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Folk and Popular Culture

What did you do today? Presumably, your first activity was to get out of bed—for some of us the most difficult task of the day. Shortly thereafter, you got dressed. What did you wear? That depended on both the weather (shorts or sweater) and the day's activities (suit or T-shirt).

After work or school you returned home (ranch house, apartment, or dorm room). You then ate dinner (pizza or salad). After studying or finishing some work, you may now have some free time during the evening for leisure activities (watching television, listening to music, or playing or watching sports).

This narrative may not precisely describe you, but you can recognize the day of a "typical" North American. However, the routine described and the choices mentioned in parentheses do not accurately reflect the practices of many people elsewhere in the world. People living in other locations often have extremely different social customs. Geographers ask why such differences exist and how social customs are related to the cultural landscape.

The need for understanding differences in social customs has become more urgent with the increase in terrorist attacks. Al-Qaeda terrorists regard attacks against the United States and its allies as an attempt to withstand the onslaught of Western-dominated popular culture. Although condemning terrorist tactics, many others share al-Qaeda's opposition to Western cultural dominance.

As you watch television in your single-family dwelling, wearing jeans and munching on a pizza, consider the impact if people from rural Botswana or Papua New Guinea were suddenly placed in the room. Despite striking differences in social customs across the landscape, you might be surprised to find that your visitors are familiar with most of your customs, as Earth becomes more and more a "global village." Your visitors might be attracted within a short period of time to change their customs—or to strongly condemn yours.

KEY ISSUES

1 **Where do folk and popular cultures originate and diffuse?**

2 **Why is folk culture clustered?**

3 **Why is popular culture widely distributed?**

4 **Why does globalization of popular culture cause problems?**

The Aboriginal Artists of Australia at Lincoln Center

The Aboriginal Artists of Australia, a group of Aborigines living in the isolated Australian interior, visited New York a few years ago and danced at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Their series of dances, handed down from their ancestors, reflected their customs and local landscape. They told how features of their landscape, such as hills and rivers, were created.

The Aboriginal dancers challenged their New York audience to understand the meaning of their movements and music. Aborigines consider such dances an essential social custom, reflecting their daily experiences and activities, such as the need for rain or the behavior of particular animals. At best, the New York audience could recognize that the dances were meaningful to the Aborigines. But understanding was inevitably limited by the lack of a comparable role for dance in Western customs.

The geographic contrast between the Aboriginal dancers and the New York theater audience was heightened by differing attitudes toward the physical environment. The Aboriginal dancers respond to specific landscape features and environmental conditions in their Australian homeland. In contrast, New York's Lincoln Center is not a product of an isolated and unique set of social customs. Nothing at Lincoln Center is indigenous to the unique conditions of the site—not the arrangement of structures, the building materials, the variety of performances, nor the performers' places of origin. Lincoln Center reflects the diffusion of social customs across a large portion of Earth's surface. Lincoln Center exemplifies how regional differences in social and physical characteristics become less important in the distribution of cultural activities, through interaction and integration.

n Chapter 1, *culture* was shown to combine three things: values, material artifacts, and political institutions. Geographers are interested in all three components of the definition of culture—where these various elements of culture are found in the world and reasons why the observed distributions occur.

This chapter deals with the material artifacts of culture, the visible objects that a group possesses and leaves behind for the future. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 examine three important components of a group's beliefs and values, including language, religion, and ethnicity. Chapter 8 concludes the emphasis on the cultural elements of human geography by looking at the political institutions that maintain values and protect their artifacts.

Culture follows logically from the discussion of migration in Chapter 3. Two locations have similar cultural beliefs, objects, and institutions because people bring along their culture when they migrate. Differences emerge when two groups have limited interaction.

This chapter examines two facets of material culture. First is material culture deriving from survival activities of everyone's daily life—food, clothing, and shelter. Each cultural group provides these in its own way. Second is culture involving leisure activities—the arts and recreation. Each cultural group has its own definition of meaningful art and stimulating recreation.

Culture can be distinguished from habit and custom. A **habit** is a repetitive act that a particular *individual* performs, such as wearing jeans to class every day. A **custom** is a repetitive act of a *group*, performed to the extent that it becomes *characteristic* of the group—American university students wear jeans to class every day. Unlike custom, habit does not imply that the act has been adopted by most of the society's population. A custom is therefore a habit that a group of people has widely adopted.

A collection of social customs produces a group's material culture—jeans typically represent American informality and a badge of youth. In this chapter, *custom* may be used to denote a specific element of material culture, such as wearing jeans, whereas *culture* refers to a group's entire collection of customs.

Material culture falls into two basic categories that differ according to scale: folk and popular. **Folk culture** is traditionally practiced primarily by small, homogeneous groups living in isolated rural areas—such as wearing a sarong (a loose skirt made of a long strip of cloth wrapped around the body) in Malaysia or a sari (a long cloth draped so that one end forms a skirt and the other a head or shoulder covering) in India. **Popular culture** is found in large, heterogeneous societies that share certain habits despite differences in other personal characteristics—such as wearing jeans. The *scale* of territory covered by a folk culture is typically much smaller than that of a popular culture.

Geographers focus on two aspects of *where* folk and popular cultures are located in *space*. First, each cultural activity, like wearing jeans, has a distinctive spatial distribution. Geographers study a particular social custom's origin, its diffusion, and integration with other social characteristics. Second, geographers study the relation between material culture and the physical environment. Each cultural group takes particular elements from the environment into its 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 background.

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 their 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 the economically more developed countries, 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 in the labor force from predominantly agricultural work to predominantly jobs in service and manufacturing.

Origin of Folk Music

Music exemplifies the differences in the origins of folk and popular culture. According to a Chinese legend, music was invented in 2697 B.C., when the Emperor Huang Ti sent Ling Lun to cut bamboo poles that would produce a sound matching the call of the phoenix bird. But 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.

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 ruỏi ắt la `không non[1]*

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,
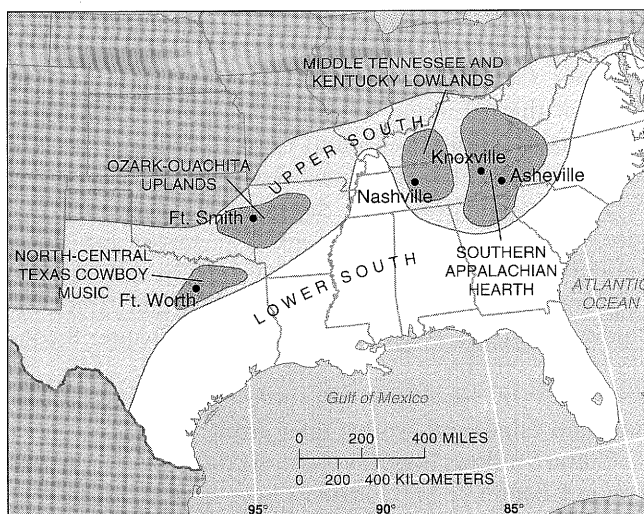

FIGURE 4-1 *Origin of country music. Country music in the United States has four major hearths, or regions of origin. These include southern Appalachia, central Tennessee and Kentucky, the Ozark Plateau and Ouachita mountains of western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, and north-central Texas.*

similar themes emerge, even if the specific information conveyed about the environment differs.

Folk customs may have multiple origins owing to noncommunication among groups in different places. U.S. country music provides a recent example of the process by which folk customs originate independently at multiple hearths. Country music originated in the Upper South, a belt from western Virginia to western Texas. Within the Upper South, geographer George Carney identified four major hearths of country music during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: southern Appalachia, central Tennessee and Kentucky, the Ozark and Ouachita uplands of western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, and north-central Texas (Figure 4–1). Carney documented these hearths on the basis of the birthplaces of performers and other individuals active in the field.

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 New York, along 28th Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway, a district that became known as Tin Pan Alley (Figure 4–2). The name derived from the sound of pianos being furiously pounded by people called song pluggers, who were demonstrating tunes to publishers.

Tin Pan Alley was home to songwriters, music publishers, orchestrators, and arrangers. Companies in Tin

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[1] From John Blacking and Joann W. Kealiinohomoku, eds., *The Performing Arts: Music and Dance* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 144. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.
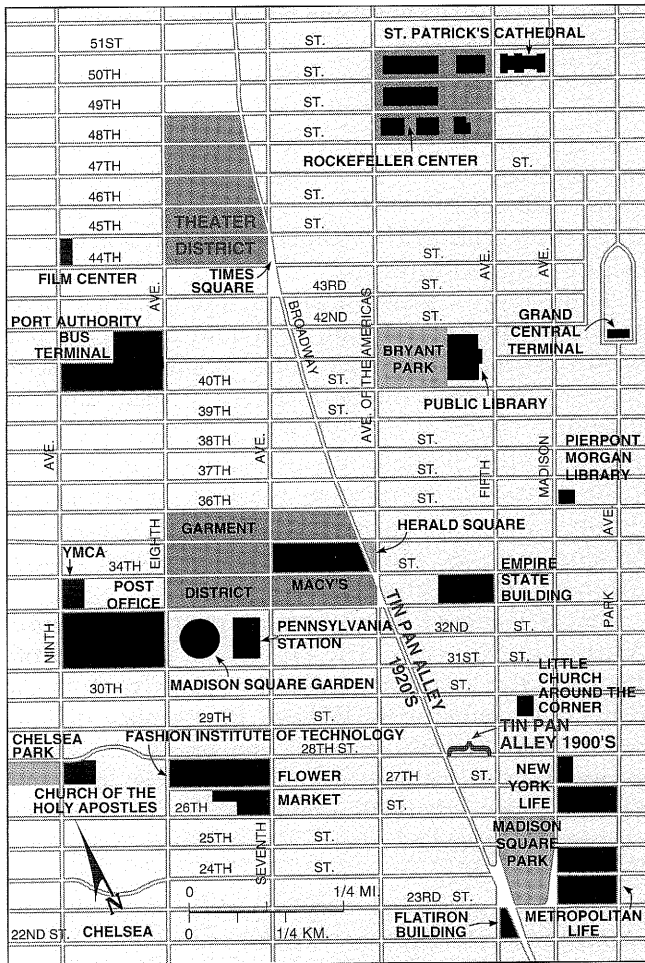
FIGURE 4-2 *Tin Pan Alley. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most writers and publishers of popular music were clustered in New York City in a few buildings along 28th Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway, which became known as Tin Pan Alley. Tin Pan Alley relocated north to 32nd Street and Broadway and then along Broadway between 42nd and 50th streets. Tin Pan Alley is no longer a node of popular music, but performing arts are still clustered in New York City. The Theater District, near 45th Street and Broadway, contains the country's largest concentration of theaters featuring live plays and shows. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, a place for music and theater productions, is located near 63rd Street and Broadway.*

Pan Alley originally tried to sell as many printed songsheets as possible, although sales of recordings ultimately became the most important measure of success. The location of Tin Pan Alley later moved uptown to Broadway and 32nd Street and then along Broadway between 42nd and 50th streets. 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.

Hip hop is a more recent form of popular music that also originated in New York. Whereas Tin Pan Alley originated in Manhattan office buildings, hip hop originated in the late 1970s in the South Bronx, a neighborhood that had recently changed from predominantly middle-class whites of European origin to predominantly low-income African American and Puerto Rican (Figure 4–3). Rappers in other low-income neighborhoods of New York City Queens, Brooklyn, and Harlem adopted the style with local twists—"thug" rap in Queens, clever lines in Brooklyn. Hip hop remained predominantly a New York phenomenon until the late 1980s when it spread to Oakland and Atlanta, 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
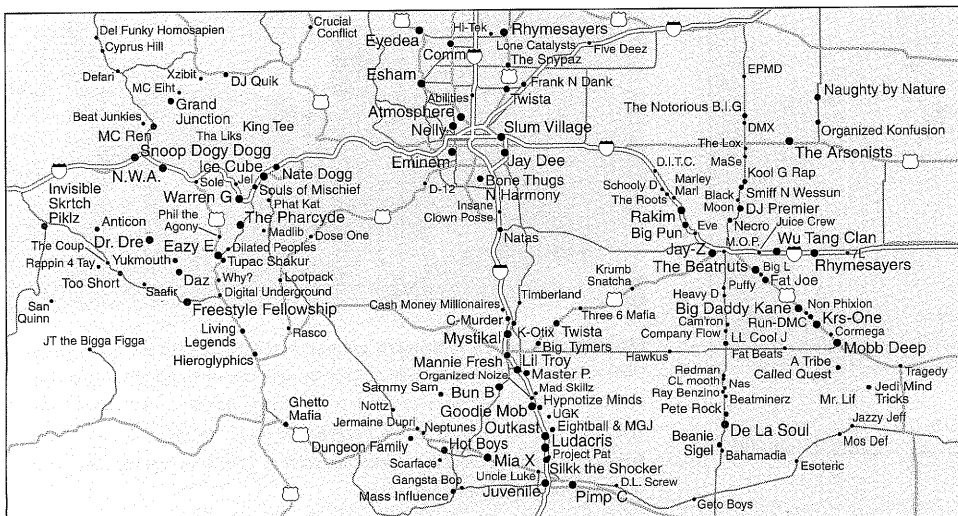

FIGURE 4-3 *Mental map of hip hop (Dave One). The map attempts to place prominent hip hop performers in proximity to similar performers as well as in the region of the country (Northeast, South, Midwest, West) where they performed or drew inspiration.*

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 six decades ago 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 is effected 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. The Amish have distinctive clothing, farming, religious practices, and other customs. They leave a unique pattern on landscapes where they settle. Shunning mechanical and electrical power, the Amish still travel by horse and buggy and continue to use hand tools for farming.

