

## KEY ISSUE 1

# Where Are Folk and Popular Leisure Activities Distributed?

- Characteristics of Folk and Popular Culture
- Origin and Diffusion of Folk and Popular Music
- Origin and Diffusion of Folk and Popular Sports

Culture was defined in Chapter 1 as the body of material traits, customary beliefs, and social forms that together constitute the distinct tradition of a group of people. Geographers are interested in all three components of the definition of culture:

- Chapter 4 focuses on the first part of this definition (material traits)—the visible elements that a group possesses and leaves behind for the future.
- Chapters 5 and 6 examine two important components of a group's beliefs and values—language and religion.
- Chapters 7 and 8 look at the social forms (ethnicity and political institutions) that maintain values and protect the artifacts.

Two elements of culture are emphasized in this chapter:

- **Daily necessities: Food, clothing, and shelter.** All people must consume food, wear clothing, and find shelter, but different cultural groups do so in distinctive ways (Figure 4-3).
- **Leisure activities: Arts and recreation.** Each cultural group has its own definition of meaningful art and stimulating recreation (Figure 4-4).

Geographers search for where these various elements of culture are found in the world and for reasons why the observed distributions occur. How does culture influence

▼ FIGURE 4-3 MATERIAL CULTURE Roots are being cooked near Ghanzi, Botswana.



▲ FIGURE 4-4 LEISURE Women play soccer in Dodoma, Tanzania.

behavior? To answer this question, habit must be distinguished from 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, such as many students typically wearing jeans to class.

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 has been widely adopted by a group of people (Figure 4-5).

A collection of social customs produces a group's material culture; for example, 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.

A consideration of 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. For example, a group living in one mountainous area may have little connection with a group living in another mountainous area, such as in the Himalayas, described on the next page.



▲ FIGURE 4-5 HABIT AND CUSTOM As CEO of Fiat and Chrysler, Sergio Marchionne had a habit of wearing black sweaters, even when meeting other executives who adhered to the custom of wearing suits and ties.

## Characteristics of Folk and Popular Culture

### Learning Outcome 4.1.1

Compare the origin, diffusion, and distribution of folk and popular culture.

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 different spatial distributions of popular and folk cultures—the process of origin and the pattern of diffusion.

### ORIGIN

Culture originates at a *hearth*, a center of innovation. Folk culture often has anonymous hearths, originating from anonymous sources, at unknown dates, through unidentified originators. It may also have multiple hearths, originating independently in isolated locations.

In contrast, popular culture is most often a product of developed countries, especially in North America and Europe. Popular culture is typically traceable to a specific person or corporation in a particular place, whereas folk culture typically has an unknown point of origin. For example, popular music as we know it today originated around 1900. At that time, the main popular musical entertainment in North America and Europe was the variety show, called the music hall in the United Kingdom and vaudeville in the United States. To provide songs for music halls and vaudeville, a music industry was developed in a district of New York that became known as Tin Pan Alley (Figure 4-6).

Popular music and other elements of popular culture, such as food and clothing, arise from a combination of advances in industrial technology and increased leisure time. Industrial technology permits the uniform reproduction of

▼ FIGURE 4-6 ORIGIN OF POPULAR MUSIC Shops such as this one in New York City's Tin Pan Alley sold popular music in records and sheet music in the early twentieth century.



objects in large quantities (iPods, 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 service and manufacturing jobs.

### DIFFUSION

Compared to popular culture, folk culture is transmitted from one location to another more slowly and on a smaller scale, primarily through relocation diffusion (migration). The spread of popular culture, such as popular music, typically follows the process of hierarchical diffusion, diffusing rapidly and extensively from hearths or nodes of innovation with the help of modern communications.

The diffusion of American popular music worldwide began in earnest during the 1940s, when the Armed Forces Radio Network broadcast music to American soldiers and to citizens of countries where American forces were stationed or fighting during World War II. In the late twentieth century, western dance music diffused rapidly from the United States to Europe, especially Detroit's techno music and Chicago's house music (Figure 4-7). Techno music was heavily influenced by soul, gospel, and ultimately African folk music. House music was heavily influenced by hip-hop that emerged in New York and other urban areas, which in turn diffused from funk, jazz, and again ultimately African folk music.

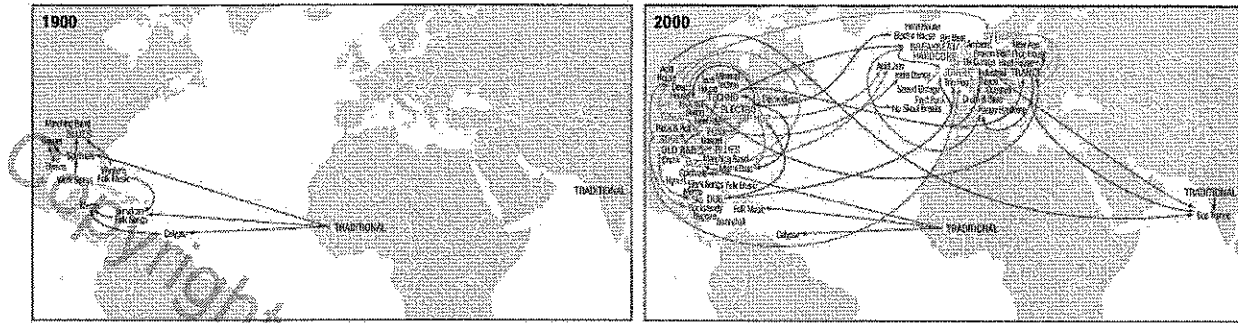
### DISTRIBUTION

Popular culture is distributed widely across many countries, with little regard for physical factors. The distribution is influenced by the ability of people to access the material. The principal obstacle to access is lack of income to purchase the material.

