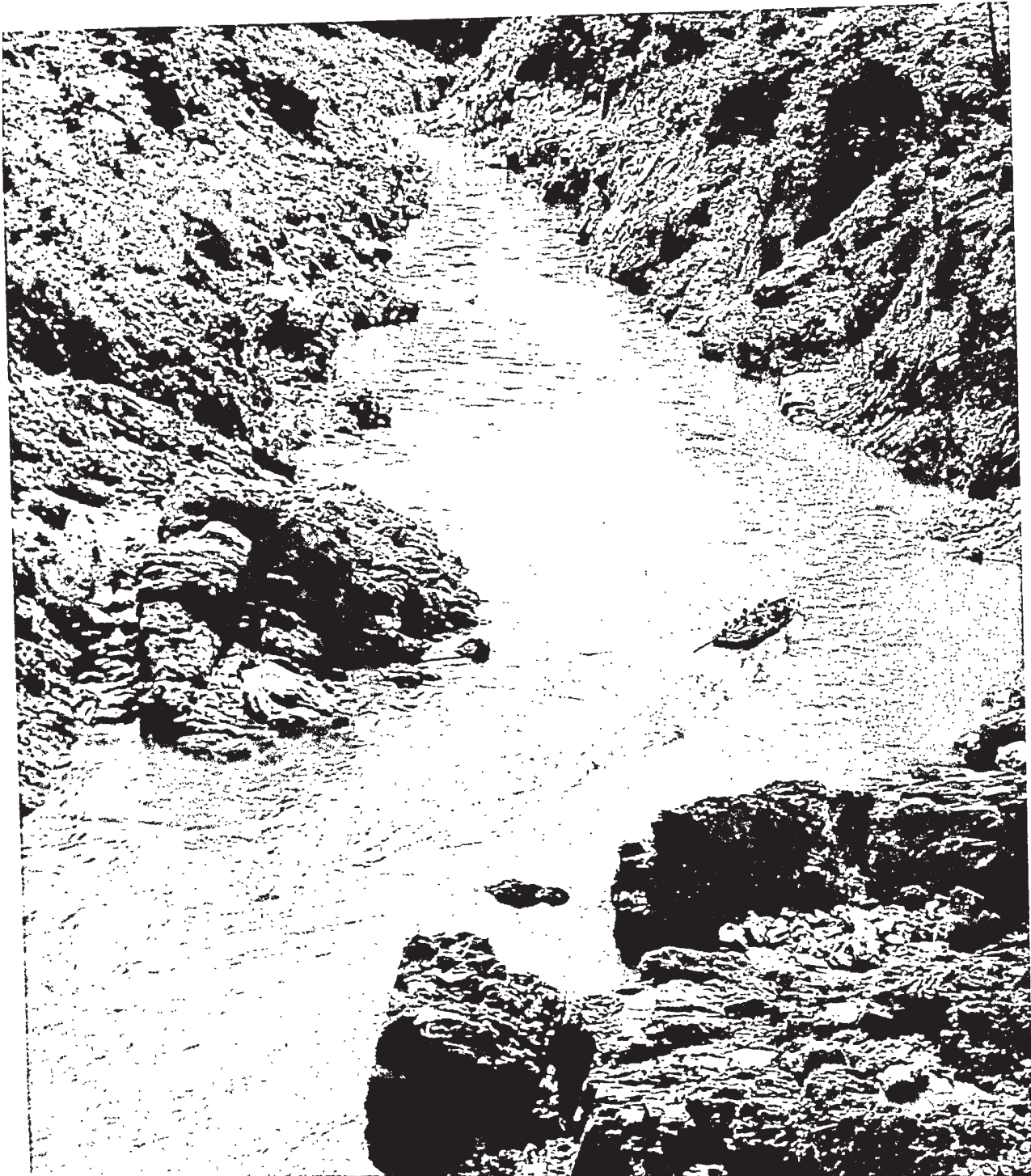


The Nature of Cultural Geography

1



Humans are, by nature, geographers. Children create carefully mapped kingdoms in tiny spaces—a small room, a single backyard. As we grow, our concepts of spatial relationships change constantly, gaining a partially magical quality. And always beyond what we have explored lies the unknown, the mysterious lands that we move into at our own peril and that we often populate with our fears and dreams. The academic discipline of geography is basically the product of human nature, of humans' ancient and insatiable curiosity about lands other than their own.

In time this natural curiosity was strengthened by the practical motives of traders and empire builders, who wanted information about the world for the purposes of commerce and conquest. It is not surprising, then, that "geography" first arose among the ancient Greeks and Romans, the former the greatest traders of their time and the latter the builders of one of the greatest empires in world history.

Initially, Greek and Roman geographers were most interested in practical knowledge. They cataloged factual information on locations, places, and products. But they were not content merely to chart and describe the known world. These ancient geographers soon began to ask questions about why peoples, cultures, and environments differ from

SIZING UP THE WORLD: THE MAPS CHILDREN DRAW

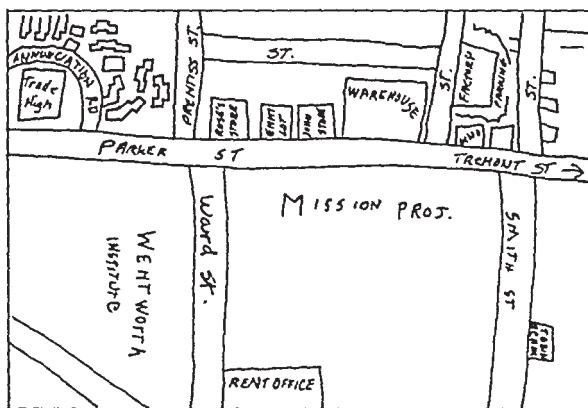
"In the Mission Hill area of Boston, . . . Florence Ladd asked a number of black children to draw a map of their area, and then she tape-recorded her conversation with them. On Dave's map, the Mission Hill project is where the white children live, and he has drawn it as the largest, completely blank area on his map. From his taped conversation it is clear that he is physically afraid of the area and has

never ventured near it. On his map the white residential area is literally *terra incognita*, while all the detail on the map is immediately around his home and school on the other side of Parker Street. Ernest also puts in Parker Street dividing his area from the white Mission [Hill] project, and uses about a quarter of his sheet of paper to emphasize, quite unconsciously, the width of this psychological barrier. Both of these

boys going to the local neighborhood schools have never ventured across this barrier to the unknown area beyond."