Although the Amish population in the United States numbers only about 70,000, a mere 0.03 percent of the total population, Amish folk culture remains visible on the landscape in at least 17 states. 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, Iowa, and Ontario 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 (Figure 4–4). These communities
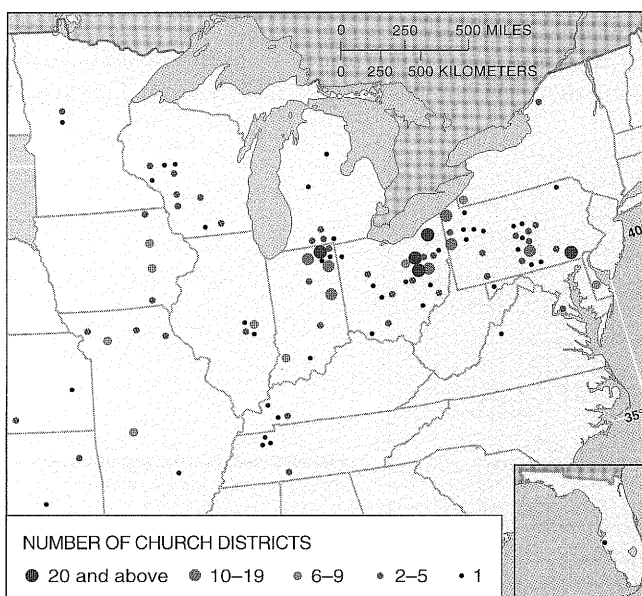

NUMBER OF CHURCH DISTRICTS
● 20 and above ◉ 10–19 ◉ 6–9 ● 2–5 • 1

FIGURE 4–4 Amish settlements are distributed throughout the northeastern United States. According to William Crowley, who documented this distribution, the number of church districts within a settlement indicates the relative number of Amish in the community. Amish buggies and motor vehicles must share the highway in the larger Amish settlements, such as Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, shown in the photograph.

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, 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 from the nearby metropolitan areas who come 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 is the world's most popular sport (it is called football outside North America). Its origin is obscure, although 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 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 "soc-cer." 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 a football player at Rugby College picked up the ball and ran with it.

Beginning in the late 1800s, the British exported association football around the world, first to continental

World Cup. Thousands of South Korean soccer fans celebrate in the streets of Seoul after their country's 1-0 victory over Portugal in a World Cup game, June 14, 2002, which was played in Seoul.

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.

Soccer diffused to Russia when the English manager of a textile factory near Moscow organized a team at the factory in 1887 and advertised in London for workers who could play football. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, both the factory and its football team were absorbed into the Soviet Electric Trade Union. The team, renamed the Moscow Dynamo, became the country's most famous, although the official history of Soviet football never acknowledged its English origin.

Although soccer was also exported to the United States, it never gained the popularity it won in Europe and Latin America. The first college football game played in the United States, between Princeton and Rutgers in 1869, was really soccer, and officials of several colleges met four years later to adopt football rules consistent with those of British soccer. But Harvard's representatives successfully argued for adoption of rugby rules instead. Rugby was so thoroughly modified by U.S. colleges that an entirely new game—American football—emerged. Similar modifications of football were undertaken in other English-speaking countries, including Canada, Australia, and Ireland. This complex tale of diffusion is typical of many popular customs.

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. 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 International Lacrosse Federation has invited the Iroquois nation to participate in the Lacrosse World Championships, along with teams from Australia, Canada, England, and the United States. 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. Competition for the World Cup in soccer is clear evidence of the global diffusion of sports. National soccer teams worldwide compete every four years, including jointly in South Korea and Japan in 2002 and in Germany in 2006. Thanks to television, the final match is viewed by more spectators than any other event in history.

KEY ISSUE 2

Why Is Folk Culture Clustered?

- Isolation promotes cultural diversity
- Influence of physical environment

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.

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 demonstrate 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 4–5). Despite their spatial proximity, limited interaction among these groups produces distinctive folk customs.
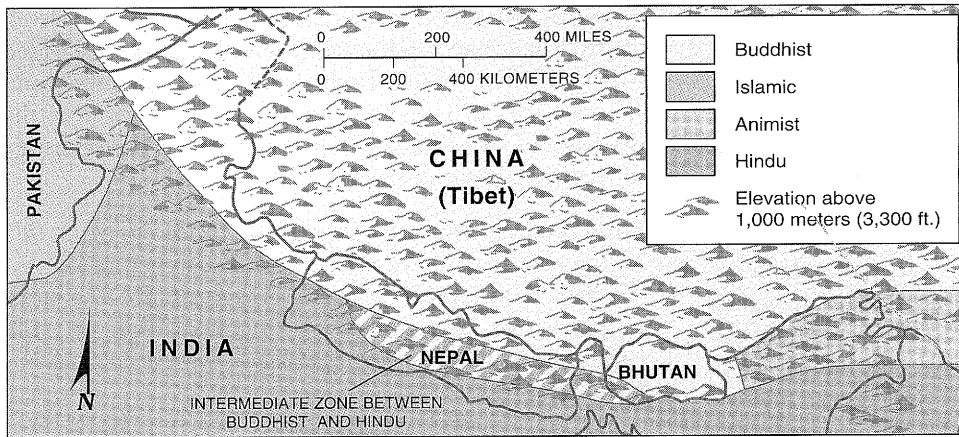
FIGURE 4-5 *Cultural regions in the Himalaya Mountains. Cultural geographers P. Karan and Cotton Mather found four cultural areas in the rugged Himalayan region of Bhutan, Nepal, and northern India. Variations among the four groups were found in painting, dance, and other folk customs.*

Subjects of paintings by each group reveal how their folk culture mirrors their religions and individual views of their environment:

- Tibetan 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.
- Paintings 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, Muslims do not depict harsh climatic conditions.
- Animist groups 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.

Influence of the Physical Environment

Recall from Chapter 1 that environmental determinists theorized how processes in the environment cause social customs. This may sound reasonable on the surface, but most contemporary geographers reject the idea. Many examples exist of peoples who live in similar environments but adopt different social customs. Conversely, many examples exist of peoples who live under different environmental conditions but adopt similar social customs. Of course, people respond to their environment, but the environment is only one of several controls over social customs.

Customs such as provision of food, clothing, and shelter are clearly influenced by the prevailing climate, soil, and vegetation. For example, residents of arctic climates may wear fur-lined boots, which protect against the cold, and snowshoes to walk on soft, deep snow without sinking in. On the other hand, 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.

Environmental conditions can limit the variety of human actions anywhere, but folk societies are particularly responsive to the environment because of their low level of 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.

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.

Two necessities of daily life—food and shelter—demonstrate the influence of cultural values and the environment on development of unique folk culture. Different folk societies prefer different foods and styles of house construction.

Distinctive Food Preferences

Folk food habits derive from the environment. According to nineteenth-century geographer Vidal de la Blache, "Among the connections that tie [people] to a certain environment, one of the most tenacious is food supply; clothing and weapons are more subject to modification than the dietary regime, which experience has shown to be best suited to human needs in a given climate."

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. For example, rice demands a milder, moist climate, whereas wheat thrives in colder, drier regions.

People adapt their food preferences to conditions in the environment. A good example is soybeans, which are an excellent source of protein and 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 dilemma 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).

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.

Food Diversity in Transylvania. Food customs are inevitably affected by the availability of products, but people do not simply eat what is available in their particular environment. Food habits are strongly influenced by cultural traditions. What is eaten establishes one's social, religious, and ethnic memberships. The surest way to identify a family's ethnic origins is to look in its kitchen.

In Transylvania, currently part of Romania, food preferences distinguish among groups who have long lived in close proximity. A century ago, before killings and emigrations during the World War II era, Transylvania contained about 4 million Hungarians, 4 million Romanians, 500,000 to 600,000 Saxons, 50,000 to 75,000 Jews, 20,000 to 25,000 Armenians, and several thousand Szeklers. The Saxons and Szeklers were German peoples who migrated to Transylvania in the ninth century. The Hungarians conquered Transylvania in 1003 and ruled it with few interruptions until losing it to Romania after World War I. Most Jews came to the region with the Hungarians. Most of the Armenians migrated to Transylvania in the 1600s to escape the Muslim-controlled Ottoman Empire to the southeast.

Soup, the food consumed by poorer people, shows the distinctive traditions of the neighboring cultural groups in Transylvania. Romanians made sour bran soups from cracked wheat, corn, brown bread, and cherry tree twigs. Saxons instead simmered fatty pork in water, added sauerkraut or vinegar, and often used fruits. Jews preferred soups made from beets and sorrel (a leafy vegetable) rather than from meat. Armenians made soup based on churut (curdled milk) and ground vegetables. Hungarians added smoked bacon to the soup and thickened it with flour and onion fried in lard. Szeklers—who adopted many Jewish dietary practices, including avoidance of pork products—substituted smoked goose or other poultry for the bacon in the Hungarian recipes.

Distinctive food preferences among groups from Transylvania have continued, even after many migrated to the United States. Long after dress, manners, and speech have become indistinguishable from those of the majority, old food habits often continue as the last vestige of traditional folk customs.

Food Attractions and Taboos. 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.

Certain foods are eaten because their natural properties are perceived to enhance qualities considered desirable by the society, such as strength, fierceness, or lovemaking ability. The Abipone Indians of Paraguay eat jaguars and bulls to make them strong, brave, and swift. The mandrake, a plant native to Mediterranean climates, was thought to enhance an individual's lovemaking abilities. The smell of the plant's orange-colored berries is attractive, but the mandrake's association with sexual prowess comes primarily from the appearance of the root, which is thick, fleshy, and forked, suggesting a man's torso. In parts of Africa and the Middle East, the mandrake's root is administered as a drug, and several references to its powers are found in the Bible.

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.

The Ainus in Japan avoid eating otters because they are believed to be forgetful animals and consuming them could cause loss of memory. Europeans blamed the potato, the first edible plant they had encountered that grew from tubers rather than seeds, for a variety of problems during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including typhoid, tuberculosis, and famine. Initially, Europeans also resisted eating the potato because it resembled human deformities caused by leprosy.

Before becoming pregnant, the Mbum Kpau women of Chad do not eat chicken or goat. Abstaining from consumption of these animals is thought to help escape pain in childbirth and to prevent birth of an abnormal child. During pregnancy, Mbum Kpau women avoid meat from antelopes with twisted horns, which could cause them to bear deformed offspring. In the Trobriand Islands off the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea, couples are prohibited from eating meals together before marriage, whereas premarital sexual relations are an accepted feature of social life.

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. For example, to preserve scarce animal species, only a few high-ranking people in some tropical regions are permitted to hunt, whereas

the majority cultivate crops. However, most food-avoidance customs arise from cultural values.

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. 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.

Similarly, Muslims embrace the taboo against pork, because pigs are unsuited for the dry lands of the Arabian Peninsula (Figure 4–6). 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 explained partly for 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.
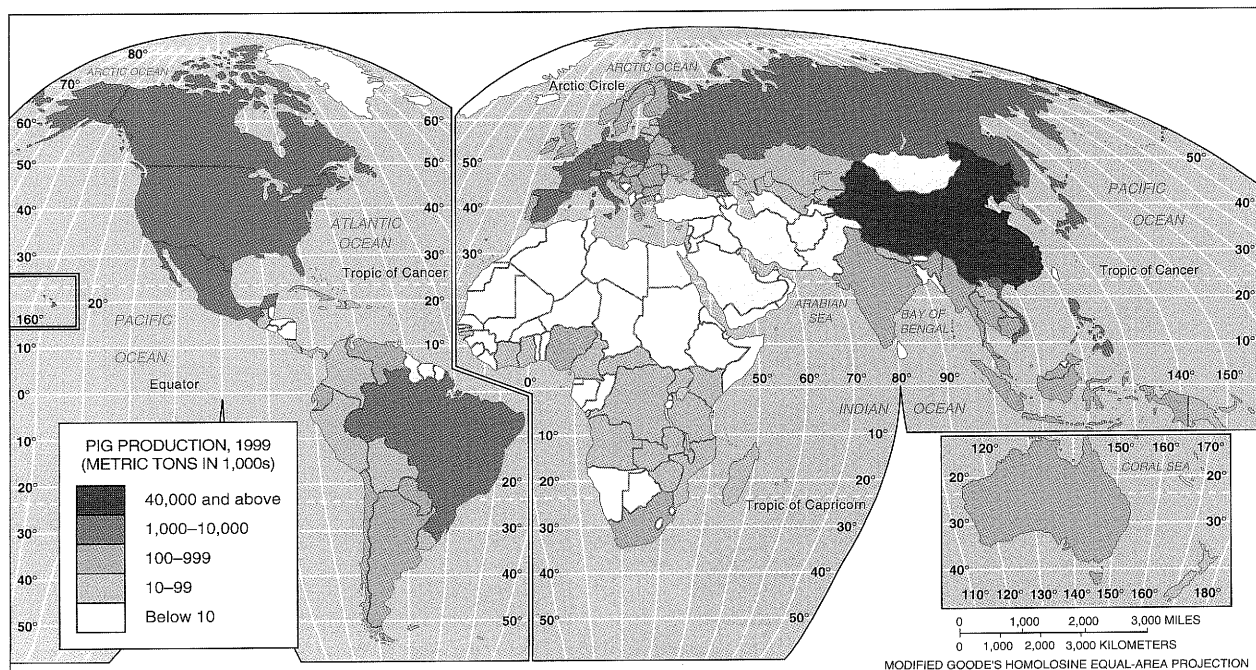
But the taboo against consumption of meat among many people, including Muslims, Hindus, and Jews, cannot be explained primarily by environment factors. Social values must influence the choice of diet, because people in similar climates and with similar levels of income consume different foods. The biblical 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.