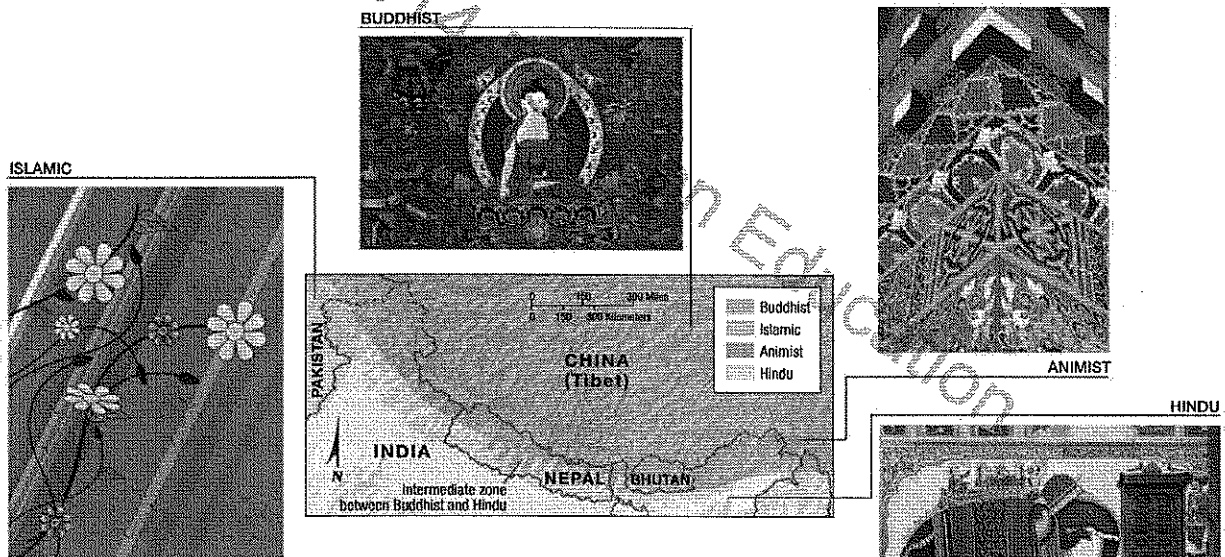
A combination of local physical and cultural factors influences the distinctive distributions of folk culture. For example, in a study of artistic customs in the Himalaya Mountains, geographers P. Karan and Cotton Mather revealed that distinctive views of the physical environment emerge among neighboring 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 4-8). Despite their spatial proximity, limited interaction among these groups produces distinctive folk customs.

Through their choices of subjects of paintings, each group reveals how its culture mirrors the religions and individual views of the group's environment:

- **Buddhists.** In the northern region Buddhists paint idealized divine figures, such as monks and saints. Some of these figures are depicted as bizarre or terrifying, perhaps reflecting the inhospitable environment.



▲ FIGURE 4-7 DIFFUSION OF WESTERN DANCE MUSIC Popular dance music originated in the Western Hemisphere and diffused to Europe and Asia during the 1980s.



▲ FIGURE 4-8 DISTRIBUTION OF FOLK CULTURE Distinct folk painting traditions are distributed within the Himalayas as a result of isolation of cultural groups.

- **Hindus.** In the southern region Hindus create scenes from everyday life and familiar local scenes. Their paintings sometimes portray a deity in a domestic scene and frequently represent the region's violent and extreme climatic conditions.
- **Muslims.** In the western portion Muslims show the region's beautiful plants and flowers because the Muslim faith prohibits displaying animate objects in art. In contrast with the paintings from the Buddhist and Hindu regions, these paintings do not depict harsh climatic conditions.
- **Animists.** Animists from Myanmar (Burma) and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, who have migrated to the

eastern region of the study area, paint symbols and designs that derive from their religion rather than from the local environment.

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

**Pause and Reflect 4.1.1**

What geographic factors account for the diversity of cultures in the Himalayas?

## Origin and Diffusion of Folk and Popular Music

### Learning Outcome 4.1.2

#### Compare the characteristics of folk and popular music.

Every culture in human history has had some tradition of music, argues music researcher Daniel Levitan. As music is a part of both folk and popular culture traditions, it can be used to illustrate the differences in the origin, diffusion, and distribution of folk and popular culture.

### FOLK MUSIC

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. In reality, folk songs usually originate anonymously and are 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. As people migrate, folk music travels with them as part of the diffusion of folk culture.

Folk songs may tell a story or convey information about life-cycle events, such as birth, death, and marriage, or environmental features, such as agriculture and climate. For example, in Vietnam, where most people are subsistence farmers, information about agricultural technology was traditionally conveyed through folk songs. 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 rười ắt là không non!*

This song can be translated as follows:

While seedlings for the summer crop are not old when they are three months of age,  
Seedlings for the winter crop are certainly not young when they are one-and-a-half months old.