From Peter Gould and Rodney White, Mental Maps (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), pp 31-33 Maps from F Ladd, "A Note on 'The World Across the Street'," Harvard School of Education Association Bulletin, 12 (1967). 47-48

DAVE'S MAP



ERNEST'S MAP



place to place. By the end of the Roman era, geographers had developed theories about the earth's roundness, latitudinal climate zones, environmental influences on humans and people's role in modifying the earth.

During Europe's Dark Ages, a newly expanding Arab empire took over academic geography. Muslim Arab scholars, following in the wake of trade and conquest as their Greek and Roman predecessors did, further expanded geographical knowledge. These Arab geographers were great travelers, ranging from China to Spain in search of new knowledge. Although they tended to be even more practical than the Greeks and Romans, they did not entirely ignore the theoretical side of learning. For example, Arab geographers proposed theories about the evolution of mountain ranges.

With the European cultural reawakening known as the Renaissance and the beginning of the Age of Discovery, the center of geographical learning shifted to Europe. The modern scientific study of geography arose in Germany during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, at the same time that European power was slowly spreading over much of the globe. In the 1700s, the German philosopher and geographer Immanuel Kant defined *geography* as the study of spatial variations—that is, the differences between one place and another. Kant compared geography and history, because he recognized that both disciplines thrive on variations. Just as geographers emphasize the differences between areas, so historians emphasize the differences between periods of time. If every year were identical—and the same events occurred over and over again—no academic study of history would be needed. In the same way, if every place on earth were identical, we would not need geography. Fortunately, plenty of differences exist to provide ample fuel for both fields.

Let us extend Kant's comparison. When geographers consider the differences (and similarities) between places, or when historians study changes between points in time, they want to understand the contrasts they see. Historians compare two periods and try to find reasons for the changes from one period to the other. Geographers study spatial variation in the same way. They first find out exactly what the variation between the areas is by describing differences and similarities as precisely as possible. Then they try to interpret the variations and to decide what forces made these two areas different. This process merely reflects the basic human curiosity that makes us all geographers. No one needs special training to wonder why things are where they are, and that is the geographer's key question. That question comes to us naturally in our everyday lives. Historians ask the questions *What? When? and Why?* Geographers ask *What? Where? and Why?* In both disciplines, *Why?* is the all-important question, because it leads to interpretations. This type of scientific, analytical geographic research was begun in the nineteenth century by the German geographers Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Ritter. As a result, they are generally recognized as the fathers of modern geography.

Another similarity between geographers and historians is the way they subdivide their disciplines. Historians divide time into manageable sections called periods: the Napoleonic period, the Civil War period, the Elizabethan period, and so on. The geographic equivalent of the period is the region, a subdivision of the earth. Examples of regional geography are



IMMANUEL KANT
1724–1804

Kant is best known as a philosopher, but he taught a course in physical geography between 1756 and 1798 at the University of Königsberg in East Prussia. Königsberg, today called Kaliningrad, was on the far edge of the Prussian state, much as Alaska is on the far edge of the United States. Kant brought international attention to this provincial German town and university. He organized geography into such categories as mathematical, "theological," commercial, political, and "moral" (an account of differing customs of peoples). In addition, he developed the distinction between geography and history described in the text. Kant defined geography as the study of spatial variations.



ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT
1769–1859

Humboldt, a world-famous German scientist, traveled widely and wrote extensively on geographical topics. In 1797, with the permission of the Spanish crown, he sailed to South America. For the next five years, he explored from Mexico to the Andes. Later, at the age of sixty, he accepted an invitation from the czar of Russia to explore mineral resources. He traveled by carriage through Siberia, carefully recording and describing the landscape. His interests were in physical geography—the study of climate, terrain, and vegetation—but

Humboldt's writings reveal his belief that humans are part of the ecological system. His main contribution to geography was his attention to cause-and-effect relationships. Most geographies of earlier times merely compiled facts. When Humboldt tried to explain spatial patterns of certain physical phenomena, he found geography useful. Because he brought the prestige and methods of science to geography, he is considered one of the founders of modern geography. Humboldt never held a university position, but he was widely respected as a scholar.

the geography of Europe, of Latin America, or of California. Both periods and regions are characterized by certain unifying traits that justify picking them out of time and space.

Another way of dividing subject matter common to both geography and history is the *topical* or *systematic* method. Using this method, the geographer or the historian singles out a certain topic rather than a period or region. A geographer might choose to study political geography, urban geography, or agricultural geography; a historian might select military history, agricultural history, or economic history. Within geography, the two principal topical divisions are physical and cultural geography. Each of these is, in turn, separated into smaller topical divisions. In this book, we use mainly a topical approach to cultural geography. However, as the "culture region" theme discussed later in this chapter indicates, the regional approach is not ignored.