Food taboos are significant even in countries dominated by popular culture, such as the United States. Americans avoid eating insects, despite their nutritional value. In Thailand and Myanmar (Burma), on the other hand, giant water bugs are deep fried as a snack food or ground up in sauces. Mixing insects with rice provides lysine, an amino acid that is often deficient in the diet of people in developing countries, where rice is the staple food. The aversion of most Americans to eating insects is contradicted by consumption of such foods as canned mushrooms and tomato paste, which contain insects although not commonly acknowledged.

Folk Housing

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.

FIGURE 4–6 *Annual hog production. The number of hogs produced in different parts of the world is influenced to a considerable extent by religious taboos against consuming pork. Hog production is virtually nonexistent in predominantly Muslim regions, such as northern Africa and southwestern Asia, whereas the level is high in predominantly Buddhist China and predominantly Christian countries.*

Distinctive Building Materials. 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, although 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.

Today, people in more developed societies 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.

Some societies have limited access to forests and use alternative materials. In relatively 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.

The choice of building materials is influenced both by social factors and by what is available from the environment. If the desired material is not locally available, then it must be imported. For example, migrants sometimes paved streets and built houses in their new location with the stone ballast placed in the hold of the ship that transported them. Building materials may be available but be more expensive than alternatives. For example, to save money (as well as trees), most new homes in the United States have interior walls made of drywall (filled with gypsum, a widely available mineral) rather than wood.

Distinctive House Form and Orientation. Social groups may share building materials, but the distinctive form of their houses may result from customary beliefs or environmental factors. In addition, the orientation of the houses on their plots of land can vary.

The form of houses in some societies might reflect religious values. For example, houses may have sacred walls or corners. 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, religious considerations influence the use of each part of the house and even furniture arrangement. The main door is on the west, considered the most important direction, whereas 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.

Beliefs govern the arrangement of household activities in a variety of Southeast Asian societies. In the south-central part of the island of Java, the front door always faces south, the direction of the South Sea Goddess, who holds the key to Earth.

Figure 4–7 (left) shows a housing custom of the Lao people in northern Laos, who arrange beds perpendicular to the center ridgepole of the house. 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
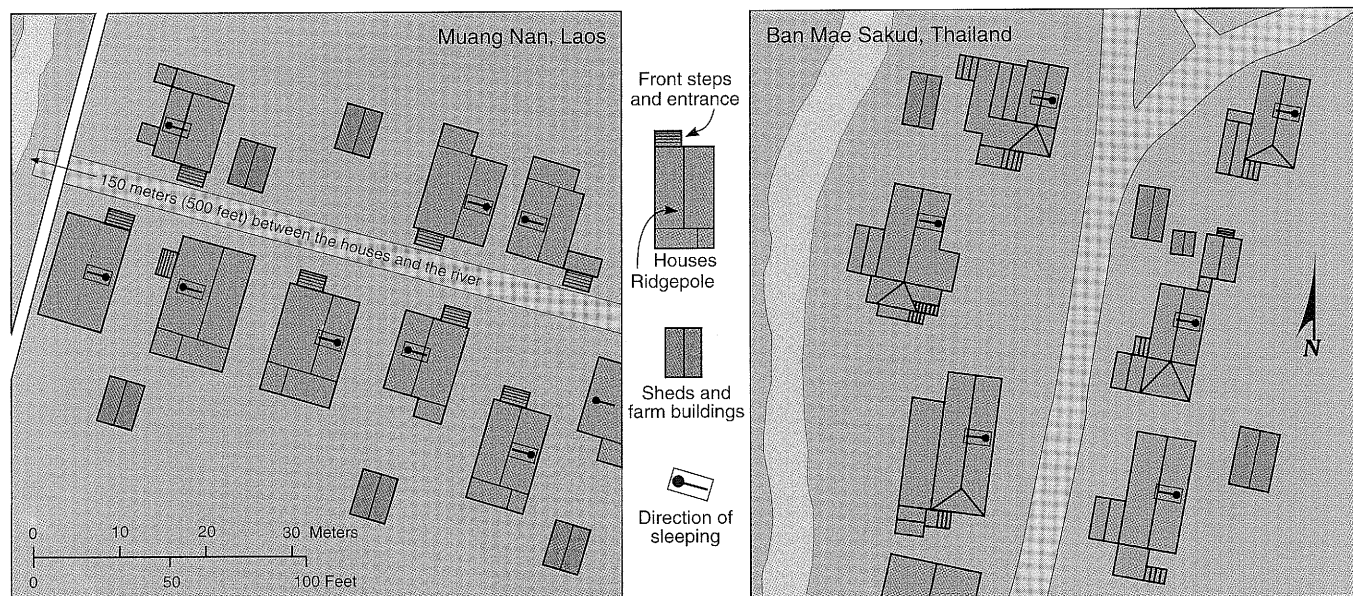

FIGURE 4–7 *(left) Houses of Lao people in northern Laos. The fronts of Lao houses, such as those in the village of Muang Nan, Laos, face one another across a path, and the backs face each other at the rear. Their ridgepoles (the centerline of the roof) are set perpendicular to the path but parallel 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.*

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 4–7, 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.

Housing and Environment. The form of housing is related in part to environmental as well as social conditions. 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.

Even in areas that share similar climates and available building materials, folk housing can vary, owing to 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. All use similar building materials, including adobe and timber from the desert poplar tree, and they share a similar objective: protection from 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 (Figure 4–8).

U.S. Folk House Forms

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 a house, barn, and fences. The style of pioneer homes reflected whatever upscale style was prevailing at the place on the East Coast from which they migrated. In contrast, houses built in the United States during the past half century display popular culture influences.

Fred Kniffen identified three major hearths or nodes of folk house forms in the United States: New England, Middle Atlantic, and Lower Chesapeake. Migrants carried house types from New England northward to upper
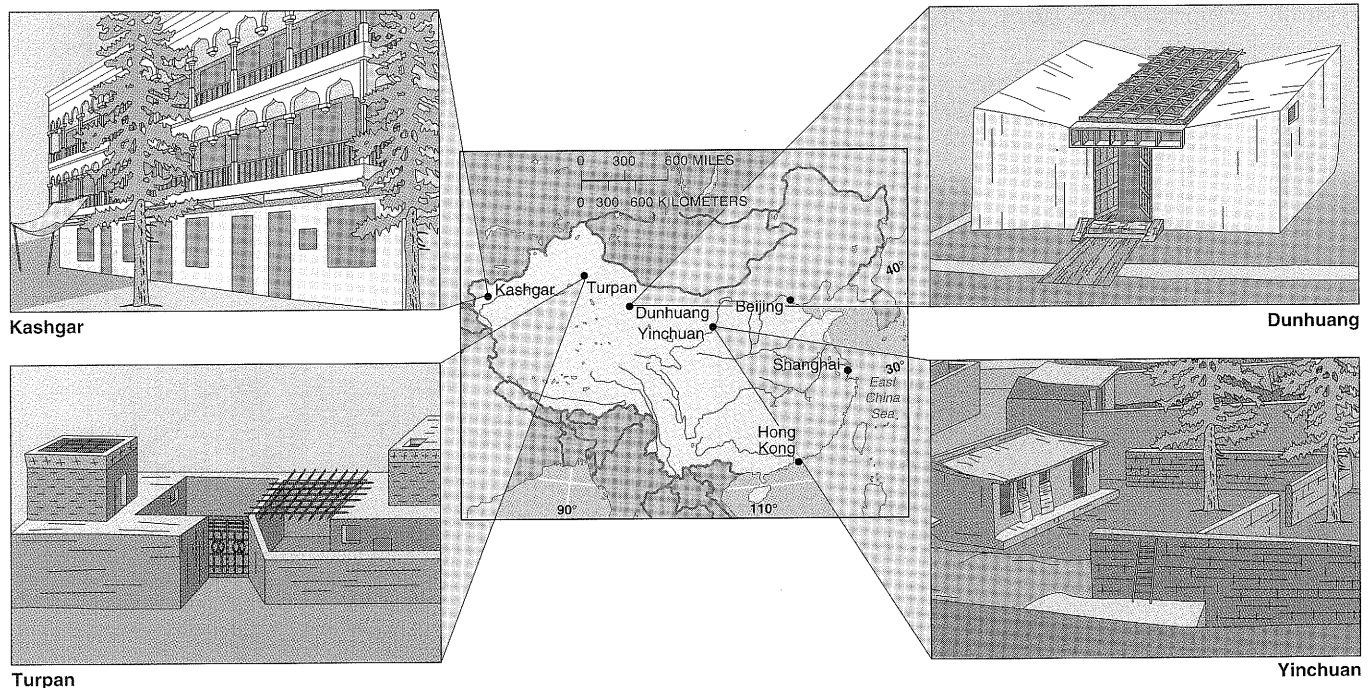

Kashgar

Turpan

Dunhuang

Yinchuan

FIGURE 4–8 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.

New England and westward across the southern Great Lakes region; from the Middle Atlantic westward across the Ohio Valley and southwestward along the Appalachian trails; and from the lower Chesapeake southward along the Atlantic Coast (Figure 4–9).

Four major house types were popular in New England at various times during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, shown in Figure 4–10. When settlers from New England migrated westward, they took their house type with them. The New England house type can be found throughout the Great Lakes region as far west as Wisconsin, because this area was settled primarily by migrants from New England. 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.

The major house type in the Middle Atlantic region 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. 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. Settlers built "I"-houses in much of the Midwest because most of them had migrated from the Middle Atlantic region.

The Lower Chesapeake or Tidewater style of house typically comprised one story, with a steep roof and chimneys at either end. These houses spread 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 a brick foundation.

Today, such distinctions are relatively difficult to observe in the United States. The style of housing does not display the same degree of regional distinctiveness 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.
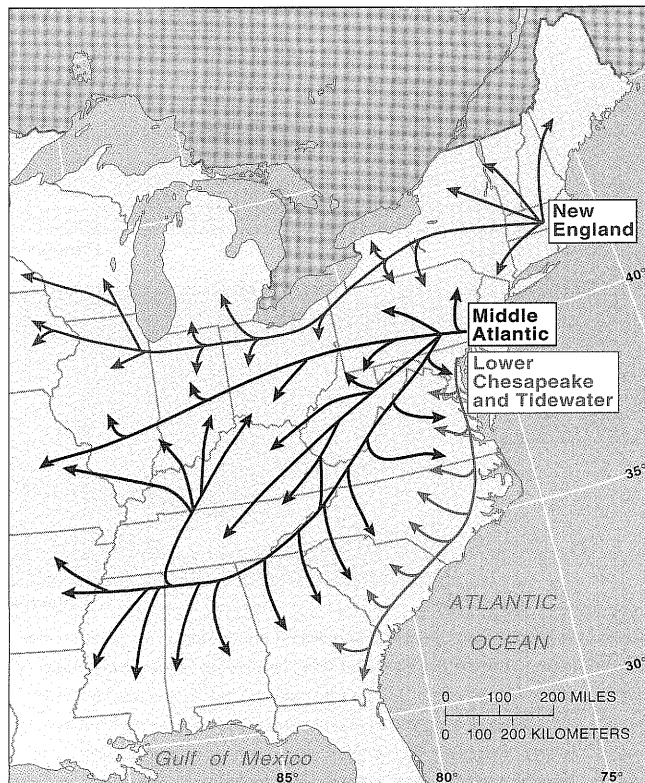

FIGURE 4–10 *Diffusion of New England house types. Fred Kniffen suggests that these four major house types were popular in New England at various times during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As settlers migrated, they carried memories of familiar house types with them and built similar structures on the frontier. Thus New Englanders were most likely to build houses like the yellow one 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 type of house typical in New England at that time, shown here in yellow.*

FIGURE 4–9 *Source areas of U.S. house types. According to Fred Kniffen, 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.*
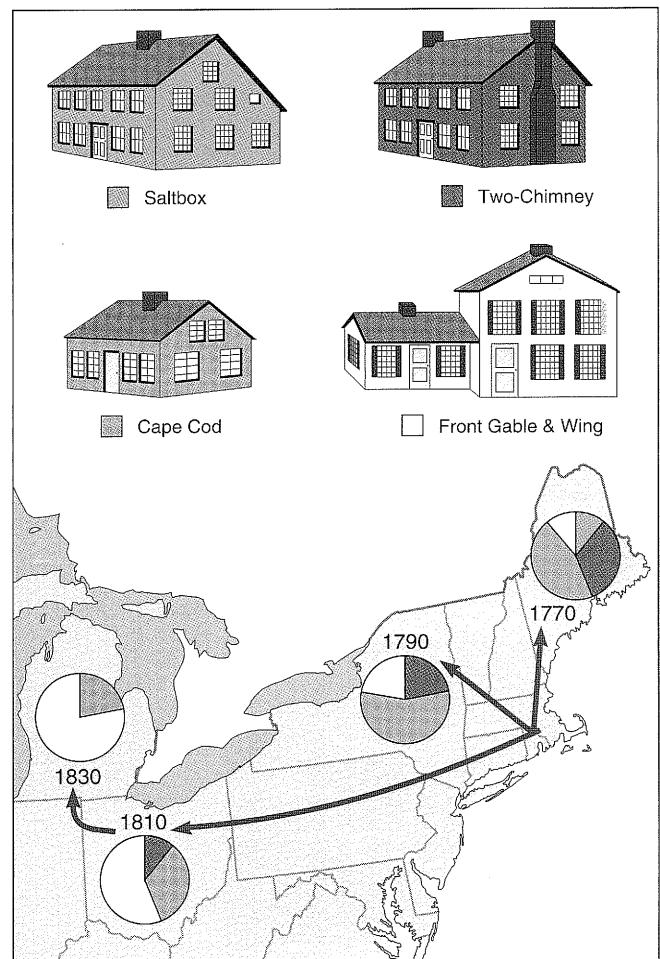
Why Is Popular Culture Widely Distributed?