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

Festivals throughout Vietnam feature music in locally meaningful environmental settings, such as hillsides or on water. Singers in traditional clothes sing about elements of daily life in the local village, such as the trees, flowers, and water source (Figure 4-9).

### Pause and Reflect 4.1.2

What type of music do you like? Where does it fit in the popular music maps?



▲ FIGURE 4-9 VIETNAMESE FOLK MUSIC Singers perform Quan Ho folk songs as part of the annual Lim Festival, which is held annually on the 13th to the 15th day of the first lunar month. Quan Ho folk music dates back more than 500 years and is recognized by UNESCO as part of humanity's intangible heritage.

### POPULAR MUSIC

In contrast to folk music, popular music is written by specific individuals for the purpose of being sold to or performed in front of a large number of people. It frequently displays a high degree of technical skill through manipulation of sophisticated electronic equipment.

As with other elements of popular culture, popular musicians have more connections with performers of similar styles, regardless of where in the world they happen to live, than they do with performers of different styles who happen to live in the same community. The Landscape of Music project illustrates this point by depicting popular music as a world map, with different types of popular music represented as countries and musicians as places within the countries (Figure 4-10). "Countries" that are closer to each other have relatively similar musical styles. The most important musicians in each style are represented on the "world" map; the larger the size of the type, the more important the musician. Zooming in on a portion of the map reveals less important musicians within individual "countries."

In the past, according to Richard Florida, Charlotta Mellander, and Kevin Stolarick, musicians clustered in particular communities according to shared interest in specific styles, such as Tin Pan Alley in New York, Dixieland jazz in New Orleans, country in Nashville, and Motown in Detroit. Now with the globalization of popular music, musicians are less tied to the culture of particular places and instead increasingly cluster in communities where other creative artists reside, regardless of the particular style. In the United States, New York and Los Angeles attract the largest number of musicians so they can be near sources of employment and cultural activities that attract a wide variety of artists, not just performers of a specific type of music. Nashville is also a leading center for musicians, especially those performing country and gospel; it has the largest concentrations of musicians when the number of musicians there is compared to a much smaller population than in New York and Los Angeles.

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

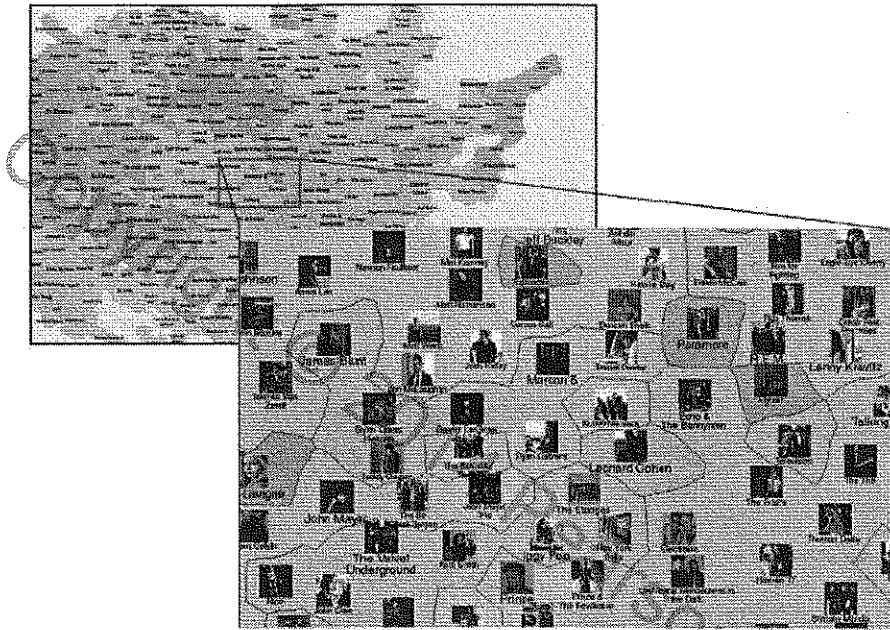


FIGURE 4-10 THE LANDSCAPE OF MUSIC The map shows relations among musicians. Musicians whose styles are closely related are depicted as inhabiting the same region. Musicians whose styles are unrelated are shown as inhabiting regions that are not adjacent to each other. The map was created by Yifan Hu, a researcher at AT&T Labs.

Popular musicians are also increasingly attracted to a handful of large clusters in order to have better access to agencies that book live performances, which have become increasingly important compared to recordings. Nearly all of the music festivals that attract the highest attendance are in Europe and the United States.

Connections between popular musicians are depicted in a transit map. Subway “lines” represent styles of popular music, and “interchanges” represent individuals who cross over between two styles. For example, Kanye West is placed at the interchange between hip-hop and soul, and Jimi Hendrix at the interchange between rock and blues and country (Figure 4-11).