Also like history, geography belongs as much to the humanities as to the social sciences. The humanistic branches of learning are those having mainly a cultural character, and many geographers regard themselves primarily as humanists. It is no accident that Immanuel Kant was both a philosopher and a geographer. The social sciences, by contrast, deal with the institutions and functions of human society. Cultural geographers with social science inclinations are concerned with the spatial functioning of society, humanistic cultural geographers with the spatial characteristics and interworkings of cultures. Both are necessary to the continued advancement of cultural geography; both help produce the distinctively geographic way of looking at, understanding, and appreciating the human world. Both approaches seek to know *What?* and *Where?* Both are analytical and seek the answer to *Why?* It is our aim in this textbook to teach you to see the human world through the geographer's eyes. If we succeed, you will have a new perspective of the

world, a useful one, we believe. Analysis and answer-seeking are important, and we will show you how geographers solve problems. But equally important is the geographer's perspective of the world, a unique perspective that we regard as essential for any truly educated person.

WHAT IS CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY?

The term *cultural geography* implies an emphasis on human cultures rather than on the physical environment they live in. To understand the scope of cultural geography, we must first agree on what the word *culture* means. Social scientists and humanists have suggested many definitions of culture, some broad and some narrow. Furthermore, even within some disciplines not all scholars agree on a common definition. However, most social scientists accept the broad definition set down over 100 years ago by Edward Tylor, who defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."¹

The three components of this definition demand closer inspection. First, culture is considered a "complex whole," meaning that culture is not a series of unrelated items. Instead, it is an integrated unit in which all parts fit together. Law and morals, for example, are based on belief systems, while art and habits are based on custom, technology on knowledge, and so on. Secondly, it must be emphasized that culture is acquired or learned; it is not inherited or instinctive. There is no question that we are born with certain basic needs, but these needs are biological, not cultural. We quickly learn to fulfill our needs through culturally acceptable means.

The third important component of Tylor's definition is that culture is shared. This emphasizes the fact that culture is a group phenomenon, not an individual or personal one, and that we are culture bearers as a result of our group ties.

We can say that a culture is a total way of life held in common by a group of people. Learned similarities in speech, behavior, ideology, livelihood, technology, and society bind people together in a culture. Cultural geography, then, is the study of spatial variations among cultural groups and the spatial functioning of society. It focuses on describing and analyzing the ways language, religion, economy, government, and other cultural phenomena vary or remain constant from one place to another. Because cultures are formed by groups of people, the cultural geographer is necessarily concerned with humans in the aggregate rather than as individuals. A character in the comic strip "Peanuts" once declared that he loved humankind, it was people he could not stand. Cultural geographers have nothing against individuals, but they are most interested in humans as groups, as cultures, and as societies.

Anthropologists, historians, and sociologists share geographers' fascination with culture. Geographers' attention to cultures overlaps that of



CARL RITTER
1779–1859

Ritter, a longtime and close associate of Alexander von Humboldt, was a professor of geography at the University of Berlin beginning in 1820. He began his career as a tutor for a wealthy family in Frankfurt. In these comfortable surroundings, he was able to meet other intellectuals and study geography. During the long period he taught in Berlin, his work influenced the thinking of many people, including military leaders. In contrast to Humboldt, his chief concern was cultural geography, the geography of humans. He sought to bring the rigor of science to the study of human geography and believed that laws of human spatial behavior could be discovered. His first book discussed Africa, then a little-known continent. Ritter is widely regarded as a cofounder, with Humboldt, of the academic discipline of geography.

¹Friedl and Pfeiffer, 1977, p. 284 (see the Suggested Readings section at the end of the chapter).

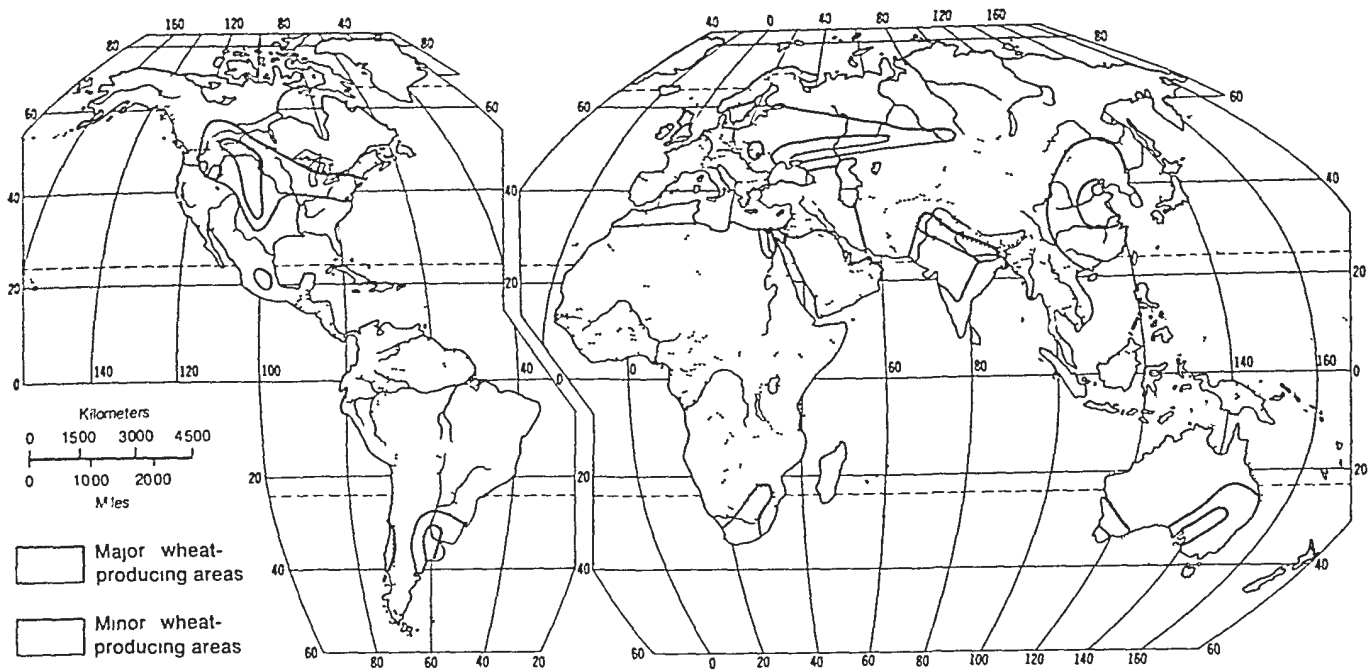
Geographers explore how cultures differ from place to place. Variations in language, as well as forms of communication, are often a clear indication of cultural differences, as in this street scene in Damascus. What might be some similarities between this scene and your local newsstand?