- Diffusion of popular housing, clothing, and food
- Role of television in diffusing 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 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 more developed countries, 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 chain delivers pizza.

Popular Housing Styles

Housing built in the United States since the 1940s demonstrates how popular customs vary more in time than in place. In contrast with folk housing that is characteristic of the early 1800s, newer housing in the United States has been built to reflect rapidly changing fashion concerning the most suitable house form.

Houses show the influence of shapes, materials, detailing, and other features of architectural style in vogue at any one point in time. In the years immediately after World War II, which ended in 1945, most U.S. houses were built in a *modern style*. Since the 1960s, styles that architects call *neo-eclectic* have predominated (Figure 4–11).

Modern House Styles (1945–60). Specific types of modern-style houses were popular at different times. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the dominant type was known as *minimal traditional*, reminiscent of Tudor-style houses popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Minimal traditional houses were usually one story, with a dominant front gable and few decorative details. They were small, modest houses designed to house young families and veterans returning from World War II.

The *ranch* house replaced minimal traditional as the dominant style of housing in the 1950s and into the 1960s. The ranch house was one story, with the long side parallel to the street. With all the rooms on one level rather than two or three, the ranch house took up a larger lot and encouraged the sprawl of urban areas (see Chapter 13).
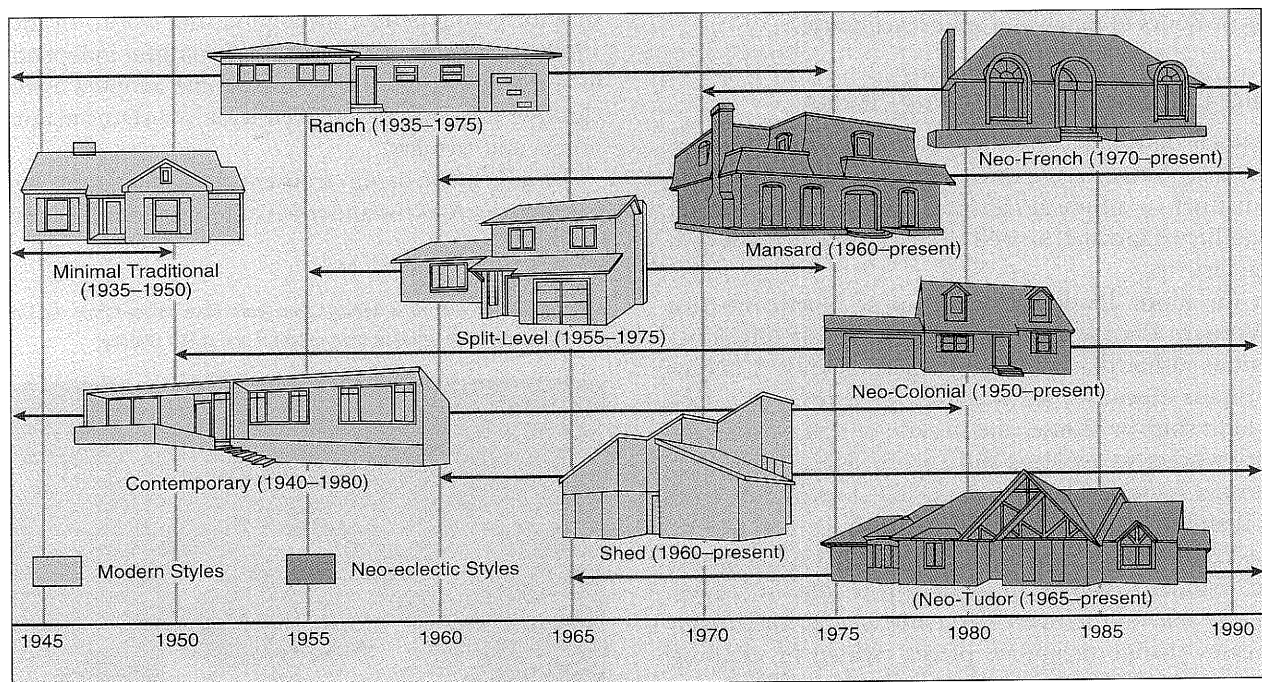

FIGURE 4–11 U.S. house types 1945–90. The dominant type of house construction in the United States was minimal traditional during the late 1940s and early 1950s, followed by ranch houses during the late 1950s and 1960s. The split-level was a popular variant of the ranch between the 1950s and 1970s, whereas the contemporary style was popular for architect-designed houses during the same period. The shed style was widely built in the late 1960s. Neo-eclectic styles, beginning with the mansard, were in vogue during the late 1960s. The neo-Tudor was popular in the 1970s and the neo-French in the 1980s. The neocolonial style has been widely built since the 1950s but never dominated popular architecture.

The *split-level* house was a popular variant of the ranch house between the 1950s and 1970s. The lower level of the typical split-level house contained the garage and the newly invented "family" room, where the television set was placed. The kitchen and formal living and dining rooms were placed on the intermediate level, with the bedrooms on the top level above the family room and garage.

The *contemporary* style was an especially popular choice between the 1950s and 1970s for architect-designed houses. These houses frequently had flat or low-pitched roofs. The *shed* style, popular in the late 1960s, was characterized by high-pitched shed roofs, giving the house the appearance of a series of geometric forms.

Neo-eclectic House Styles (Since 1960). In the late 1960s, *neo-eclectic* styles became popular and by the 1970s had surpassed modern styles in vogue. The first popular neo-eclectic style was the *mansard* in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The shingle-covered second-story walls sloped slightly inward and merged into the roofline.

The *neo-Tudor* style, popular in the 1970s, was characterized by dominant, steep-pitched front-facing gables and half-timbered detailing. The *neo-French* style also appeared in the early 1970s and by the early 1980s was the most fashionable style for new houses. It featured dormer windows, usually with rounded tops, and high-hipped roofs. The *neo-colonial* style, an adaptation of English colonial houses, has been continuously popular since the 1950s but never dominant. Inside many neo-eclectic houses, a large central "great room" has replaced separate family and living rooms, which were located in different wings or floors of ranch and split-level houses.

Rapid Diffusion of Clothing Styles

Individual clothing habits reveal how popular culture can be distributed across the landscape with little regard for distinctive physical features. Such habits reflect availability of income, as well as social forms such as job characteristics.

In the more developed countries of North America and Western Europe, clothing habits generally reflect occupations rather than particular environments. A lawyer or business executive, for example, tends to wear a dark suit, light shirt or blouse, and necktie or scarf, whereas a factory worker wears jeans and a work shirt. A lawyer in California is more likely to dress like a lawyer in New York than like a steelworker in California.

A second influence on clothing in MDCs is higher income. Women's clothes, in particular, change in fashion from one year to the next. The color, shape, and design of dresses change to imitate pieces created by clothing designers. For social purposes, people with sufficient income may update their wardrobe frequently with the latest fashions.

Improved communications have permitted the rapid diffusion of clothing styles from one region of Earth to another. Original designs for women's dresses, created in Paris, Milan, London, or New York, are reproduced in large quantities at factories in Asia and sold for relatively low prices at North American and European chain stores. Speed is essential in manufacturing copies of designer dresses because fashion tastes change quickly.

Until recently, a year could elapse from the time an original dress was displayed to the time that inexpensive reproductions were available in the stores. Now the time lag is less than six weeks because of the diffusion of facsimile machines, computers, and satellites. Sketches, patterns, and specifications are sent instantly from European fashion centers to American corporate headquarters and then on to Asian factories. Buyers from the major retail chains can view the fashions on large, high-definition televisions linked by satellite networks.

The globalization of clothing styles has involved increasing awareness by North Americans and Europeans of the variety of folk costumes around the world. Increased travel and the diffusion of television have exposed people in MDCs to other forms of dress, just as people in other parts of the world have come into contact with Western dress. The poncho from South America, the dashiki of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, and the Aleut parka have been adopted by people elsewhere in the world. The continued use of folk costumes in some parts of the globe may persist not because of distinctive environmental conditions or traditional cultural values but to preserve past memories or to attract tourists.

Jeans. An important symbol of the diffusion of Western popular culture is jeans, which became a prized possession for young people throughout the world. In the late 1960s jeans acquired an image of youthful independence in the United States as young people adopted a style of clothing previously associated with low-status manual laborers and farmers.

Locally made denim trousers are available throughout Europe and Asia for under $10, but "genuine" jeans made

Jeans sold in a market in Beijing, China. Jeans have diffused from the United States around the world as both practical and stylish clothing.

CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC TOOLS

Documenting House Types Through Fieldwork

Fieldwork has been regarded as an important geographic method since the development of geography as a modern science two centuries ago. Geographers head for destinations near and far, to bustling urban areas and to remote rural areas, within their own countries or abroad. Given their concern with regularities in space, geographers need to get out of their classrooms and laboratories to observe the visible elements of other places with their own eyes. Fieldwork has been especially important for understanding the unique character of a place or the collection of features that distinguish one region from another.

Geographers make use of fieldwork in two principal ways. First, collecting information in the field can be the basis for drawing conclusions about expected patterns. Second, observing conditions in the field can be a source of inspiration for thinking about problems to address in future scientific studies. In other words, fieldwork helps some geographers to *answer* questions and helps others to *ask* questions.

Especially well suited to field studies have been visible everyday elements of folk and popular culture, such as house styles. Statistical studies and questionnaires such as the census can help geographers determine the size and date of construction of a house, but not the style that inspired its design. Only by looking at a house can its style of design be classified. Field material can be collected by delineating one or more areas on a map and visiting the sites. Armed with a chart or a spreadsheet, the geographer counts the number of times that something appears in the area, such as a particular type of house.

According to fieldwork by geographers Jakle, Bastian, and Meyer, regional differences in the predominant type of house persist to some extent in the United States. Small towns in the southeastern United States were more likely to contain ranch houses. In northeastern small towns the most numerous style was the so-called double-pile, which was two rooms wide and two rooms deep (Figure 4-1.1). Northeastern houses were larger, more likely to be painted white, and have garages, whereas southeastern houses were smaller, more likely to be painted beige or brown, and have carports. Differences in roofs, porches, and building materials also distinguish northeastern and southeastern houses.

Differences in housing among U.S. communities derive largely from differences in the time period in which the houses were built. The ranch house was more common in the Southeast than in the Northeast primarily because the Southeast grew much more rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s, the period when the ranch house was especially popular. A housing development built in one region will resemble more closely developments built at the same time elsewhere in the country than will developments built in the same region at other points in time.
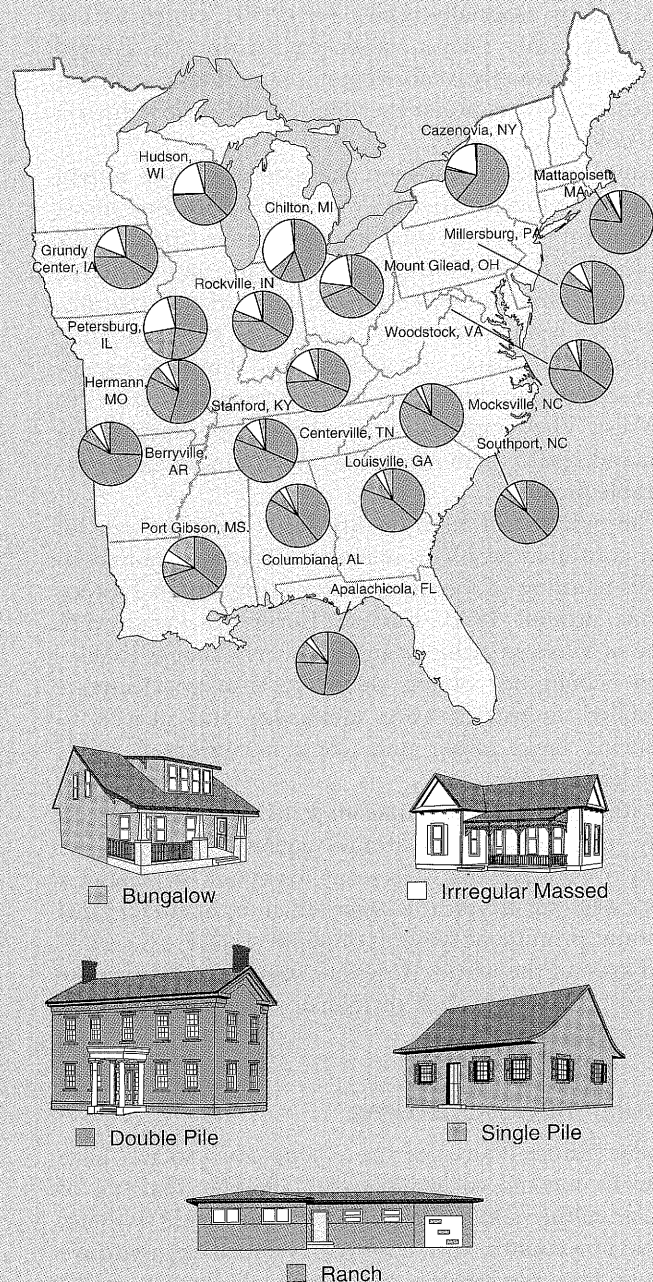

FIGURE 4-1.1 *Regional differences in house types. Jakle, Bastian, and Meyer allocated the single-family housing in 20 small towns in the eastern United States into five groups: bungalow, double-pile, irregularly massed, ranch, and single-pile. Ranch houses were more common in the southeastern towns, whereas double-pile predominated in northeastern areas.*

by Levi Strauss, priced at $50 to $100, are preferred as a status symbol. Millions of second-hand Levis are sold each year in Asia, especially in Japan and Thailand, with most priced between $100 and $1,000. Even in the face of globalization of popular culture such as wearing jeans, some local variation persists: according to sellers of used jeans, Asians especially prefer Levi's 501 model with a button fly rather than a zipper. And within the United States the button fly is more common on the West Coast, whereas easterners prefer the zipper fly because it doesn't let in cold air.