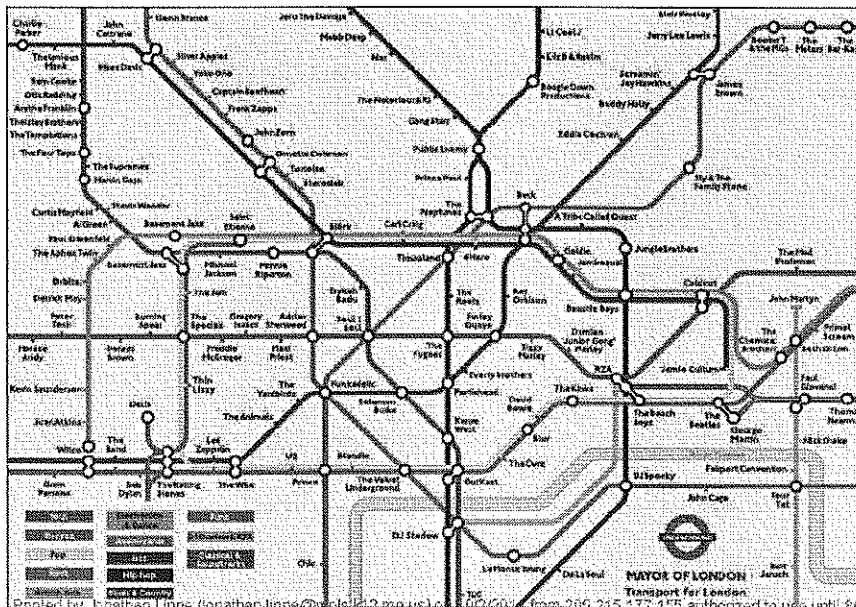


FIGURE 4-11 LONDON SUBWAY MAP OF POPULAR MUSIC This map showing relationships among musical styles is designed to look like the map of the London Underground (subway) system.

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## Origin and Diffusion of Folk and Popular Sports

### Learning Outcome 4.1.3

Describe how sports have been transformed from folk to popular culture.

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.

### ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF POPULAR SPORTS

Soccer, the world's most popular sport—known in most of the world as football—originated as a folk custom in England during the eleventh century. It was transformed into a part of global popular culture beginning in the nineteenth century.

**ORIGIN OF SOCCER: FOLK CULTURE.** As with other folk customs, soccer's origin is obscure. The earliest documented contest took place in England in the eleventh century. According to football historians, after the Danish invasion of England between 1018 and 1042, workers excavating a building site encountered a Danish soldier's head, which they began to kick. "Kick the Dane's head" was imitated by boys, one of whom got the idea of using an inflated cow bladder.

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

**DIFFUSION OF SOCCER: POPULAR CULTURE.** 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 the United Kingdom, 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 participate in sporting events but also to view 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 the United Kingdom marks the transition of football from folk to popular culture.

The word *soccer* originated after 1863, when supporters of the game formed the Football Association. Association was shortened to *assoc*, which ultimately became twisted around into the word *soccer*. The terms *soccer* and *association football* also helped to distinguish the game from rugby football, which permits both kicking and carrying of the ball. Rugby originated in 1823, when a football player at Rugby School (in Rugby, England) picked up the ball and ran with it.

Beginning in the late 1800s, the British exported association football around the world, first to continental Europe and then to other countries. For example:

- **The Netherlands.** Dutch students returning from studies in the United Kingdom were the first to play football in continental Europe in the late 1870s.
- **Spain.** Miners in Bilbao adopted the sport in 1893, after seeing it played by English engineers working there.
- **Russia.** 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 football team.

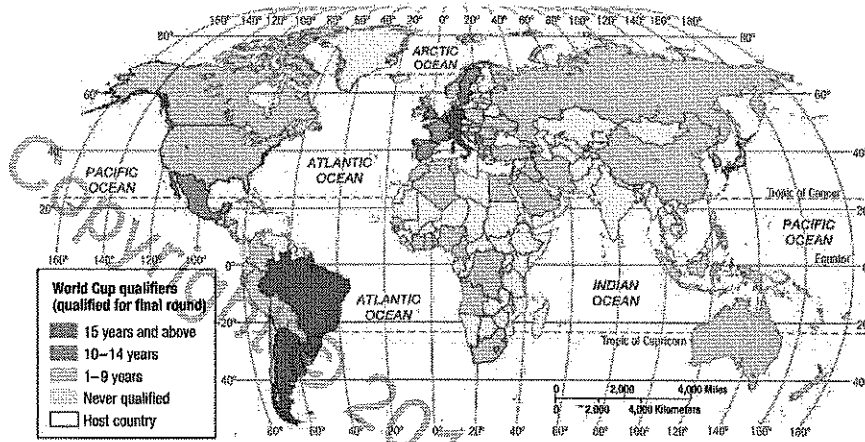
British citizens further diffused the game throughout the worldwide British Empire. In the twentieth century, soccer, like other sports, was further diffused by new communication systems, especially radio and TV.

The global popularity of soccer is seen in the World Cup, in which national soccer teams compete every four years, including in South Africa in 2010 and Brazil in 2014. Thanks to TV, each final breaks the record for the most spectators of any event in world history (Figure 4-12).

**OLYMPIC SPORTS.** To be included in the Summer Olympics, a sport must be widely practiced in at least 75 countries and on four continents (50 countries for women). The 2016 Summer Olympics features competition in 28 sports: archery, aquatics, athletics, badminton, basketball, boxing, canoeing/kayaking, cycling, equestrian, fencing, field hockey, football (soccer), golf, gymnastics, handball, judo, modern pentathlon, rowing, rugby, sailing, shooting, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, triathlon, volleyball, weightlifting, and wrestling (Figure 4-13). The two leading team sports in the United States—American football and baseball—are not included.

