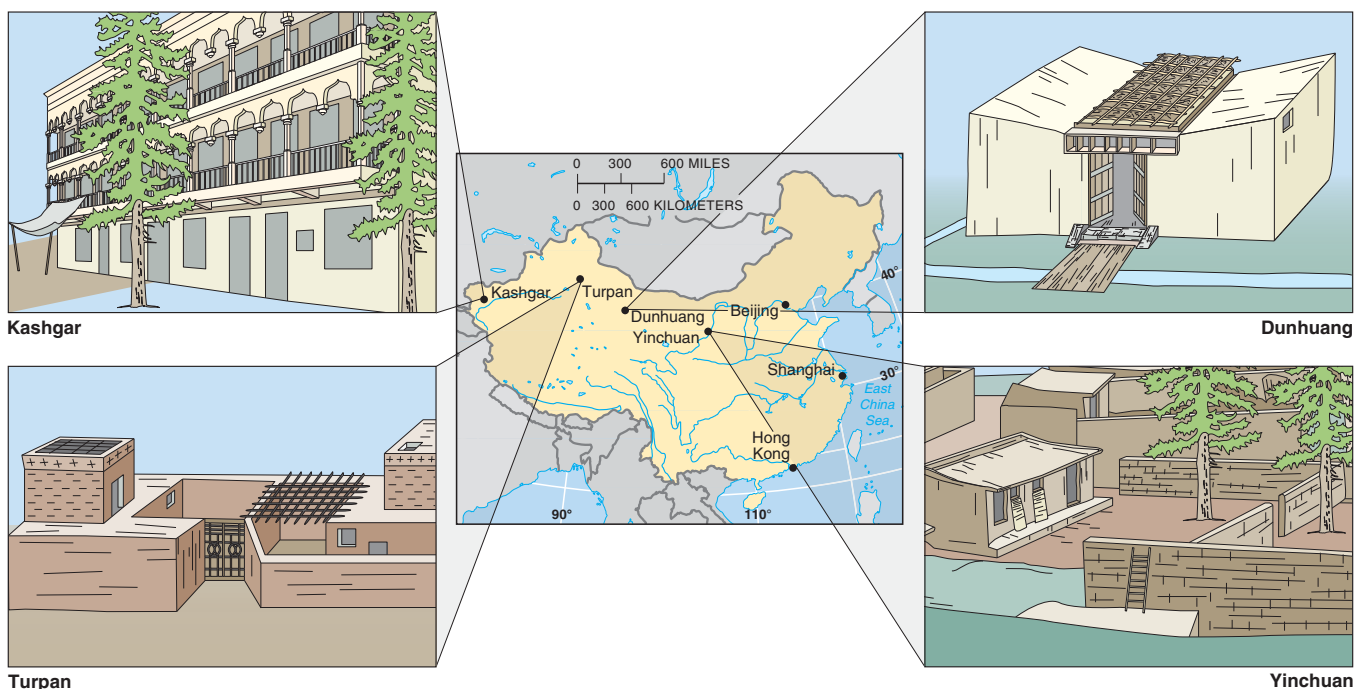
## Folk Housing and the Environment

French geographer Jean Brunhes, a major contributor to the cultural landscape tradition, views the house as being among the essential facts of human geography. It is a product of both

cultural tradition and natural conditions. American cultural geographer Fred Kniffen considered the house to be a good reflection of cultural heritage, current fashion, functional needs, and the impact of environment.

The type of building materials used to construct folk houses is influenced partly by the resources available in the environment. The two most common building materials in the world are wood and brick; stone, grass, sod, and skins are also used. If available, wood is generally preferred for house construction because it is easy to build with it. In the past, pioneers who settled in forested regions built log cabins for themselves. In hot, dry climates—such as the U.S. Southwest, Mexico, northern China, and parts of the Middle East—bricks are made by baking wet mud in the sun. Stone is used to build houses in parts of Europe and South America and as decoration on the outside of brick or wood houses in other countries.