many of these other social scientists and humanists. Even so, it is still possible to discern a focus of concern that sets geographers apart from other students of culture. This focus is cultural geographers' concern with the ways cultures and societies vary and function spatially. Geographers are trained to observe spatial variations of all kinds, both human and environmental. Therefore, they are particularly well qualified to describe and interpret spatial variations in culture. Geographers recognize that any differences in cultures are the result of complex forces. As a result, they can rarely find easy explanations for the questions raised by spatial variations in culture.

The complexity of the forces that affect culture can be illustrated by an example drawn from agricultural geography: the distribution of wheat cultivation in the world. Looking at the map in Figure 1-1, you can see important wheat cultivation in Australia but not Africa; the United States but not Brazil; China but not Southeast Asia. Why do these spatial variations exist? Partly because of environmental factors such as climate, terrain, and soils. Some regions have always been too dry for wheat





cultivation, others too steep or infertile. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between wheat cultivation and midlatitude climates, level terrain, and good soil. Still, do not place too much importance on such physical factors. People can now modify the effects of climate through irrigation, the use of hothouses, or the development of new, specialized strains of wheat. They can conquer steep slopes through terracing, and they can make infertile soils productive through fertilization. For example, farmers in mountainous parts of Greece wrest an annual harvest of wheat from tiny terraced plots where soil has been trapped behind hand built, stone retaining walls. Even in the United States, environmental factors alone cannot explain the curious fact that major wheat cultivation is concentrated in the semiarid Great Plains, some distance from states such as Ohio and Illinois, where the climate for wheat is better.

The cultural geographer knows that wheat has to survive in a cultural as well as physical environment. Agricultural patterns cannot be explained by the characteristics of the land and climate alone. Many factors complicate the distribution of wheat, including people's tastes, desires, and traditions. Food preferences and taboos, often backed by religious beliefs, strongly influence the choice of crops to plant. Some cultural groups, such as the Poles, prefer dark bread made from rye flour. Other groups, particularly American Indians (or Amerindians), would rather eat breads made from corn. Obviously, wheat will not "thrive" in such cultural environments. But where wheat bread is preferred, people are willing to put great efforts into overcoming hostile physical surroundings. They have even created new strains of wheat, thereby decreasing the environment's influence on wheat distribution. Economics also enters the picture. Wheat cultivation can be encouraged or discouraged by tariffs like those that protect the wheat farmers of Germany and other Common Market countries from competition with more

FIGURE 1-1

This map shows areas of wheat production in the world. These culture regions are based on a single trait—the presence of wheat in the agricultural system.

efficient American and Canadian producers. In addition, wheat farming is a less profitable use of the land than dairying or fattening livestock. For this reason, wheat is sometimes not grown in the most suitable regions, such as the American Midwest.

This is by no means a complete list of the forces that affect wheat distribution. But it should be clear that the map of wheat reflects the pushing and pulling of many factors. The distribution of all cultural elements, not only the distribution of wheat, is a result of the constant interplay of *push-and-pull* factors.

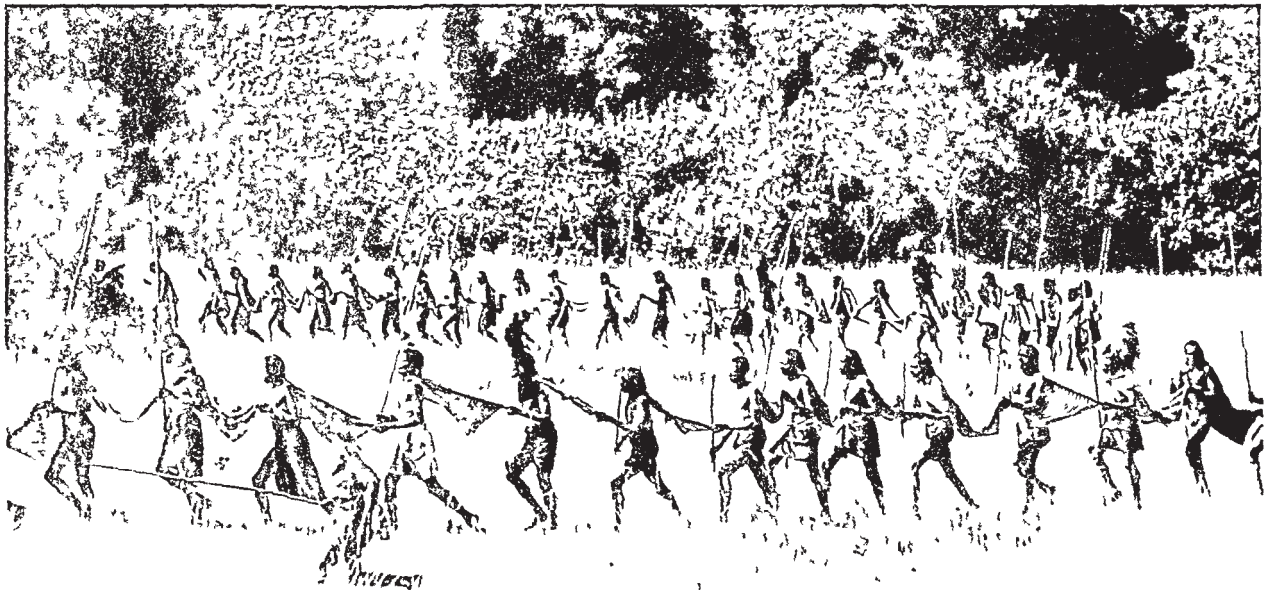
THEMES IN CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