### Pause and Reflect 4.3.1

Are there any Olympic sports in which the United States does not even field a team?



▲ FIGURE 4-12 GLOBAL SPORTS: WORLD CUP Most countries in Europe and Latin America have qualified for the World Cup finals. As soccer diffuses worldwide, qualification has increased in other regions.

- Australia rules football is a sport distinct from soccer and the football played in North America. Distinctive forms of football developed in Australia, as well as the United States and Canada, as a result of lack of interaction among sporting nations during the nineteenth century.

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.



▲ FIGURE 4-13 GLOBAL SPORTS: OLYMPICS Athletes from Turkey (in blue gear) and the United States (in red gear) compete in women's taekwondo at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London, United Kingdom.

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 1

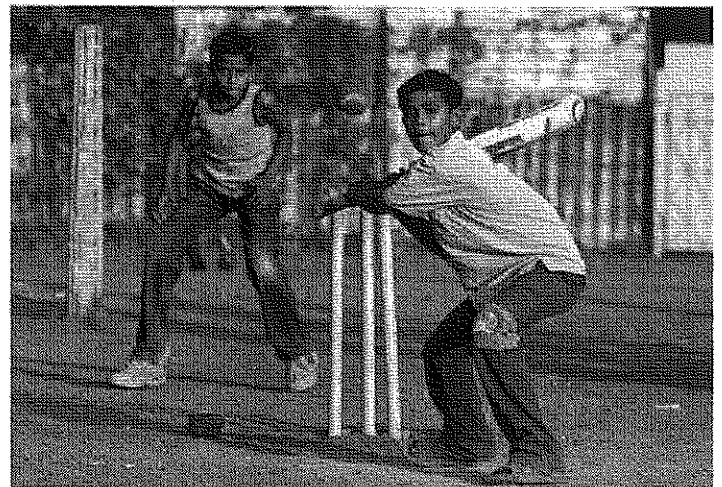
Where Are Folk and Popular Leisure Activities Distributed?

- ✓ Folk culture and popular culture have distinctive patterns of origin, diffusion, and distribution.
- ✓ Folk leisure activities typically have anonymous origins, diffuse through relocation diffusion, and have limited distribution.
- ✓ Popular leisure activities typically originate with identifiable individuals or corporations, diffuse rapidly through hierarchical diffusion, and have widespread distribution.

SURVIVING FOLK SPORTS

Most other sports have diffused less than soccer. Cultural groups still have their own preferred sports, which are often unintelligible to people elsewhere. Consider the following:

- Cricket is popular primarily in the United Kingdom and former British colonies, especially in South Asia, the South Pacific, and Caribbean islands (Figure 4-14).
- Wushu, martial arts that combine forms such as kicking and jumping with combat such as striking and wrestling, are China's most popular sports.
- 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.



▲ FIGURE 4-14 CRICKET Boys play cricket in Katni, India.

## KEY ISSUE 2

## Where Are Folk and Popular Material Culture Distributed?

- Folk and Popular Clothing
- Folk and Popular Food Preferences
- Distribution of Folk and Popular Housing
- U.S. Housing

### Learning Outcome 4.2.1

Compare reasons for distribution of clothing styles in folk and popular culture.

Material culture includes the three most important necessities of life—clothing, food, and shelter. As is the case with leisure, material elements of folk culture typically have unknown or multiple origins among groups living in relative isolation, and they diffuse slowly to other locations through the process of relocation diffusion.

Popular clothing, food, and shelter vary more in time than in place. They originate through the invention of a particular person or corporation, and they diffuse rapidly across Earth to locations with a variety of physical conditions. Access depends on an individual having a sufficiently high level of income to acquire the material possessions associated with popular culture.

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

## Folk and Popular Clothing

People living in folk cultures have traditionally worn clothing in part in response to distinctive agricultural practices and climatic conditions. In popular culture, clothing preferences generally reflect occupations rather than particular environments.

### FOLK CLOTHING PREFERENCES

People wear distinctive folk clothing for a variety of environmental and cultural reasons. The folk custom in the Netherlands of wearing wooden shoes may appear quaint, but it still has practical uses in a wet climate (Figure 4-15).

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▲ FIGURE 4-15 **DUTCH WOODEN SHOES** A man wearing wooden shoes bikes on a flooded street in Stellingdam, Netherlands.

In arctic climates, fur-lined boots protect against the cold, and snowshoes permit walking on soft, deep snow without sinking in. People living in warm and humid climates may not need any footwear if heavy rainfall and time spent in water discourage such use. Cultural factors, such as religious beliefs, can also influence clothing preferences (Figure 4-16).

Increased travel and the diffusion of media have exposed North Americans and Europeans 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 (Figure 4-17).

Wearing traditional clothing in countries dominated by popular culture can be controversial, and conversely so can wearing popular clothing in countries dominated by folk-style clothing. Especially difficult has been the coexistence of the loose-fitting combination body covering, head covering, and veil traditionally worn by women in Southwest Asia and North Africa with casual Western-style popular women's clothing, such as open-necked blouses, tight-fitting slacks, and revealing skirts.