Even in areas that share similar climates and available building materials, folk housing can vary because of minor differences in environmental features. For example, R. W. McColl compared house types in four villages situated in the dry lands of northern and western China (Figure 4-9). All use similar building materials, including adobe and timber from the desert poplar tree, and they share a similar objective—protection from



**FIGURE 4-9** House types in four communities of western China. (upper left) Kashgar houses have second-floor open-air patios, where the residents can catch evening breezes. Poplar and fruit trees can be planted around the houses because the village has a river that is constantly flowing rather than seasonal, as is the case in much of China's dry lands. These deciduous trees provide shade in the summer and openings for sunlight in the winter. (lower left) Turpan houses have small, open courtyards for social gatherings. Turpan is situated in a deep valley with relatively little open land because much of the space is allocated to drying raisins. Second-story patios, which would use even less land, are avoided because the village is subject to strong winds. (lower right) Yinchuan houses are built around large, open-air courtyards, which contain tall trees to provide shade. Most

residents are Muslims, who regard courtyards as private spaces to be screened from outsiders. The adobe bricks are square or cubic rather than rectangular, as is the case in the other villages, though R. W. McColl found no reason for this distinctive custom. (upper right) Dunhuang houses are characterized by walled central courtyards, covered by an open-lattice grape arbor. The cover allows for the free movement of air but provides shade from the especially intense direct summer heat and light. Rather than the flat roofs characteristic of dry lands, houses in Dunhuang have sloped roofs, typical of wetter climates, so that rainfall can run off. The practice is apparently influenced by Dunhuang's relative proximity to the population centers of eastern China, where sloped roofs predominate.

extreme temperatures, from very hot summer days to subfreezing winter nights. Despite their similarities, the houses in these four Chinese villages have individual designs. Houses have second-floor open-air patios in Kashgar, small open courtyards in Turpan, large private courtyards in Yinchuan, and sloped roofs in Dunhuang. McColl attributed the differences to local cultural preferences.

The construction of a pitched roof is important in wet or snowy climates to facilitate runoff and to reduce the weight of accumulated snow. Windows may face south in temperate climates to take advantage of the Sun's heat and light. In hot climates, on the other hand, window openings may be smaller to protect the interior from the full heat of the Sun.

Today, people in MDCs buy lumber that has been cut by machine into the needed shapes. Cut lumber is used to erect a frame, and sheets or strips of wood are attached for the floors, ceilings, and roof. Shingles, stucco, vinyl, aluminum, or other materials may be placed on the exterior for insulation or decoration.

## Isolation Promotes Cultural Diversity

A group's unique folk customs develop through centuries of relative isolation from customs practiced by other cultural groups. As a result, folk customs observed at a point in time vary widely from one place to another, even among nearby places.

### Himalayan Art

In a study of artistic customs in the Himalaya Mountains, geographers P. Karan and Cotton Mather demonstrated that distinctive views of the physical environment emerge among neighboring cultural groups that are isolated. The study area, a narrow corridor of 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles) in the Himalaya Mountains of Bhutan, Nepal, northern India, and

southern Tibet (China), contains four religious groups: Tibetan Buddhists in the north, Hindus in the south, Muslims in the west, and Southeast Asian animists in the east (Figure 4-10). Despite their spatial proximity, limited interaction among these groups produces distinctive folk customs.

Through their choices of subjects of paintings, each group reveals how their folk culture mirrors their religions and individual views of their environment:

- **Buddhists** in the northern region paint idealized divine figures, such as monks and saints. Some of these figures are depicted as bizarre or terrifying, perhaps reflecting the inhospitable environment.
- **Hindus** in the southern region create scenes from everyday life and familiar local scenes. Their paintings sometimes portray a deity in a domestic scene and frequently represent the region's violent and extreme climatic conditions.
- **Muslims** in the Islamic western portion show the region's beautiful plants and flowers because the Muslim faith prohibits displaying animate objects in art. In contrast with the paintings from the Buddhist and Hindu regions, these paintings do not depict harsh climatic conditions.
- **Animists** from Myanmar (Burma) and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, who have migrated to the eastern region of the study area, paint symbols and designs that derive from their religion rather than from the local environment.

The distribution of artistic subjects in the Himalayas shows how folk customs are influenced by cultural institutions like religion and by environmental processes such as climate, landforms, and vegetation. These groups display similar uniqueness in their dance, music, architecture, and crafts.