Our study of cultures will be organized around five concepts or themes. These are *culture region*, *cultural diffusion*, *cultural ecology*, *cultural integration*, and *cultural landscape*. These themes will be stressed throughout the book, giving structure to each chapter. They represent only one of many possible ways to study cultural geography and not all cultural geographers employ them. However, we find them to be useful devices for teaching the concepts of cultural geography.

The culture region of the Masai of Kenya has changed over the years because of the pressures of urban expansion and shifts in political boundaries. What analogies might you draw between this culture group's maintenance of traditional folk customs (here seen in a ritual dance) and similar customs in your own culture? How is your own culture region changing as a result of political, technological, or other pressures?

The Theme of Culture Region

If, as is often said, one picture is worth a thousand words, then a well-prepared map is worth at least ten thousand words to the geographer. No description in words can rival the descriptive forces of maps. Maps are valuable tools particularly because they portray spatial differences in culture. Geographers can use maps to see cultural differences at a glance. *The more complex the distribution of cultural traits under study, the*



more valuable the map. There are two major types of culture regions: formal and functional. To these we might add a third type, the vernacular or perceptual region.

Formal Culture Regions A formal culture region can be defined as an area inhabited by people who have one or more cultural traits in common. You cannot go into the street and find a formal culture region. Yet there is nothing mysterious about it. Geographers find the formal culture region useful for grouping people with similar cultural traits. It is a tool geographers can use to describe spatial differences in culture. For example, a German-language culture region can be drawn on a map of languages, and it would include the area where German is spoken. Or a wheat-farming culture region could describe the parts of the world where wheat is a major crop.

The examples of German speech and wheat cultivation represent the concept of formal region at its simplest level. Each is based on a single cultural trait. More commonly, culture regions depend on multiple related traits. Thus an Eskimo culture region might depend on language, religion, type of economy, type of social organization, and typical form of dwellings. The Eskimo culture region would reflect the spatial distribution of these five Eskimo cultural traits. Districts where all five of these traits are present would be part of the culture region.



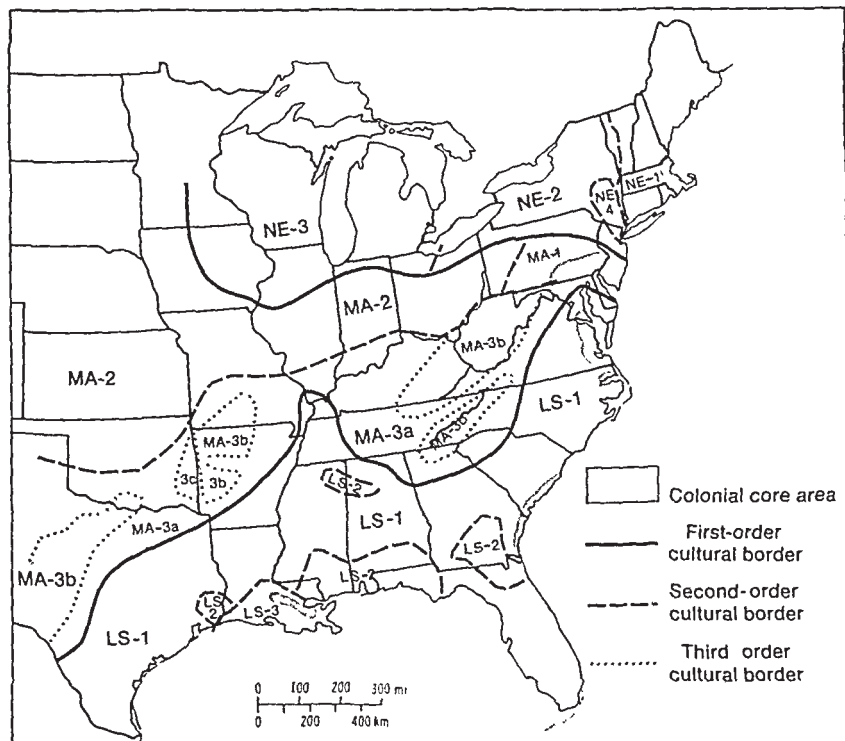
In this date market in Morocco, the multiple related traits of a culture region are apparent. Agricultural products, marketing, architecture, and clothing all contribute to the region's identity. Observe a few neighborhood shopping centers and note how a common identity is expressed.

Another example of multitrail culture region is shown by the traditional cultures that took root in the eastern United States in colonial times. Figure 1-2 shows three major American culture regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, and Lower Southern. Each culture region is, in turn, divided into subcultures. These divisions are based on each region's economy, dialect, religion, and ethnic-racial population. Each culture has a nucleus, where it first took shape and later spread to occupy a larger area.

The nucleus of New England was settled almost exclusively by colonists from England, whose agricultural technology was poorly suited to such cold, infertile lands. Marginal success in farming caused many colonists to turn to fishing, trading, manufacturing, and lumbering as occupations. In its early stage, nuclear New England was a theocracy, controlled by Puritan leaders.

In contrast to New England, the Middle Atlantic region's culture embraced a great variety of ethnic groups. English, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Swedes, and other European groups met and mingled here, importing rich and diverse agricultural heritages into a fertile land. The middle-class family farm was instituted here. Quakers, Lutherans, German and Dutch Reformed, Presbyterians, Mennonites, and various other Protestant sects were represented. Here was America's first "melting pot." The result was a farming culture that shaped the face of the rural United States from then on.