The loose-fitting combination garment, known by a variety of names, including burqa and chador, is typically





▲ FIGURE 4-16 **TRADITIONAL CLOTHES, MUSLIMS AND JEWS** Devout Muslim women and Jewish men wear modest black clothes, including head coverings. (top) French women wear traditional Muslim burqa to protest the French government's ban on wearing the burqa in public. (bottom) Jewish boys in Israel.

▼ FIGURE 4-17 **POSING FOR TOURISTS, PERU** These women in Cuzco, Peru, dressed in traditional costumes, are posing for tourists as a way to make money.



worn by women following traditional folk customs in Southwest Asia and North Africa. Women in these countries are discouraged from adopting Western-style blouses, skirts, and slacks. Meanwhile, men in the region may prefer to wear Western-style suits, especially if they occupy positions of leadership in business or government.

On the other hand, European countries, including France and Belgium, prohibit women from wearing the burqa in public. Some leaders in these countries have argued that traditional clothing that completely hides the face and body represents unacceptable treatment of women as second-class citizens.

#### Pause and Reflect 4.2.1

Can you think of other restrictions on clothing styles in developed countries, perhaps in schools?

### RAPID DIFFUSION OF POPULAR CLOTHING STYLES

Individual clothing habits reveal how popular culture can be distributed across the landscape with little regard for distinctive physical features. Instead, popular clothing habits reflect:

- **Occupation.** 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 New York is more likely to dress like a lawyer in California than like a factory worker in New York.
- **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 in North American and European chain stores. Speed is essential in manufacturing copies of designer dresses because fashion tastes change quickly.

In the past, years 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 only a few weeks because of the diffusion of electronic communications. Buyers from the major retail chains can view fashions electronically and place orders. Sketches, patterns, and specifications can be sent instantly from European fashion centers to American corporate headquarters and then on to Asian factories.

## Folk and Popular Food Preferences

### Learning Outcome 4.2.2

#### Understand reasons for folk food preferences and taboos.

According to the nineteenth-century cultural 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."

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

### FOLK FOOD CUSTOMS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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

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

**FOODS TO CRAVE OR AVOID.** In folk cultures, certain foods are eaten because their natural properties are perceived to enhance qualities considered desirable by the society. Here are some examples:

- The Abipone people in Paraguay eat jaguars, stags, and bulls to make them strong, brave, and swift. The Abipone believe that consuming hens or tortoises will make them cowardly.
- The Ainu people in Japan avoid eating otters because they are believed to be forgetful animals, and consuming them could cause loss of memory.
- The Mbum Kpau women in Chad do not eat chicken or goat before becoming pregnant. Abstaining from

consumption of these animals is thought to help escape pain in childbirth and to prevent birth of a child with abnormalities. During pregnancy, the Mbum Kpau avoid meat from antelopes with twisted horns, which could cause them to bear offspring with deformities.

**FOODS FROM A GARDEN: THE BOSTANS OF ISTANBUL.** Bostans, which are small gardens inside Istanbul, Turkey, have been supplying the city with fresh produce for hundreds of years (Figure 4-18). According to geographer Paul Kaldjian, Istanbul has around 1,000 bostans, run primarily by immigrants from Cide, a rural village in Turkey's Kastamonu province. Bostan farmers are able to maximize yields from their small plots of land (typically 1 hectare) through what Kaldjian calls clever and efficient manipulation of space, season, and resources. In a bostan, 15 to 20 different types of vegetables are planted at different times of the year, and the choice is varied from year to year, in order to reduce the risk of damage from poor weather. Most of the work is done by older men, who prepare beds for planting, sow, irrigate, and operate motorized equipment, according to Kaldjian. Women weed, and both men and women harvest.

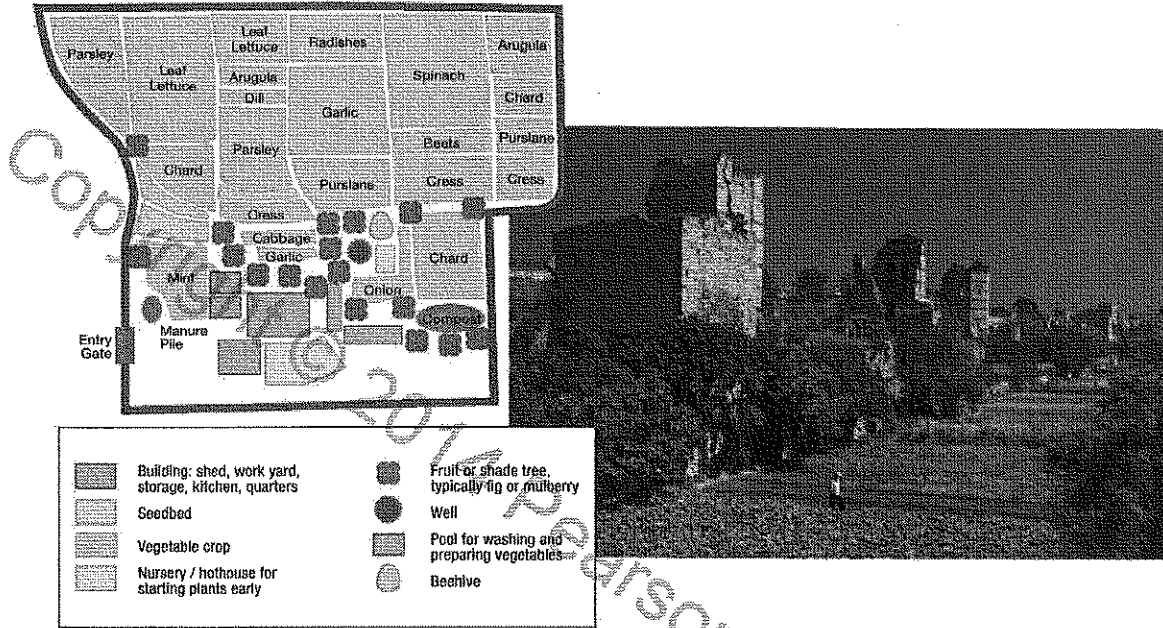
**FOODS AND THE ENVIRONMENT.** People adapt their food preferences to conditions in the environment. In Asia, rice is grown in milder, moister regions; wheat thrives in colder, drier regions. In Europe, traditional preferences for quick-frying foods in Italy resulted in part from fuel shortages. In Northern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