### Beliefs and Folk House Forms

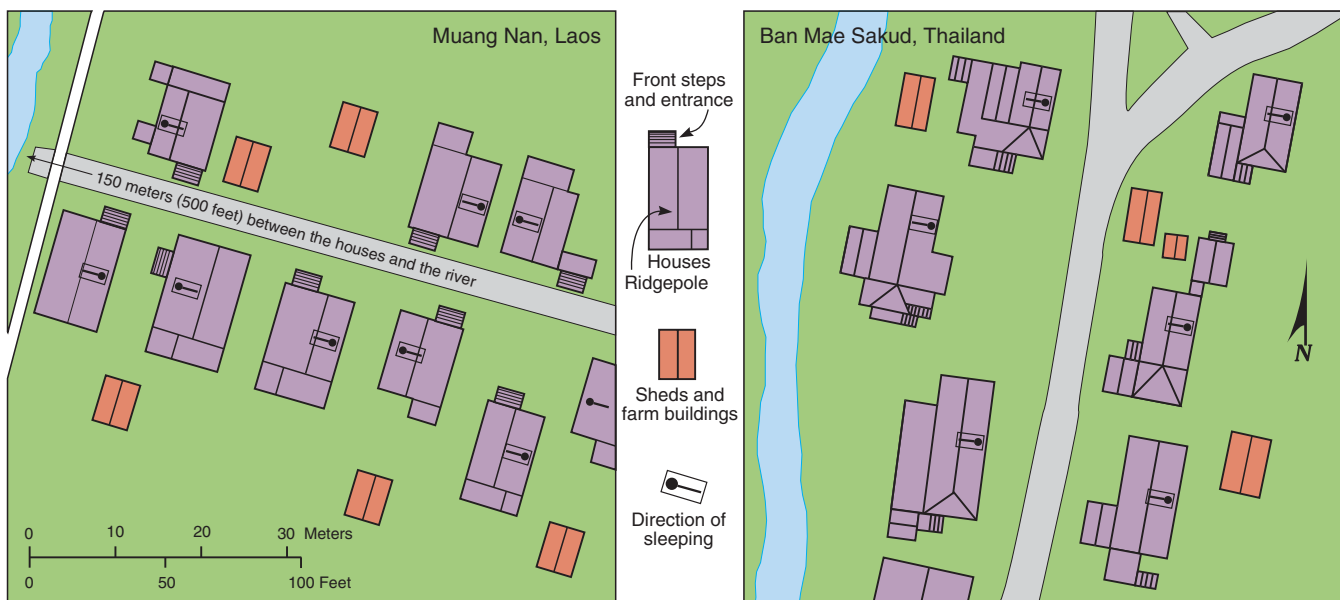
The distinctive form of folk houses may derive primarily from religious values and other customary beliefs rather than from environmental factors. Some compass directions may be more important than other directions.



**FIGURE 4-10** Cultural diversity in isolated folk regions. Cultural geographers P. Karan and Cotton Mather found four cultural areas in the rugged Himalayan region of Bhutan, Nepal, and northern India. Variations among the four groups were found in painting, dance, and other folk customs.

**SACRED SPACES.** Houses may have sacred walls or corners. In the south-central part of the island of Java, for example, the front door always faces south, the direction of the South Sea Goddess, who holds the key to Earth. The east wall of a house is considered sacred in Fiji, as is the northwest wall in parts of China. Sacred walls or corners are also noted in parts of the Middle East, India, and Africa.

In Madagascar, the main door is on the west, considered the most important direction, and the northeast corner is the most sacred. The north wall is for honoring ancestors; in addition, important guests enter a room from the north and are seated against the north wall. The bed is placed against the east wall of the house, with the head facing north.



**FIGURE 4-11** Sacred housing space. (left) Houses of Lao people in northern Laos. The fronts of Lao houses, such as those in the village of Muang Nan, Laos, face one another across a path and the backs face each other at the rear. Their ridgepoles (the centerline of the roof) are set perpendicular to the path but parallel to a stream if one is nearby. Inside adjacent houses, people sleep in the orientation shown, so neighbors are head-to-head or feet-to-feet. (right) Houses of Yuan and Shan peoples in northern Thailand. In the village of Ban Mae Sakud, Thailand, the houses are not set in a straight line because of a belief that evil spirits move in straight lines. Ridgepoles parallel the path, and the heads of all sleeping persons point eastward.