In the Lower South, English and African traits were combined in a plantation system of agriculture. Large estates, specializing in subtropical



NO TWO CULTURAL PHENOMENA HAVE THE SAME SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

No matter how closely related two elements of culture seem to be, close investigation always shows that they do not exactly cover the same area. This is true regardless of what degree of detail is involved. Thus, just as the map of languages does not duplicate the distribution of religions, governments, or economies, so also no two words or pronunciations within a single dialect or language cover precisely the same area.

What does this mean to the cultural geographer in practical terms? First, it means that every

feature and detail of culture is unique to an area and that the explanation for each spatial variation is different in some degree from those for all other cultural phenomena. Second, it means that culture changes continually through an area, that every inhabited place on the earth has a unique combination of cultural features, differing from every other place in one or more respects.

Does this cultural uniqueness of each place prevent geographers from seeking explanatory theories? Does it doom them to explaining

each distribution separately? The answer must be no. The fact that no two hills or rocks, no two planets or stars, no two trees or flowers are identical has not prevented geologists, astronomers, and botanists from formulating theories based on generalizations. They often make explanations through the use of models.

cash crops and depending on a large body of slave laborers, gave rise to a landed aristocracy that quickly assumed political control of the plantation colonies.

As each of these three cultures expanded westward, the diversities of the eastern seaboard were transplanted to the interior. In this way, many present-day patterns of economy, dialect, and religion were established throughout the country. However, these culture areas have not been static. For instance, in the United States, the culture of one region has flowed into, mixed with, and sometimes clashed dramatically with the culture of other regions. The result has often been some new combination of traits. Since 1890, large numbers of blacks, representing a rural Lower Southern culture, have migrated to northern urban areas in search of industrial jobs. The mixing and clashing of cultures that followed are part of our everyday history.

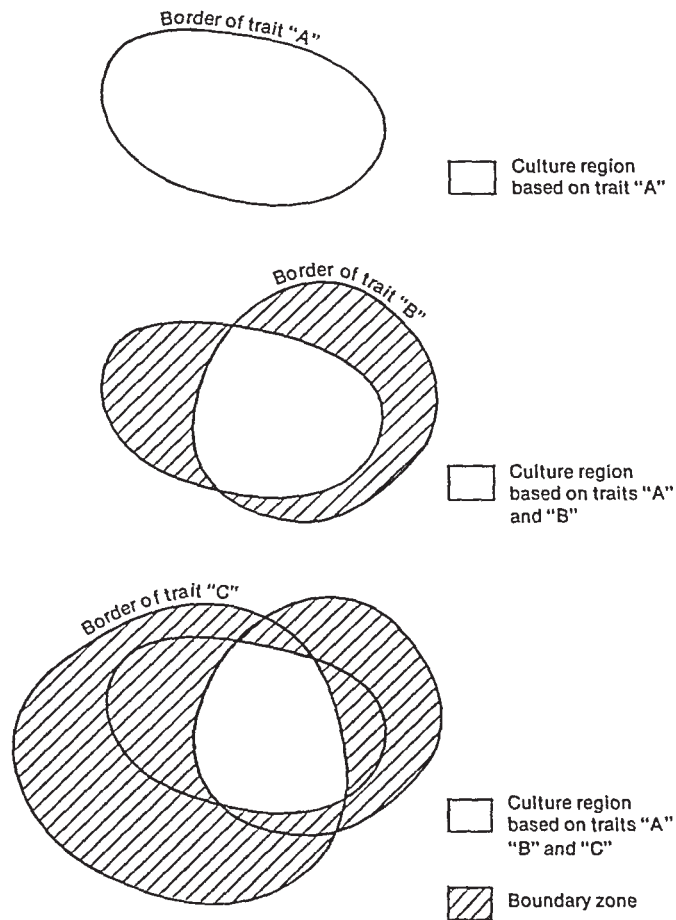
Formal culture regions are the geographer's somewhat arbitrary creations. No two cultural traits have the same distribution, and the territorial extent of a culture region depends on what defining traits are used. For example, Greeks and Turks differ in language and religion. Culture regions defined on the basis of speech and religious faith would separate these two groups. However, Greeks and Turks hold many other cultural traits in common. This is partly because of the long Turkish rule of Greece and the lengthy coexistence of Greeks and Turks in Asia Minor. Both groups are monotheistic, worshipping a single god. In both groups, male supremacy and patriarchal families are the rule. Certain folk foods, such as shish kebab, are enjoyed in common. Whether Greeks and Turks are placed in the same formal culture region or in different ones depends entirely on how the geographer chooses to define the culture region. That choice in turn depends on the specific purpose of research that the culture region is designed to serve. Thus an infinite number of formal culture regions can be created. It is unlikely that any two geographers would use exactly the same distinguishing criteria.