Jeans became an obsession and a status symbol among youth in the former Soviet Union when the Communist government prevented their import. Gangs would attack people to steal their American-made jeans, and authentic jeans would sell for $400 on the black market. Ironically, jeans were brought into the Soviet Union by the elite, including diplomats, bureaucrats, and business executives—essentially those who were permitted to travel to the West. These citizens obtained scarce products in the West and resold them inside the Soviet Union for a considerable profit.

The scarcity of high-quality jeans was just one of many consumer problems that were important motives in the dismantling of Communist governments in Eastern Europe around 1990. Eastern Europeans, who were aware of Western fashions and products—thanks to television—could not obtain them, because government-controlled industries were inefficient and geared to producing tanks rather than consumer-oriented goods (see Chapter 11).

With the end of communism, jeans are now imported freely into Russia. Levi Strauss opened a store in the center of Moscow that sells jeans for about $50, about a week's wage for a typical Russian. In an integrated global economy, prominent symbols of popular culture have diffused around the world. Access to these products is now limited primarily by lack of money rather than government regulation.

Popular Food Customs

Popular culture flourishes where people in a society have sufficient income to acquire the tangible elements of popular culture and the leisure time to make use of them. People in a country with a more developed economy are likely to have the income, time, and inclination to facilitate greater adoption of popular culture.

Alcohol and Fresh Produce. Consumption of large quantities of alcoholic beverages and snack foods are characteristic of the food customs of popular societies. Nonetheless, the amounts of alcohol and snacks consumed, as well as preferences for particular types, vary by region within more developed countries, such as the United States.

Americans choose particular beverages or snacks in part on the basis of preference for what is produced, grown, or imported locally. Bourbon consumption in the

United States is concentrated in the Upper South, where most of it is produced. Rum consumption is heavily concentrated on the East Coast, where it arrives from the Caribbean, whereas Canadian whiskey is preferred in communities contiguous to Canada (Figure 4–12). Southerners may prefer pork rinds because more hogs are raised there, and northerners may prefer popcorn and potato chips because more corn and potatoes are grown there.

However, cultural backgrounds also affect the amount and types of alcohol and snack foods consumed. Alcohol consumption relates partially to religious backgrounds and partially to income and advertising. Baptists and Mormons, for example, drink less than do adherents of other denominations. Because Baptists are concentrated
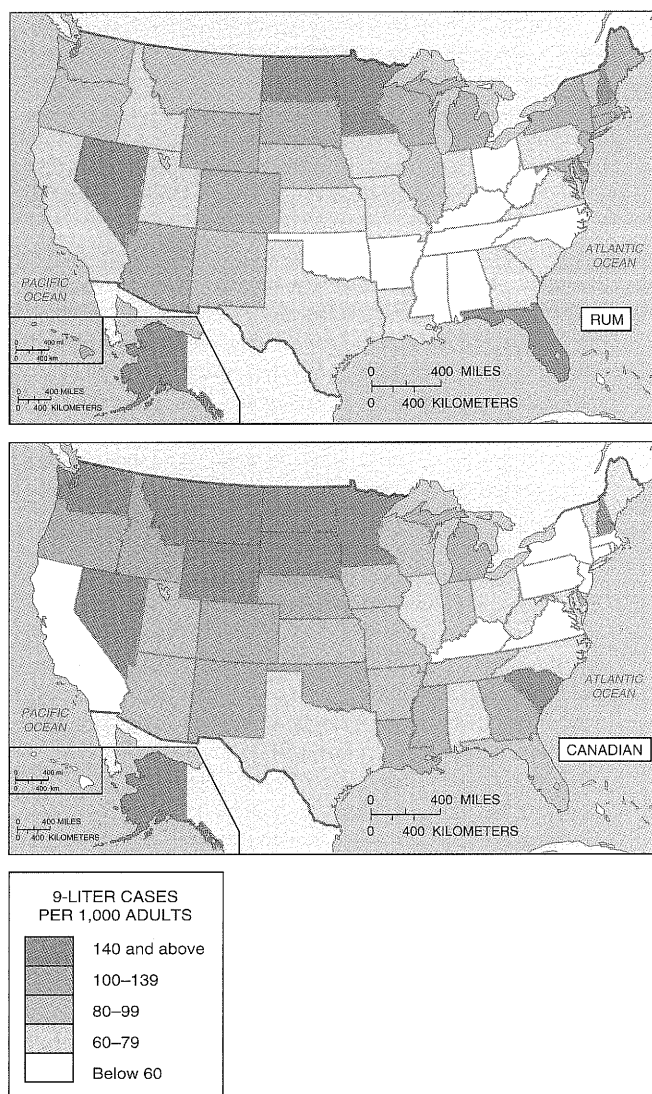

9-LITER CASES PER 1,000 ADULTS
140 and above
100–139
80–99
60–79
Below 60

FIGURE 4–12 *Per capita consumption of rum (top) and Canadian whiskey (bottom). Rum has a higher incidence of consumption in Florida and other East Coast states, where most of it is imported. States that have a high incidence of consumption of Canadian whiskey are located in the north, along the Canadian border. Preference for Canadian whiskey has apparently diffused southward from Canada into the United States.*

in the Southeast and Mormons in Utah, these regions have relatively low consumption rates. Nevada has a high rate because of the heavy concentration of gambling and other resort activities there. Texans may prefer tortilla chips because of the large number of Hispanic Americans there, and westerners may prefer multigrain chips because of greater concern for the nutrition content of snack foods.

Geographers cannot explain all the regional variations in food preferences. Why do urban residents prefer Scotch, and New Englanders consume nuts? Why is per capita consumption of snack food one-third higher in the Midwest than in the West? Why does consumption of gin and vodka show little spatial variation within the United States?

In general, though, consumption of alcohol and snack foods is part of popular culture primarily dependent on two factors—high income and national advertising. Variations within the United States are much less significant than differences between the United States and less developed countries of Africa and Asia.

Wine Production. The spatial distribution of wine production demonstrates that the environment plays a role in the distribution of popular as well as folk food customs. The distinctive character of a wine derives from a unique combination of soil, climate, and other physical characteristics at the place where the grapes are grown.

Vineyards are best cultivated in temperate climates of moderately cold, rainy winters and fairly long, hot summers. Hot, sunny weather is necessary in the summer for the fruit to mature properly, whereas winter is the preferred season for rain, because plant diseases that cause the fruit to rot are more active in hot, humid weather. Vineyards are planted on hillsides, if possible, to maximize exposure to sunlight and to facilitate drainage. A site near a lake or river is also desirable because water can temper extremes of temperature.

Grapes can be grown in a variety of soils, but the best wine tends to be produced from grapes grown in soil that is coarse and well drained—a soil not necessarily very fertile for other crops. For example, the soil is generally sandy and gravelly in the Bordeaux wine region, chalky in Champagne country, and of a slate composition in the Moselle Valley. The distinctive character of each region's wine is especially influenced by the unique combination of trace elements, such as boron, manganese, and zinc, in the rock or soil. In large quantities these elements could destroy the plants, but in small quantities they lend a unique taste to the grapes.

Because of the unique product created by the distinctive soil and climate characteristics, the world's finest wines are most frequently identified by their place of origin. Wines may be labeled with the region, town, district, or specific *estate*. A wine expert can determine the precise origin of a wine just by tasting because of the unique taste imparted to the grapes by the specific soil composition of each estate. (Similarly, a coffee expert can tell precisely where the beans were grown.)

The year of the harvest is also indicated on finer wines because specific weather conditions each year affect the quality and quantity of the harvest. Wines may also be identified by the variety of grape used rather than the location of the vineyard. Less expensive wines might contain a blend of grapes from a variety of estates and years.

Although grapes can be grown in a wide variety of locations, wine distribution is based principally on cultural values, both historical and contemporary. Wine is made today primarily in locations that have a tradition of excellence in making it and people who like to drink it and can afford to purchase it.

The social custom of wine production in much of France and Italy extends back at least to the Roman Empire. Wine consumption declined after the Fall of Rome, and many vineyards were destroyed. Monasteries preserved the wine-making tradition in medieval Europe for both sustenance and ritual. Wine consumption has become extremely popular again in Europe in recent centuries, as well as in the Western Hemisphere, which was colonized by Europeans. Vineyards are now typically owned by private individuals and corporations rather than religious organizations.

Wine production is discouraged in regions of the world dominated by religions other than Christianity (Figure 4–13). Hindus and Muslims in particular avoid alcoholic beverages. Thus wine production is limited in the Middle East (other than Israel) and southern Asia primarily because of cultural values, especially religion. The distribution of wine production shows that the diffusion of popular customs depends less on the distinctive environment of a location than on the presence of beliefs, institutions, and material traits conducive to accepting those customs.

Role of Television in Diffusing Popular Culture

Watching television is an especially significant popular custom for two reasons. First, it is the most popular leisure activity in more developed countries throughout the world. Second, television is the most important mechanism by which knowledge of popular culture, such as professional sports, is rapidly diffused across Earth.

Diffusion of Television

Inventors in a number of countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union, simultaneously contributed to the development of television. The U.S. public first saw television in the 1930s, but its diffusion was blocked for a number of years when broadcasting was curtailed or suspended entirely during World War II. In 1945, for example, there were only 10,000 television receivers in the United States. By 1949 the number rapidly increased to 1 million. It was 10 million in 1951 and 50 million in 1959. By the mid-1950s three fourths of all U.S. homes had television receivers.
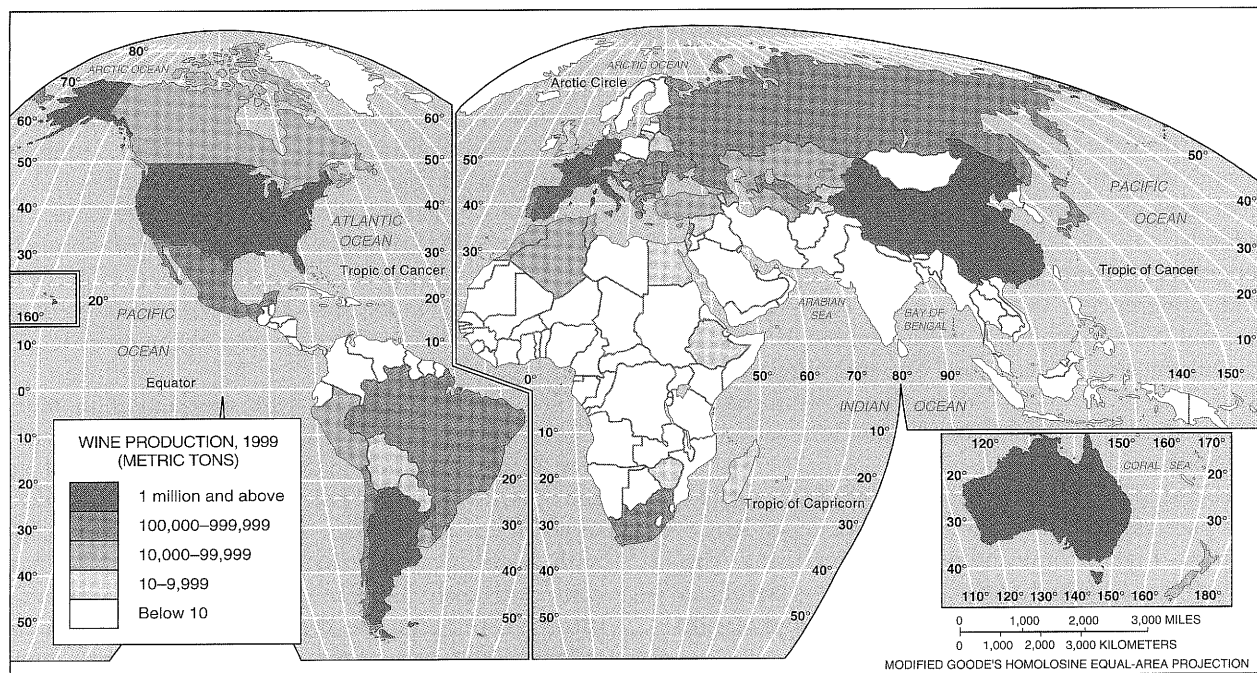
FIGURE 4–13 *Annual wine production. The distribution of wine production is influenced in part by the physical environment and in part by social customs. Most grapes used for wine are grown near the Mediterranean Sea or in areas of similar climate. Income, preferences, and other social customs also influence the distribution of wine consumption, as seen in the lower production levels of predominantly Muslim countries south of the Mediterranean.*

Television sets were being sold in only 20 countries during the 1950s, and more than 85 percent of the world's 37 million sets were in the United States. The United Kingdom had 9 percent of the world's television sets, the Soviet Union and Canada 2 percent each, and the rest of the world (primarily Cuba, Mexico, France, and Brazil) the remaining 2 percent. The United States still possessed more than half of the world's 98 million television receivers as late as the early 1960s, and the number of countries where sets were available increased to 62.