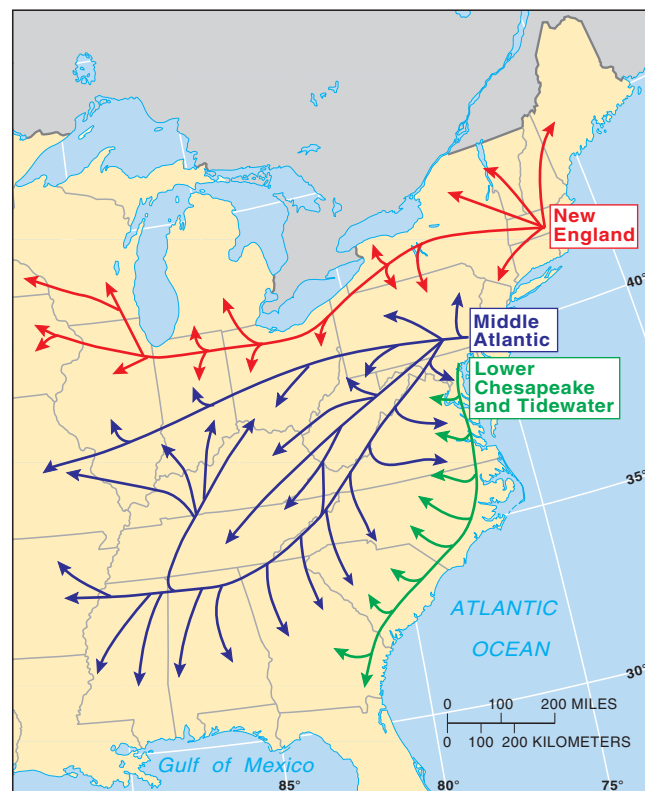
The Lao people in northern Laos arrange beds perpendicular to the center ridgepole of the house (Figure 4-11, left). Because the head is considered high and noble and the feet low and vulgar, people sleep so that their heads will be opposite their neighbor's heads and their feet opposite their neighbor's feet. The principal exception to this arrangement: A child who builds a house next door to the parents sleeps with his or her head toward the parents' feet as a sign of obeying the customary hierarchy.

Although they speak similar Southeast Asian languages and adhere to Buddhism, the Lao do not orient their houses in the same manner as the Yuan and Shan peoples in nearby northern Thailand (Figure 4-11, right). The Yuan and Shan ignore the position of neighbors and all sleep with their heads toward the east, which Buddhists consider the most auspicious direction. Staircases must not face west, the least auspicious direction, the direction of death and evil spirits.

**U.S. FOLK HOUSING.** Older houses in the United States display local folk-culture traditions. When families migrated westward in the 1700s and 1800s, they cut trees to clear fields for planting and used the wood to build houses, barns, and fences. The style of pioneer homes reflected whatever upscale style was prevailing at the place on the East Coast from which they migrated.

Geographer Fred Kniffen identified three major hearths or nodes of folk house forms in the United States: New England, Middle Atlantic, and Lower Chesapeake (Figure 4-12).

- *The Lower Chesapeake* or Tidewater style of house typically comprised one story, with a steep roof and chimneys at either



**FIGURE 4-12** Hearths of U.S. house types. U.S. house types in the United States originated in three main source areas and diffused westward along different paths. These paths coincided with predominant routes taken by migrants from the East Coast toward the interior of the country.

end. Migrants spread these houses from the Chesapeake Bay–Tidewater, Virginia, area along the southeast coast.

As was the case with the Middle Atlantic “I”-house, the form of housing that evolved along the southeast coast typically was only one room deep. In wet areas, houses in the coastal southeast were often raised on piers or on a brick foundation.

- *The Middle Atlantic* region’s principal house type was known as the “I”-house, typically two full stories in height, with gables to the sides. The “I”-house resembled the letter “I”—it was only one room deep and at least two rooms wide.

Middle Atlantic migrants carried their house type westward across the Ohio Valley and southwestward along the Appalachian trails. As a result, the “I”-house became the most extensive style of construction in much of the eastern half of the United States, especially in the Ohio Valley and Appalachia.