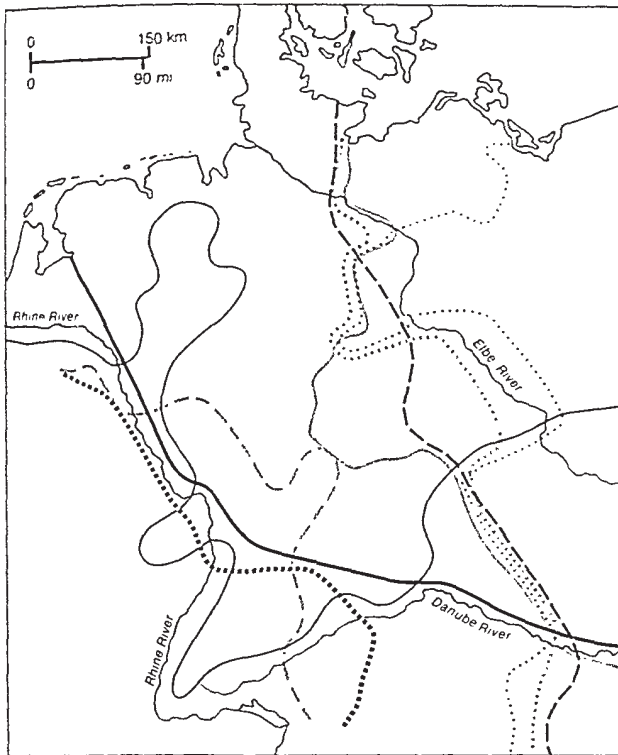
Often cultural geographers attempt to delimit culture regions based on the totality of traits displayed by a culture. The term *culture area*, derived from anthropology, is sometimes used for such regions. Because of the greater complexity of traits involved, culture areas are typically even more arbitrarily delimited than are formal regions based on fewer characteristics. Often they are based more on the geographer's intuition, derived from intimate knowledge of an area, than on carefully marshaled facts.

By definition, the geographer who identifies a formal culture region must locate cultural borders. Because cultures are fluid, such boundaries are rarely sharp, even if only a single culture trait is being mapped. For this reason, geographers often speak of cultural border zones rather than lines. Naturally, these zones broaden with each additional cultural trait that is considered, because no two traits have the same spatial distribution. Most formal culture regions have a core where the defining traits are strongest. Away from that core, the defining traits gradually weaken and disappear, as is shown in Figure 1-3. Where sharply defined formal culture borders exist, they usually correspond to physical barriers or closed political boundaries that separate different cultural groups. But in

FIGURE 1-3

Hypothetical formal culture regions based on one, two, and three traits. Notice that no two traits have the same spatial distribution. Thus with each additional trait, the core of the region grows smaller and the boundary zone broader.





- Northern border of Roman Empire
- - - - German-Slav (Christian-pagan) border, AD 800 (Elbe-Saale line)
- Present northern border of Roman Catholic majority
- Present northern limit of *weiler* place name suffix (derived from Latin)
- Western limits of Prussia and Austria, 1795 (the two large states of "colonial" eastern Germany)
- Western limits of surviving rural feudal estates, 1795
- Iron Curtain, 1948
- Present northern limit of divided land inheritance, derived from Roman law

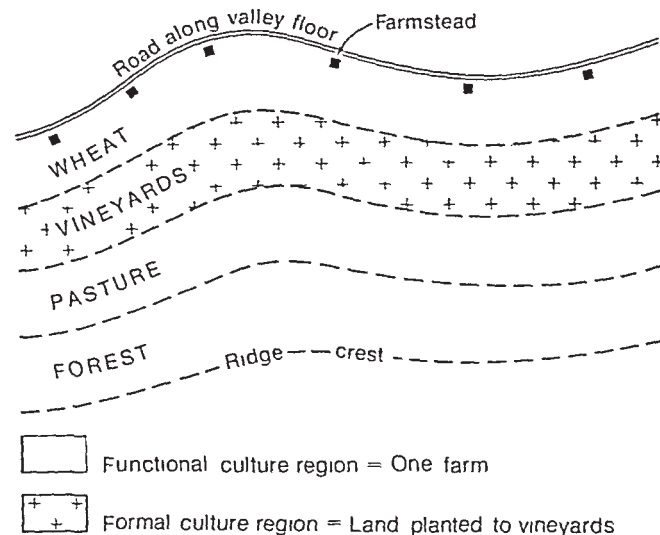
most cases, cultures blend gradually into one another through boundary zones. Cultural borders, whether zones or lines, often survive long after the forces that created them have vanished, as occurred in Central Europe (see Figure 1-4).

Functional Culture Regions. A functional culture region is quite different from a formal culture region. The hallmark of the formal type is cultural homogeneity, and the formal culture region is abstract rather than concrete. By contrast, the functional culture region is generally not culturally homogeneous. Instead, it is an area that has been organized to function politically, socially, or economically. A city, an independent state, a precinct, a church diocese or parish, a trade area, a farm, and a Federal Reserve Bank district are all examples of functional regions. Functional culture regions have *nodes*, or central points where the functions are coordinated and directed. Examples of such nodes are city halls, national capitals, precinct voting places, parish churches, factories, farmsteads, and banks.

Some functional regions have clearly defined borders and are concrete units. A farm is a functional region that includes all land owned or leased by the farmer. Its operation is directed by the farmer, who has organized the land to function as a distinct spatial unit. The node is the farmstead, which contains the home of the farmer and various structures essential to farming, such as barns, implement sheds, and silos. The borders of this functional region will probably be clearly marked by

FIGURE 1-4

This map displays the persistence of a cultural border in Central Europe. Since Roman times, an east-west cultural division has characterized Central Europe. This ancient cultural divide has taken many forms—political, legal, religious, social, economic, and place-names. It has persisted in spite of repeated German attempts to unify Central Europe. Are there cultural divides in your own community?



CULTURE REGIONS IN A MICROCOSM

Imagine a valley filled with farms. Each farm consists of a strip of land reaching from the center of the valley up to the adjacent ridge crest. Farmsteads are at the front of the farms, along a road that bisects the valley. On each farm, the slope of the land becomes steeper as we go away from the road. On the most level land, at the front of each farm, wheat is raised, and with the steadily increasing slope toward the rear of each farm, we encounter vineyards, then pastures, and finally, on the steepest slopes at the rear of the farm, forest. Thus each farm in the valley consists of wheat fields, vineyards, pastures, and woodland with increasing distance from the road. Each of these types of land use occupies a continuous strip running lengthwise through the valley.