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

### FOOD 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.

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



▲ FIGURE 4-18 ISTANBUL VEGETABLE GARDEN Geographer Paul Kaldjian sketched a typical bostan, a traditional vegetable garden in the center of Istanbul, Turkey. Bostans provide residents of the large city of Istanbul with a source of fresh vegetables.

few high-ranking people in some tropical regions are permitted to hunt, and the majority cultivate crops.

Relatively well-known taboos against consumption of certain foods can be found in the Bible. The ancient Hebrews were prohibited from eating a wide variety of foods, including animals that do not chew their cud or that have cloven feet and fish lacking fins or scales (Figure 4-19). 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

▼ FIGURE 4-19 KOSHER RESTAURANT, ROME



and in part because its meat spoils relatively quickly in hot climates, such as the Mediterranean. These biblical taboos were developed through oral tradition and by rabbis into the kosher laws observed today by some Jews.

Similarly, Muslims embrace the taboo against pork because pigs are unsuited for the dry lands of the Arabian Peninsula. 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 cattle can also be partly explained by environmental reasons. Cows are the source of oxen (castrated male bovine), the traditional choice for pulling plows as well as carts. A large supply of oxen must be maintained in India because every field has to be plowed at approximately the same time—when the monsoon rains arrive. Religious sanctions have kept India's cattle population large as a form of insurance against the loss of oxen and increasing population.

But the taboo against consumption of meat among many people, including Muslims, Hindus, and Jews, cannot be explained primarily by environmental factors. Social values must influence the choice of diet because people in similar climates and with similar levels of income consume different foods. The biblical food taboos were established in part to set the Hebrew people apart from others. That Christians ignore the biblical food injunctions reflects their desire to distinguish themselves from Jews. Furthermore, as a universalizing religion, Christianity was less tied to taboos that originated in the Middle East (see Chapter 6).

**Pause and Reflect 4.2.2**

**What foods do you avoid? Do you avoid foods because of taboos or for other reasons?**

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## POPULAR FOOD CULTURE

### Learning Outcome 4.2.3

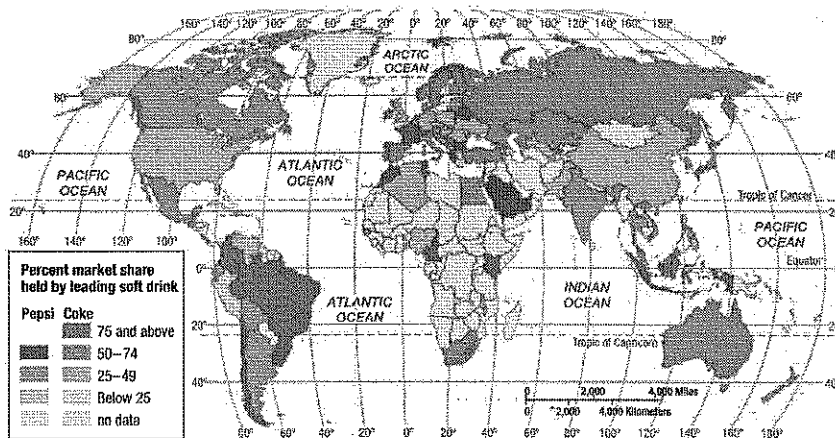
#### Describe regional variations in popular food preferences.

In the popular culture of twenty-first century America, food preferences seem far removed from folk traditions. Popular food preferences are influenced more by cultural values than by environmental features. Still, some regional variations can be observed, and environmental influences remain important in selected items.

**DIFFERENCES AMONG COUNTRIES.** Why do Coca-Cola and Pepsi have different sales patterns (Figure 4-20)? The two beverages are similar, and many people are unable to taste the difference. Yet consumers prefer Coke in some countries and Pepsi in others.

Coca-Cola accounts for more than one-half of the world's cola shares, and Pepsi for another one-fourth. Coca-Cola is the sales leader in most of the Western Hemisphere. The principal exception is Canada's French-speaking province of Québec, where Pepsi is preferred. Pepsi won over the Québécois with advertising that tied Pepsi to elements of uniquely French Canadian culture. The major indoor arena in Québec City is named the Colisée Pepsi (Pepsi Coliseum).