- *New England* migrants carried house types northward to upper New England and westward across the southern Great Lakes region. The New England house types can be found throughout the Great Lakes region as far west as Wisconsin because this area was settled primarily by migrants from New England.

Four major house types were popular in New England at various times during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Figure 4-13). As the house preferred by New Englanders changed over time, the predominant form found on the landscape varies based on the date of initial settlement.

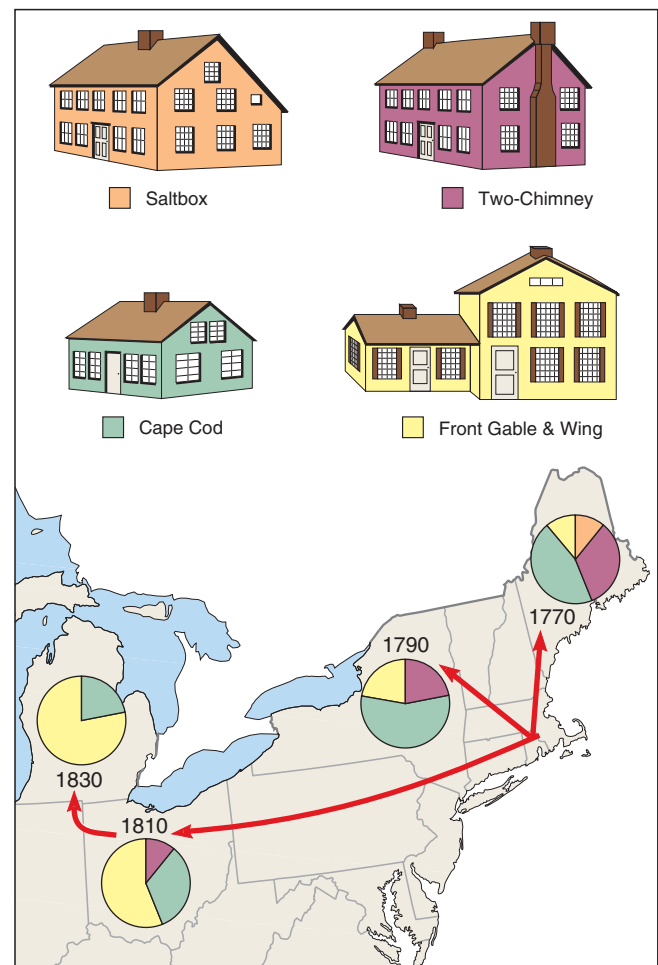
Today, such distinctions are relatively difficult to observe in the United States. Houses built in the United States during the past half-century display popular culture influences. The degree of regional distinctiveness in housing style has diminished because rapid communication and transportation systems provide people throughout the country with knowledge of alternative styles. Furthermore, most people do not build the houses in which they live. Instead, houses are usually mass-produced by construction companies.

### KEY ISSUE 3

## Why Is Popular Culture Widely Distributed?

- Diffusion of Popular Housing, Clothing, and Food
- Electronic Diffusion of Popular Culture

Popular culture varies more in time than in place. Like folk culture, it may originate in one location, within the context of a particular society and environment. But, in contrast to folk culture, it diffuses rapidly across Earth to locations with a variety of physical conditions. Rapid diffusion depends on a



**FIGURE 4-13** Diffusion of New England house types. Fred Kniffen suggests that these four major house types were popular in New England at various times during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As settlers migrated, they carried memories of familiar house types with them and built similar structures on the frontier. Thus New Englanders were most likely to build houses like the Cape Cod (green) when they began to migrate to upstate New York in the 1790s because that was the predominant house type they knew. During the 1800s, when New Englanders began to migrate farther westward to Ohio and Michigan, they built the front gable type of house typical in New England at that time, shown here in yellow.

group of people having a sufficiently high level of economic development to acquire the material possessions associated with popular culture. ■

## Diffusion of Popular Housing, Clothing, and Food

Some regional differences in food, clothing, and shelter persist in MDCs, but differences are much less than in the past. Go to any recently built neighborhood on the outskirts of an American city from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon: The houses look the same, the people wear jeans, and the same chains deliver pizza.