The number of countries where people possessed television sets increased to 91 during the 1960s, and the United States had one-third of the world's 229 million sets. By the early 1990s more than 180 countries had 900 million television sets, with less than one-fourth in the United States (Figure 4–14).

Currently, the level of television service falls into four categories. The first category consists of countries where nearly every household owns a TV set. This category includes the more developed countries of North America and Europe as well as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. A second category consists of countries in which ownership of a television is common but by no means universal. These are primarily Latin American countries and the poorer European states, such as Croatia and Romania.

The third category consists of countries in which television exists but has not yet been widely diffused to the population as a whole because of the high cost of receivers. This category includes some countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Finally, about 30 countries, most of which are in Africa and Asia, have very few television sets. Some of these countries do not have

operating TV stations, although programs from neighboring countries may be received.

In Afghanistan during the 1990s, not only did the Taliban refuse to permit any television stations to broadcast, they made it illegal to watch television, or even own a set. An unknown number of Afghans kept a TV and CD player hidden in their homes to watch tapes of programs and films smuggled in from Pakistan and other neighboring countries. If someone was caught, typical punishment was one to three months in prison and confiscation of equipment. If caught watching a tape with sex scenes, the offender would be sentenced to three years in jail. Few Afghans risked using a satellite dish to receive foreign broadcasts—the dish was all-too-obvious evidence of illegal behavior.

Diffusion of the Internet

The diffusion of internet service is following the pattern established by television a generation earlier. The number of internet hosts worldwide has growth from 213 in 1981 to 376,000 in 1990, 72 million in 2000, and 172 million in 2003 (Figure 4-15). Two thirds of the 172 million internet hosts in 2003 were in the United States, and the number of hosts per 1,000 inhabitants was substantially higher than in any other country.

Given the history of television, the internet is likely to diffuse rapidly to other countries in the years ahead. Other than the United States, relatively high rates of internet hosts were in more developed countries Japan, Canada, and Western Europe and only a tenth were in less developed countries. Among less developed regions,
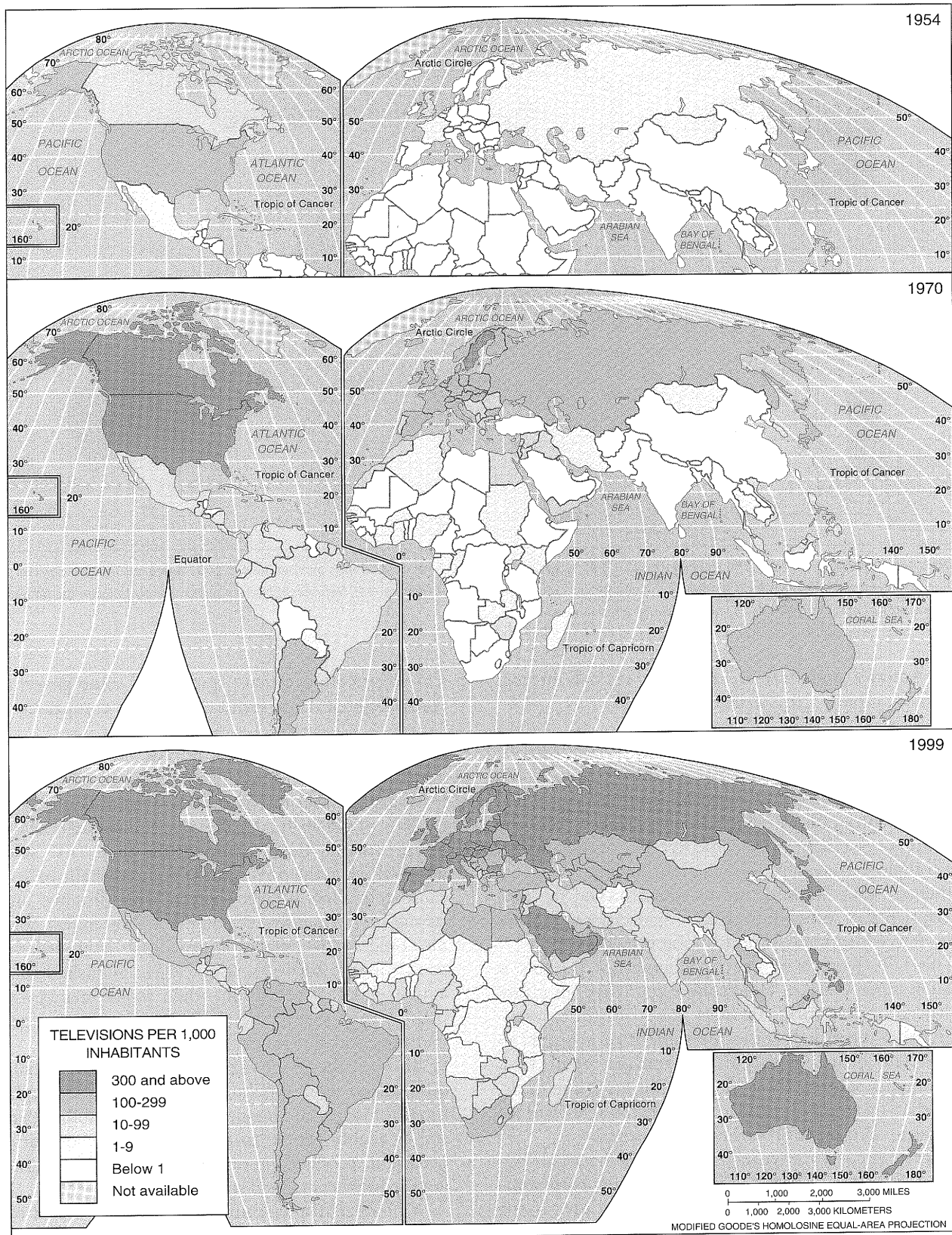
1954

1970

1999

TELEVISIONS PER 1,000
INHABITANTS

300 and above
100-299
10-99
1-9
Below 1
Not available

0   1,000   2,000   3,000 MILES
0   1,000   2,000   3,000 KILOMETERS
MODIFIED GOODE'S HOMOLOSINE EQUAL-AREA PROJECTION

FIGURE 4–14 *Televisions per 1,000 inhabitants, 1954, 1970, and 1999. Television has diffused from North America and Europe to other regions of the world, but the number of TV sets per capita still varies considerably among countries. The number of TV sets per capita is also an important indicator of a society's level of development, as shown in Chapter 9.*
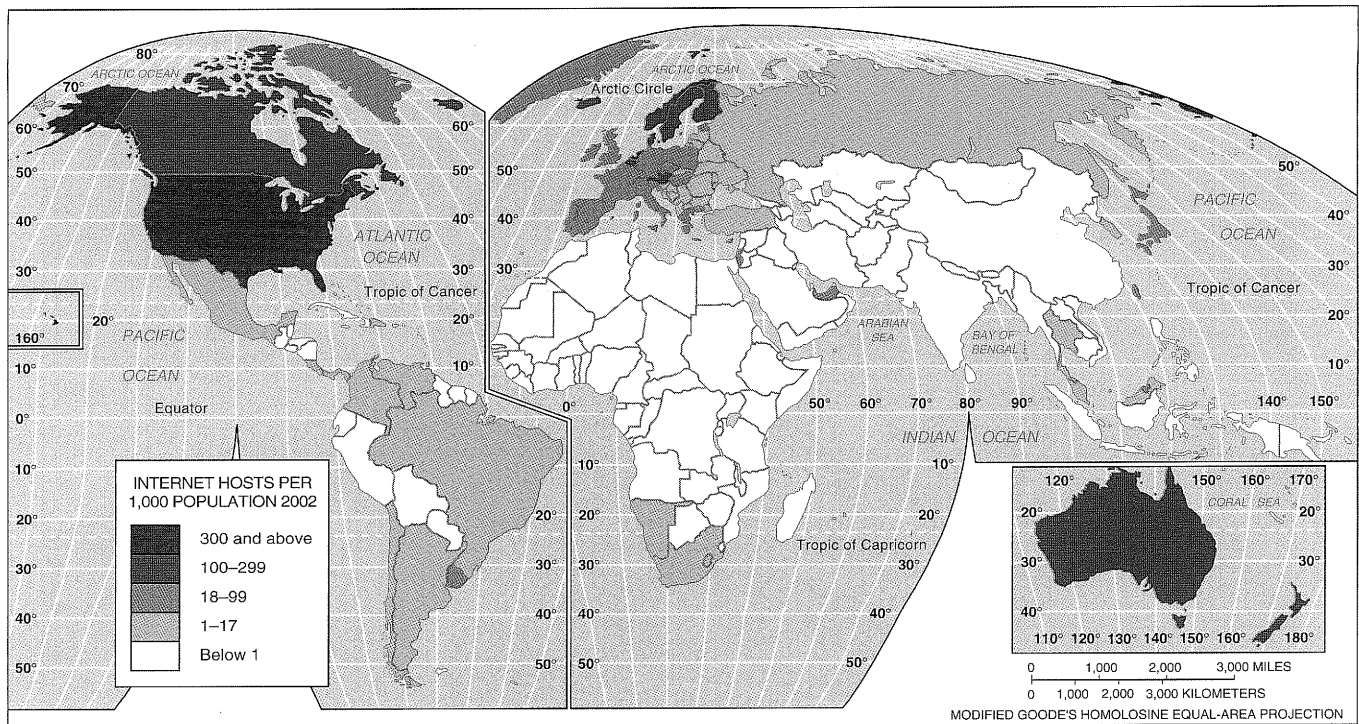
FIGURE 4–15 *Internet hosts per 1,000 inhabitants 2002.The United States had two-thirds of the world's Internet hosts in 2002 and a much higher number per capita than anywhere else in the world. Compare to the diffusion of television (top map of Figure 4–14). Diffusion of Internet service is likely to follow the pattern in the middle and bottom maps of Figure 4–14, but the rate of diffusion is unknown.*

Latin America and Asia are likely to expand internet hosts more rapidly than Africa.

Government Control of Television

In the United States most television stations are owned by private corporations, which receive licenses from the government to operate at specific frequencies (channels). The company makes a profit by selling air time for advertisements. Some stations, however, are owned by local governments or other nonprofit organizations and are devoted to educational or noncommercial programs.

The U.S. pattern of private commercial stations is found in other Western Hemisphere countries but is rare elsewhere in the world. In most countries the government either directly operates the stations or appoints an autonomous board of directors to manage them. Most governments control TV stations to minimize the likelihood that programs hostile to current policies will be broadcast—in other words, they are censored.

Operating costs are typically paid by the national government from tax revenues, although some government-controlled stations do sell air time to private advertisers. These advertisements are typically scheduled in extended blocks of time between programs rather than in the midst of programs, as in the United States. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) accepts no advertising and obtains revenue from the sale of licenses, required of all TV receiver owners; the fee is higher for color televisions than for black-and-white sets. A number of Western

European countries have transferred some government-controlled television stations to private companies.

Reduced Government Control. In the past, many governments viewed television as an important tool for fostering cultural integration; television could extol the exploits of the leaders or the accomplishments of the political system. People turned on their TV sets and watched what the government wanted them to see. Because television signals weaken with distance and are strong up to roughly 100 kilometers (60 miles), few people could receive television broadcasts from other countries. George Orwell's novel *1984*, published in 1949, anticipated that television—then in its infancy—would play a major role in the ability of a totalitarian government to control people's daily lives.

In recent years, changing technology—especially the diffusion of small satellite dishes—has made television a force for political change rather than stability. Satellite dishes enable people to choose from a wide variety of programs, produced in other countries, not just the local government-controlled station.

A number of governments in Asia have tried to prevent consumers from obtaining satellite dishes. The Chinese government banned private ownership of satellite dishes by its citizens, although foreigners and fancy hotels were allowed to keep them. The government of Singapore banned ownership of satellite dishes, yet it encourages satellite services, including MTV and HBO, to locate their Asian headquarters in the country. The

government of Saudi Arabia ordered 150,000 satellite dishes dismantled, claiming that they were "un-Islamic."

Governments have had little success in shutting down satellite technology. Despite the threat of heavy fines, several hundred thousand Chinese still own satellite dishes. Consumers can outwit the government because the small size of satellite dishes makes them easy to smuggle into the country and erect out of sight, perhaps behind a brick wall or under a canvas tarpaulin. A dish may be expensive by local standards—twice the annual salary of a typical Chinese, for example—but several neighbors can share the cost and hook up all of their TV sets to it.

The diffusion of small satellite dishes hastened the collapse of Communist governments in Eastern Europe during the late 1980s. For the first time, Eastern Europeans living beyond the signal range of Western broadcast stations could watch TV programs from Western Europe and North America. Eastern European countries have allocated some of their channels to such foreign broadcasters as CNN and MTV, because after many years under Communist control, citizens still do not trust the accuracy of locally produced television programs.

Satellite dishes represent only one assault on government control of the flow of information. Facsimile machines, portable video recorders, and cellular telephones have also put chinks in government censorship.

KEY ISSUE 4

Why Does Globalization of Popular Culture Cause Problems?