Cola preferences are influenced by politics in Russia. Under communism, government officials made a deal with Pepsi to allow that cola to be sold in the Soviet Union. With the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of communism, Coke entered the Russian market. Russians quickly switched their preference to Coke because Pepsi was associated with the discredited Communist government.



▲ FIGURE 4-20 COKE VERSUS PEPSI Coca-Cola leads in sales in the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Russia. Pepsi leads in Canada and South and Southwest Asia.

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In Southwest Asia, religion influences cola preferences. At one time, the region's predominantly Muslim countries boycotted products that were sold in predominantly Jewish Israel. Because Coke but not Pepsi was sold in Israel, in most of Israel's neighbors Pepsi was preferred.

**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES.** Some of the leading franchised fast-food restaurants display regional variations in popularity. Lexicalist ([www.lexicalist.com](http://www.lexicalist.com)) reads through millions of words on Twitter and other social media to see what kind of words are being used throughout the United States. Based on the frequency of referring to particular fast-food restaurants, Lexicalist concludes that Dunkin' Donuts is especially popular in the Northeast, Krispy Kreme in the Southeast, White Castle in the Midwest, and In-N-Out Burger in the Southwest (Figure 4-21).

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

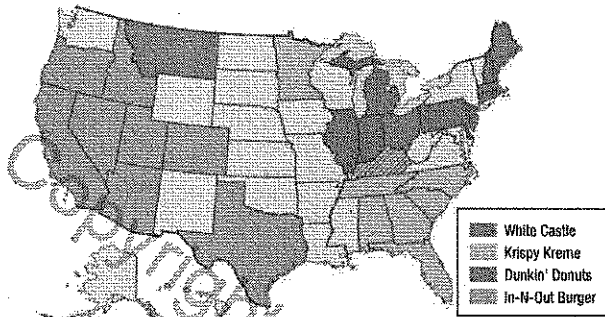
- Wine consumption is relatively high in California, where most of the U.S. production is concentrated, and beer consumption is relatively low there. Beer and spirits consumption are relatively high in the upper Midwest, where much of the grain is grown. Consumption of wine is low in that part of the country, where few grapes are grown.
- 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.

Cultural backgrounds affect the amount and types of alcohol and snack foods consumed:

- Utah has a low rate of consumption of all types of alcohol because of a concentration there of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who abstain from all alcohol consumption. The adjacent state of Nevada has a high rate of consumption of all types of alcohol because of the heavy concentration of gambling and other resort activities there. Alcohol consumption relates partially to religious backgrounds and partially to income and advertising.

- Texans may prefer tortilla chips because of the large number of Hispanic Americans there. Westerners may prefer multigrain chips because of greater concern for the nutritional content of snack foods.

Geographers cannot explain most of the regional variations in food preferences. Variations



▲ FIGURE 4-21 FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT PREFERENCES Dunkin' Donuts is especially popular in the Northeast, Krispy Kreme in the Southeast, White Castle in the Midwest, and In-N-Out Burger in the Southwest.

within the United States are much less significant than differences between the United States and developing countries in Africa and Asia.

**Pause and Reflect 4.2.3**

**Do your food preferences match the predominant ones in your region?**

**WINE PRODUCTION: ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.** The spatial distribution of wine production demonstrates that environmental factors can be of some influence in the distribution of popular food customs. The distinctive character of a wine derives from a vineyard's terroir—the unique combination of soil, climate, and other physical characteristics at the place where the grapes are grown:

- **Climate.** 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

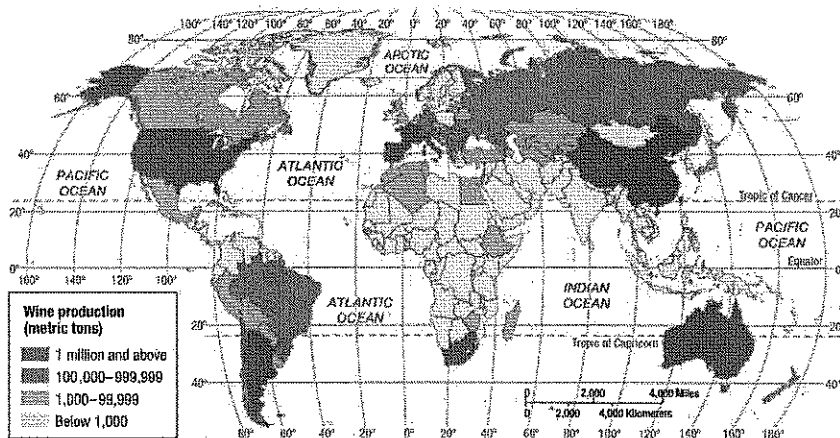
that cause the fruit to rot are more active in hot, humid weather.

- **Topography.** 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.
- **Soil.** 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 that is not necessarily fertile for other crops.

**WINE PRODUCTION: CULTURAL FACTORS.** Although grapes can be grown in a wide variety of locations, the production of wine is based principally on cultural values, both historical and contemporary. 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 (Figure 4-22). 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. 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.



◀ FIGURE 4-22 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.