- Threat to folk culture
- Environmental impact of popular culture

The international diffusion of popular culture has led to two problems, both of which can be understood from geographic perspectives. First, the diffusion of popular culture may threaten the survival of traditional folk culture in many countries. Second, popular culture may be less responsive to the diversity of local environments and consequently may generate adverse environmental impacts.

Threat to Folk Culture

Many fear the loss of folk culture, especially because rising incomes can fuel demand for the possessions typical of popular culture. When people turn from folk to popular culture, they may also turn away from the society's traditional values. And the diffusion of popular culture from more developed countries can lead to dominance of Western perspectives.

Loss of Traditional Values

One example of the symbolic importance of folk culture is clothing. In African and Asian countries today, there is a contrast between the clothes of rural farmworkers and of urban business and government leaders. Adoption of a more developed society's types of clothing is part of a process of imitation and replication of foreign symbols of success. Leaders of African and Asian countries have traveled to MDCs and experienced the sense of social status attached to clothes, such as men's business suits. Adoption of clothing customs from more developed countries has become a symbol of authority and leadership at home. The Western business suit has been accepted as the uniform for business executives and bureaucrats around the world.

Wearing clothes typical of MDCs is controversial in some Middle Eastern countries. Some political leaders in the region choose to wear Western business suits as a sign that they are trying to forge closer links with the United States and Western European countries. Fundamentalist Muslims oppose the widespread adoption of Western clothes, especially by women living in cities, as well as other social customs and attitudes typical of more developed countries. Women are urged to abandon skirts and blouses in favor of the traditional black *chador*, a combination head covering and veil.

In its 1997 presidential election Iran was presented with a sharp contrast between Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, who favored banning Western popular culture not in accordance with strict Muslim practices, and a more moderate candidate, Mohammad Khatami, who favored more tolerance of Western cultural influences. Religious and military leaders supported Nateq-Nouri, but young people overwhelmingly supported Khatami. Said one 21-year-old woman, "I want Khatami to win because I want to continue wearing my blue jeans." Khatami won.

Change in Traditional Role of Women. The global diffusion of popular culture threatens the subservience of women to men that is embedded in many folk customs. Women were traditionally relegated to performing household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, and to bearing and raising large numbers of children. Those women who worked outside the home were likely to be obtaining food for the family, either through agricultural work or by trading handicrafts.

Under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during the late 1990s, women were treated especially harshly. Women were prohibited from attending school, working outside the home, seeking health care, or driving a car. They were permitted to leave home only if fully covered by clothing and escorted by a male relative. A woman behaving like a "Westerner" in public, such as wearing fingernail polish, revealing her face, or walking alone, could be beaten or shot.

Advancement of women was limited by low levels of education and high rates of victimization from violence, often inflicted by husbands. The concepts of legal equality and availability of economic and social opportunities outside the home have become widely accepted in more

Geisha. Exposure to modern technology does not necessarily change the tradi-tional role of women in many societies. In Kyoto, Japan, a geisha girl, who is trained to provide entertainment for men, arranges appointments on her way to the restaurant where she entertains her male clients.

developed countries, even where women in reality con-tinue to suffer from discriminatory practices.

However, contact with popular culture also has brought negative impacts for women in less developed countries, such as an increase in prostitution. Hundreds of thousands of men from more developed countries, such as Japan and Northern Europe (especially Norway, Germany, and the Netherlands), purchase tours from travel agencies that include airfare, hotels, and the use of a predetermined number of women. The principal desti-nations of these "sex tours" include the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, and to a lesser extent Indonesia and Sri Lanka. International prostitution is encouraged in these countries as a major source of foreign currency. Through this form of global interaction, popular culture may regard women as essentially equal at home but as objects that money can buy in foreign folk societies (See Global Forces, Local Impacts box).

Threat of Foreign Media Imperialism

Less developed countries fear the incursion of popular culture for other reasons. Leaders of some LDCs con-sider the dominance of popular customs by MDCs as a threat to their independence. The threat is posed prima-rily by the media, especially news-gathering organiza-tions and television.

Three MDCs—the United States, the United King-dom, and Japan—dominate the television industry in LDCs. The Japanese operate primarily in South Asia and East Asia, selling their electronic equipment. British companies have invested directly in management and programming for television in Africa. U.S. corporations own or provide technical advice to many Latin American stations. These three countries are also the major ex-porters of programs. For example, only 6 percent of all television programs in Japan are foreign-made, compared to 83 percent in Uganda and 66 percent in Ecuador.

Global Forces, Local Impacts

India's Marriage Dowries

Global diffusion of popular social customs has had an unin-tended negative impact for women in India: an increase in de-mand for dowries. A dowry is a "gift" from the family of a bride to the family of a groom, as a sign of respect. Though il-legal in India since 1961, the dowry has regained popularity in recent years.

Traditionally, the local custom in much of India was for the groom to provide a small dowry to the bride's family. Now, the custom has reversed, and the family of a bride is often ex-pected to provide a substantial dowry to the husband's family.

Dowries have become much larger in modern India, an important source of income for the groom's family. A dowry can take the form of either cash or expensive consumer goods, such as motor vehicles, electronics, and household appliances.

The government has tried to ban dowries because of the adverse impact on women. If the bride's family is unable to pay a promised dowry or installments, the groom's family may cast the bride out on the street, and her family may refuse to

take her back. Husbands and in-laws angry over the small size of dowry payments killed nearly 7,000 women in 2001, ac-cording to government statistics.

Because a boy will generate revenue, whereas a girl will im-pose a significant burden, a fetus is more likely to be aborted if it is found to be a girl. A study of a Mumbai (Bombay) clinic found that 7,999 of 8,000 aborted fetuses were female. In fam-ilies where food is scarce, girls age 1-5 are 43 percent more likely than boys to die of hunger or malnutrition, according to another study.

In a highly publicized case, just before the start of a wed-ding ceremony in July 2003, a groom's family demanded a dowry of $25,000 in cash, in addition to two televisions, two home theater sets, two refrigerators, two air-conditioners, and one car that had already been paid. The bride halted the cere-mony and called the police on her cell phone. The family was arrested for violation of the 1961 anti-dowry law. The story appeared in *The Times of India* with the headline "It Takes Guts to Send Your Groom Packing."

Leaders of many LDCs view the spread of television as a new method of economic and cultural imperialism on the part of the MDCs, especially the United States. American television, like other media, presents characteristically American beliefs and social forms, such as upward social mobility, relative freedom for women, glorification of youth, and stylized violence. These attractive themes may conflict with and drive out traditional social customs.

To avoid offending traditional values, many satellite broadcasters in Asia do not carry MTV or else allow governments to censor unacceptable videos. Cartoons featuring Porky Pig may be banned in Muslim countries, where people avoid pork products. Instead, entertainment programs emphasize family values and avoid controversial cultural, economic, and political issues.

Western Control of News Media. Less developed countries fear the effects of the news-gathering capability of the media even more than their entertainment function. The diffusion of information to newspapers around the world is dominated by the Associated Press (AP) and Reuters, which are owned by American and British companies, respectively.

The process of gathering news worldwide is expensive, and most newspapers and broadcasters are unable to afford their own correspondents. Instead, they buy the right to use the dispatches of one or more of the main news organizations. The AP transmits most news photographs and provides radio stations around the world with reports from its correspondents. Similarly, the AP and Reuters Television supply most of the world's television news video.

The news media in most LDCs are dominated by the government, which typically runs the radio and TV service as well as the domestic news-gathering agency. Newspapers may be owned by the government, a political party, or a private individual, but in any event they are dependent on the government news-gathering organization for information. Sufficient funds are not available to establish a private news service.

Many African and Asian government officials criticize the Western concept of freedom of the press. They argue that the American news organizations reflect American values and do not provide a balanced, accurate view of other countries. U.S. news-gathering organizations are more interested in covering earthquakes, hurricanes, or other sensational disasters than more meaningful but less visual and dramatic domestic stories, such as birth-control programs, health-care innovations, or construction of new roads.

Nevertheless, according to a study by the British Institute of Communications, television newscasts throughout the world allocated the vast majority of time to domestic stories. On the same night, these were the first stories on the most widely watched nationwide newscasts:

- Brazil: traffic jam in Rio de Janeiro
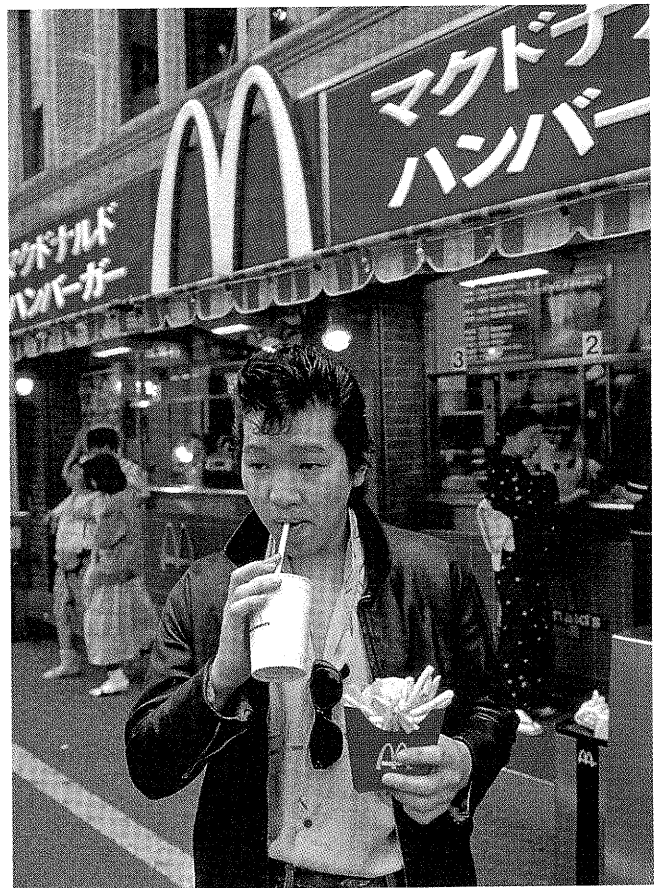
Tokyo McDonald's. U.S. fast-food chains have diffused to other countries, including Japan. Corporate logos enable customers to instantly identify the establishment regardless of whether they know the language.

- India: the birthday of the assassinated former prime minister, Indira Gandhi
- Japan: sumo wrestling results
- Kuwait: the day's activities of the ruling sheik
- Thailand: the increasing cost of eggs

Veteran travelers and journalists invariably pack a portable shortwave radio when they visit other countries. In many regions of the world the only reliable and unbiased news accounts come from the BBC World Service shortwave radio newscasts. Reliance on BBC newscasts is especially strong in war zones.

Environmental Impact of Popular Culture

Popular culture is less likely than folk culture to be distributed with consideration for physical features. The spatial organization of popular culture reflects the distribution of social and economic features. In a global economy and culture, popular culture appears increasingly uniform.

Modifying Nature

Popular culture can significantly modify or control the environment. It may be imposed on the environment

Route 66. When it connected Chicago and Los Angeles, Route 66 was once a well-known symbol of an especially prominent element of U.S. popular culture—the freedom to drive a car across the country's wide open spaces. Most of Route 66 has been replaced by interstate highways, and the remaining stretches are often cluttered by unattractive strip development, dominated by large signs for national motel, gasoline, and restaurant chains.

rather than springing forth from it, as with many folk customs. For many popular customs the environment is something to be modified to enhance participation in a leisure activity or to promote the sale of a product. Even if the resulting built environment looks "natural," it is actually the deliberate creation of people in pursuit of popular social customs.

Diffusion of Golf. Golf courses, because of their large size (80 hectares, or 200 acres), provide a prominent example of imposing popular culture on the environment. A surge in U.S. golf popularity has spawned construction of roughly 200 courses during the past two decades. Geographer John Rooney attributes this to increased income and leisure time, especially among recently retired older people and younger people with flexible working hours.

According to Rooney, the provision of golf courses is not uniform across the United States. Although perceived as a warm-weather sport, the number of golf courses per person is actually greatest in north-central states, from Kansas to North Dakota, as well as the northeastern states abutting the Great Lakes, from Wisconsin to upstate New York (Figure 4–16). People in these regions have a long tradition of playing golf, and social clubs with golf courses are important institutions in the fabric of the regions' popular customs.

In contrast, access to golf courses is more limited in the South, in California, and in the heavily urbanized Middle Atlantic region between New York City and Washington, D.C. Rapid population growth in the South and West and lack of land on which to build in the Middle Atlantic region have reduced the number of courses

per capita. However, selected southern and western areas, such as coastal South Carolina, southern Florida, and central Arizona, have high concentrations of golf courses as a result of the arrival of large numbers of golf-playing northerners, either as vacationers or permanent residents.

Golf courses are designed partially in response to local physical conditions. Grass species are selected to thrive in the local climate and still be suitable for the needs of greens, fairways, and roughs. Existing trees and native vegetation are retained if possible (few fairways in Michigan are lined by palms). Yet, like other popular customs, golf courses remake the environment: creating or flattening hills, cutting grass or letting it grow tall, carting in or digging up sand for traps, and draining or expanding bodies of water to create hazards.

Uniform Landscapes

The distribution of popular culture around the world tends to produce more uniform landscapes. The spatial expression of a popular custom in one location will be similar to another. In fact, promoters of popular culture want a uniform appearance to generate "product recognition" and greater consumption.

Fast-food Restaurants. The diffusion of fast-food restaurants is a good example of such uniformity. Such restaurants are usually organized as franchises. A franchise is a company's agreement with businesspeople in a local area to market that company's product. The franchise agreement lets the local outlet use the company's name, symbols, trademarks, methods, and architectural

FIGURE 4–16 The 50 best-served and worst-served metropolitan areas in terms of the number of golf holes per capita. In the north-central states, people have a long tradition of playing golf, even if it is confined to summer months. The ratio is less favorable for golfers in the large urban areas of the East Coast, as well as in the rapidly growing areas of the South and West.
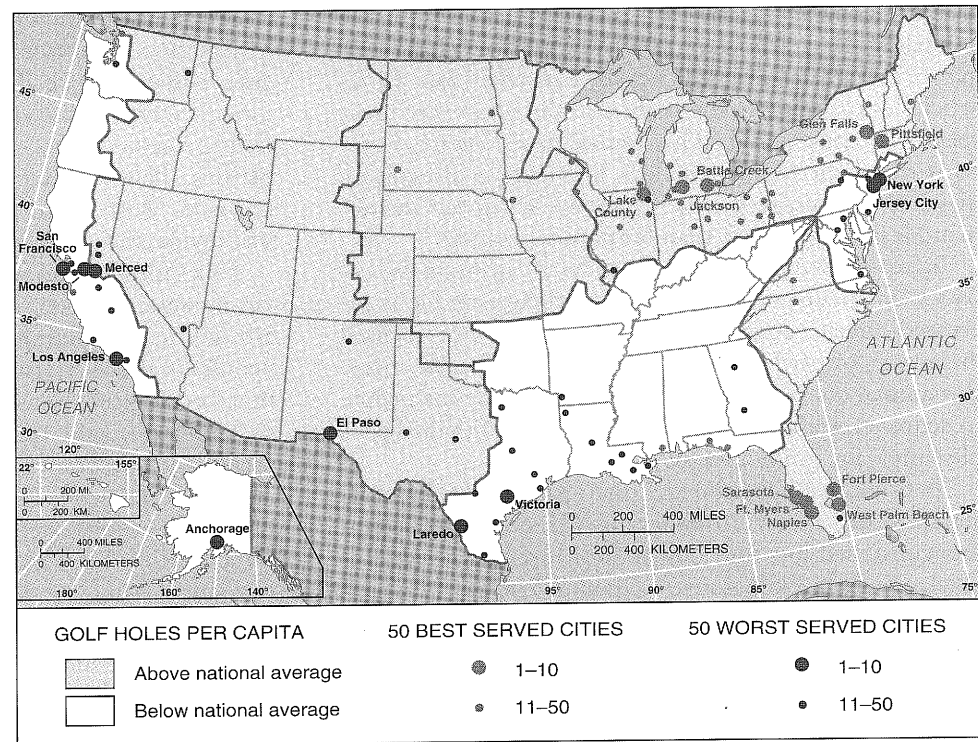
styles. To both local residents and travelers, the buildings are immediately recognizable as part of a national or multinational company. A uniform sign is prominently displayed.

Much of the attraction of fast-food restaurants comes from the convenience of the product and the use of the building as a low-cost socializing location for teenagers or families with young children. At the same time, the success of fast-food restaurants depends on large-scale mobility: people who travel or move to another city immediately recognize a familiar place. Newcomers to a particular place know what to expect in the restaurant, because the establishment does not reflect strange and unfamiliar local customs that could be uncomfortable.

Fast-food restaurants were originally developed to attract people who arrived by car. The buildings generally were brightly colored, even gaudy, to attract motorists. Recently built fast-food restaurants are more subdued, with brick facades, pseudo-antique fixtures, and other stylistic details. To facilitate reuse of the structure in case the restaurant fails, company signs often are freestanding rather than integrated into the building design.

Uniformity in the appearance of the landscape is promoted by a wide variety of other popular structures in North America, such as gas stations, supermarkets, and motels. These structures are designed so that both local residents and visitors immediately recognize the purpose of the building, even if not the name of the company.

Global Diffusion of Uniform Landscapes. Physical expression of uniformity in popular culture has diffused from North America to other parts of the world. American motels and fast-food chains have opened in other countries. These establishments appeal to North American travelers, yet most customers are local residents who wish to sample American customs they have seen on television.

Diffusion of popular culture across Earth is not confined to products that originate in North America. With faster communications and transportation, customs from anyplace on Earth can rapidly diffuse elsewhere. Japanese automobiles and electronics, for example, have diffused in recent years to the rest of the world, including North America. Until the 1970s, automobiles produced in North America, Europe, and Japan differed substantially in appearance and size, but in recent years styling has become more uniform, largely because of consumer preference around the world for Japanese cars. Automakers such as General Motors, Ford, Toyota, and Honda now manufacture similar models in North and South America, Europe, and Asia, instead of separately designed models for each continent.

Negative Environmental Impact

The diffusion of some popular customs can adversely impact environmental quality in two ways: depletion of scarce natural resources and pollution of the landscape.

Increased Demand for Natural Resources. Diffusion of some popular customs increases demand for raw materials, such as minerals and other substances found beneath Earth's surface. The depletion of resources used to produce energy, especially petroleum, is discussed in Chapter 14.

Popular culture may demand a large supply of certain animals, resulting in depletion or even extinction of some species. For example, some animals are killed for their skins, which can be shaped into fashionable clothing and

sold to people living thousands of kilometers from the animals' habitat. The skins of the mink, lynx, jaguar, kangaroo, and whale have been heavily consumed for various articles of clothing, to the point that the survival of these species is endangered. This unbalances ecological systems of which the animals are members. Folk culture may also encourage the use of animal skins, but the demand is usually smaller than for popular culture.

Increased demand for some products can strain the capacity of the environment. An important example is increased meat consumption. This has not caused extinction of cattle and poultry; we simply raise more. But animal consumption is an inefficient way for people to acquire calories—90 percent less efficient than if people simply ate grain directly.

To produce 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of beef sold in the supermarket, nearly 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of grain are consumed by the animal. For every kilogram of chicken, nearly 3 kilograms (6.6 pounds) of grain are consumed by the fowl. This grain could be fed to people directly, bypassing the inefficient meat step. With a large percentage of the world's population undernourished, some question this inefficient use of grain to feed animals for eventual human consumption.

Pollution. Popular culture also can pollute the environment. The environment can accept and assimilate some level of waste from human activities. But popular culture generates a high volume of waste—solids, liquids, and gases—that must be absorbed into the environment. Although waste is discharged in all three forms, the most visible is solid waste—cans, bottles, old cars, paper, and plastics. These products are often discarded rather than recycled. With more people adopting popular customs worldwide, this problem grows.

Folk culture, like popular culture, can also cause environmental damage, especially when natural processes are ignored. A widespread belief exists that indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere practiced more "natural," ecologically sensitive agriculture before the arrival of Columbus and other Europeans. Geographers increasingly question this. In reality, pre-Columbian folk customs included burning grasslands for planting and hunting, cutting extensive forests, and overhunting of some species. Very high rates of soil erosion have been documented in Central America from the practice of folk culture.

The more developed societies that produce endless supplies for popular culture have created the technological capacity both to create large-scale environmental damage and to control it. However, a commitment of time and money must be made to control the damage. Adverse environmental impact of popular culture is further examined in Chapter 14.

SUMMARY

Material culture can be divided into two types: folk and popular. Folk culture most often exists among small, homogeneous groups living in relative isolation at a low level of economic development. Popular culture is characteristic of societies with good communications and transportation, which enable rapid diffusion of uniform concepts. Geographers are concerned with several aspects of folk and popular culture.

Geographers study an array of thousands of social customs with distinctive spatial distributions. Groups display preferences in providing material needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, and in leisure activities such as performing arts and recreation. Examining where various social customs are practiced helps us to understand the extent of cultural diversity in the world.

Folk culture is especially interesting to geographers, because its distribution is relatively clustered and its preservation can be seen as enhancing diversity in the world. Popular culture is important, too, because it derives from the high levels of material wealth characteristic of societies that are economically developed. As societies seek to improve their economic level, they may abandon traditional folk culture and embrace popular culture associated with more developed countries.

Underlying the patterns of material culture are differences in the way people relate to their environment. Material culture contributes to the modification of the environment, and in turn nature influences the cultural values of an individual or a group.

Geographers, then, classify culture into popular and folk based on differences in the ways the environment is modified and meaning is derived from environmental conditions.

Popular culture makes relatively extensive modifications of the environment, given society's greater technological means and inclination to do so. Here again are the key issues concerning folk and popular culture:

1. **Where do folk and popular cultures originate and diffuse?** Because of distinctive processes of origin and diffusion, folk culture has different distribution patterns than does popular culture. Folk culture is more likely to have an anonymous origin and to diffuse slowly through migration, whereas popular culture is more likely to be invented and diffused rapidly with the use of modern communications.

2. **Why is folk culture clustered?** Unique regions of folk culture arise because of lack of interaction among groups, even those living nearby. Folk culture is more likely to be influenced by the local environment.

3. **Why is popular culture widely distributed?** Popular culture diffuses rapidly across Earth, facilitated by modern communications, especially television. Differences in popular culture are more likely to be observed in one place at different points in time than among different places at one point in time.

4. **Why does globalization of popular culture cause problems?** Geographers observe two kinds of problems from diffusion of popular culture across the landscape. First, popular culture—generally originating in Western MDCs—may cause elimination of some folk culture. Second, popular culture may adversely affect the environment.
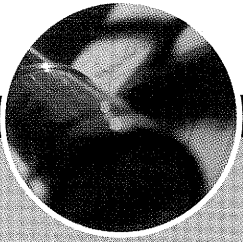
The Aboriginal Artists Return to Australia

The Aboriginal Artists of Australia and their audience in New York's Lincoln Center highlight the contrast between folk culture—rooted in the uniqueness of an isolated landscape—and popular culture, which imposes uniform standards on the landscape. Will the Aboriginal dancers maintain their traditions? Or will they be enticed by the consumer goods characteristic of popular customs, such as televisions and cars? What from the United States did they take back with them to Australia?

Many Aboriginals were not given the choice of maintaining their traditional folk customs or becoming part of popular culture. Between 1910 and 1970 the Australian government forcibly removed nearly 100,000 Aboriginal children from their families. Selected children usually had a white father or grandfather. Children with lighter skins were adopted by white families, whereas darker skinned ones were placed in orphanages. Because those with the darkest skins were not included in the program, mothers tried to hold on to their light-skinned babies by rubbing charcoal on them.

The Australian government removed Aboriginal youngsters from their homes in the belief that growing up in the country's dominant white society would be in the best interest of the children. Aboriginals would soon die out from a low fertility rate and, with them, their folk culture, including the use of 400 languages.

The Aboriginal removal program has been terminated, but the number of Aboriginals in Australia is now less than one-half
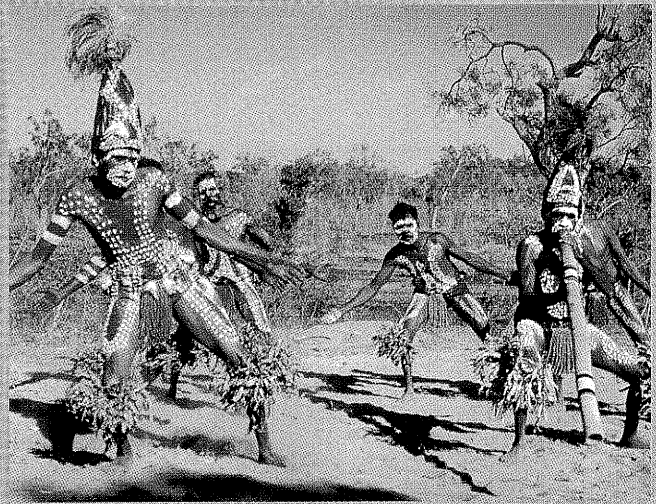
Aborigines perform a traditional dance in Australia.

million, less than 3 percent of the national population. The folk culture of the remaining Aboriginals will now be preserved through groups such as the Australian Artists rather than obliterated. But the experience of the Aboriginals demonstrates how frail the preservation of folk culture can be in the face of popular culture.

KEY TERMS

Custom (p. 117)
Folk culture (p. 117)

Habit (p. 117)
Popular culture (p. 117)

Taboo (p. 125)

THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY

1. Should geographers regard culture and social customs as meaningful generalizations about a group of people, or should they concentrate instead on understanding how specific individuals interact with the physical environment? Why?
2. In what ways might gender affect the distribution of social customs in a community?
3. Are there examples of groups, either in more developed countries or in less developed countries, that have success-

fully resisted the diffusion of popular customs? Describe such a group and tell how it has succeeded in preserving its culture.
4. Which elements of the physical environment are emphasized in the portrayal of various places on television?
5. Which images of social customs do countries depict in campaigns to promote tourism? To what extent do these images reflect local social customs realistically?

ON THE INTERNET

The theme of folk and popular culture featured in Chapter 4 is further explored in cyberspace (**www.prenhall.com/ rubenstein**). In our Critical Thinking essay we examine a global system of culture, whereas our Short Essay asks you to delve into the music of the world's many diverse cultures using audio and video clips from around the world. In our Reviewing Concepts essay we take you to an exciting virtual cultural festival, and our review questions focus on such issues as cultural origination and diffusion, folk culture clustering, and the future of folk cultures. These multiple choice and true/false questions,

with immediate electronic feedback, will test your understanding of folk and popular culture concepts.

Most major newspapers and broadcasters maintain Web sites. Particularly interesting for geographers and other social scientists is access to media from distant locations: newspapers that were difficult to obtain and radio stations that were impossible to receive. Foreign media can be most easily found through Yahoo. English-language newspapers are published throughout the world, even in countries where English is not the most widely spoken language.

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