In this situation, both formal and functional culture regions are present. Each farm constitutes a functional region, and the strips of wheat, vineyards, pasture, and woodland are each formal culture regions, defined by the homogeneity of land use.

fences, hedges, or walls. Similarly, each state in the United States is a functional region, coordinated and directed from the state capital and extending government control over a fixed area with clearly defined borders.

It is misleading to think all functional culture regions have fixed, precise borders. It is better to imagine these borders in terms of increasing or diminishing flows of energy out of or into nodes. On a map, this motion might be represented by directional arrows rather than boundary lines—as a network, not a territory. A good example is a daily newspaper's trade area. The node for the paper would be the plant where it is produced. Every morning, trucks move out of the plant to distribute the paper throughout the city. But the newspaper may also have a sales area extending into the city's suburbs, local bedroom communities, nearby towns, and rural areas. There its sales area overlaps the sales territories of competing newspapers published in other cities. Its sales area will therefore gradually peter out. It would be futile to try to define borders for such a process. How would you draw a sales area boundary for the *New York Times*? Its Sunday edition is sold in some quantity even in California, thousands of miles from its node.

The sales areas for manufactured goods present similar problems. Every time you buy a soft drink or a bottle of beer, you are a part of a dynamic functional culture region. Which bottle you choose depends on the region you are in. Is your area a nationwide, multi-state, or purely local functional network? Some beer manufacturers have gone nationwide in their marketing, establishing branch breweries in various parts of the country. Schlitz, Budweiser, and Pabst are in this category. Others, such as Coors, have traditionally confined sales activity to selected large multi-state regions. Still others, such as Lone Star of Texas, are marketed largely within a single state. Finally, some beers are sold only in small, local areas, as Pittsburgh's Iron City Beer is. Each beer has a unique market area—a functional region—and these often completely overlap one another. The node for each beer's functional area is the brewery.

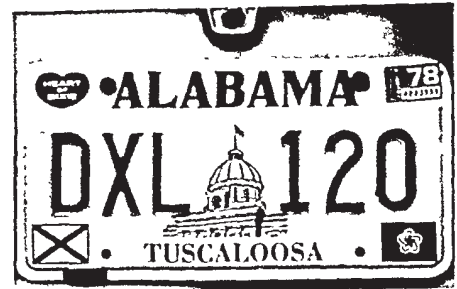
Vernacular Culture Regions

Some geographers recognize a third type of culture region, the *vernacular* or *perceptual*. This is a region perceived to exist by its inhabitants, as evidenced by the widespread acceptance and use of a regional name. Figure 1-5 shows one such popular region in the United States. Some vernacular regions are based on physical environmental features, while others find their basis in economic, political, historical, or promotional aspects. Vernacular regions, like other culture regions, generally lack sharp borders, and the inhabitants of any given area may claim residence in more than one such region. These perceived regions are often created by publicity campaigns, and their use in the communications media have a lot to do with acceptance by the local population.

Vernacular culture regions, as you can see, are rather different from the functional or formal types. They often lack the organization necessary for functional regions, though often they are centered on a single urban node, and they frequently do not display the cultural homogeneity that characterizes formal regions. They are a type unto themselves, a type rooted in the popular or folk culture. Geographers are devoting increasing attention to vernacular culture regions, as we will see in Chapter 8.

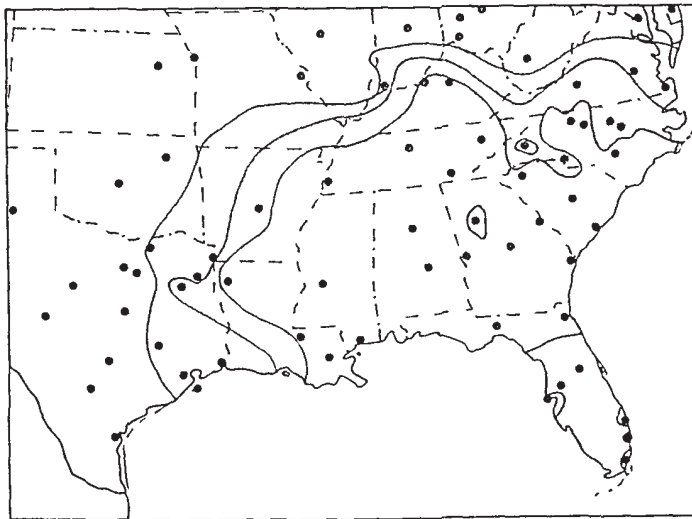
The Theme of Cultural Diffusion

The culture regions of the world, regardless of type or method of delimiting, evolved through communication and contact among people. In other words, they are the product of *cultural diffusion*, the spatial



Notice the "Heart of Dixie" symbol on this Alabama state license plate.

FIGURE 1-5



- Sampling point (Telephone Directory used)
- The heart of dixie ("Dixie" entries one-fourth or more as common as "American" entries)
- "Dixie" 15% to 25% as common as "American"
- "Dixie" 6% to 25% as common as "American"
- "Dixie" 0% to 6% as common as "American"

Dixie: A Vernacular Region. "Dixie" is a more restrictive regional term than is "South," and it is loaded with historical and cultural connotations. The territorial extent of "Dixie" was determined by counting the number of times it appeared in telephone directories as part of the name of business establishments. The total for each city was then divided by the entries for "American," to adjust for the different population sizes of the cities, producing the numbers on the map. The higher the number, the more common the use of "Dixie." Make a count of regional terms in your telephone directory. Does the place where you live lie within a vernacular region such as Dixie? (After John Shelton Reed, "The Heart of Dixie: An Essay in Folk Geography," *Social Forces*, 54 (1976), 932, with modifications for Texas.)

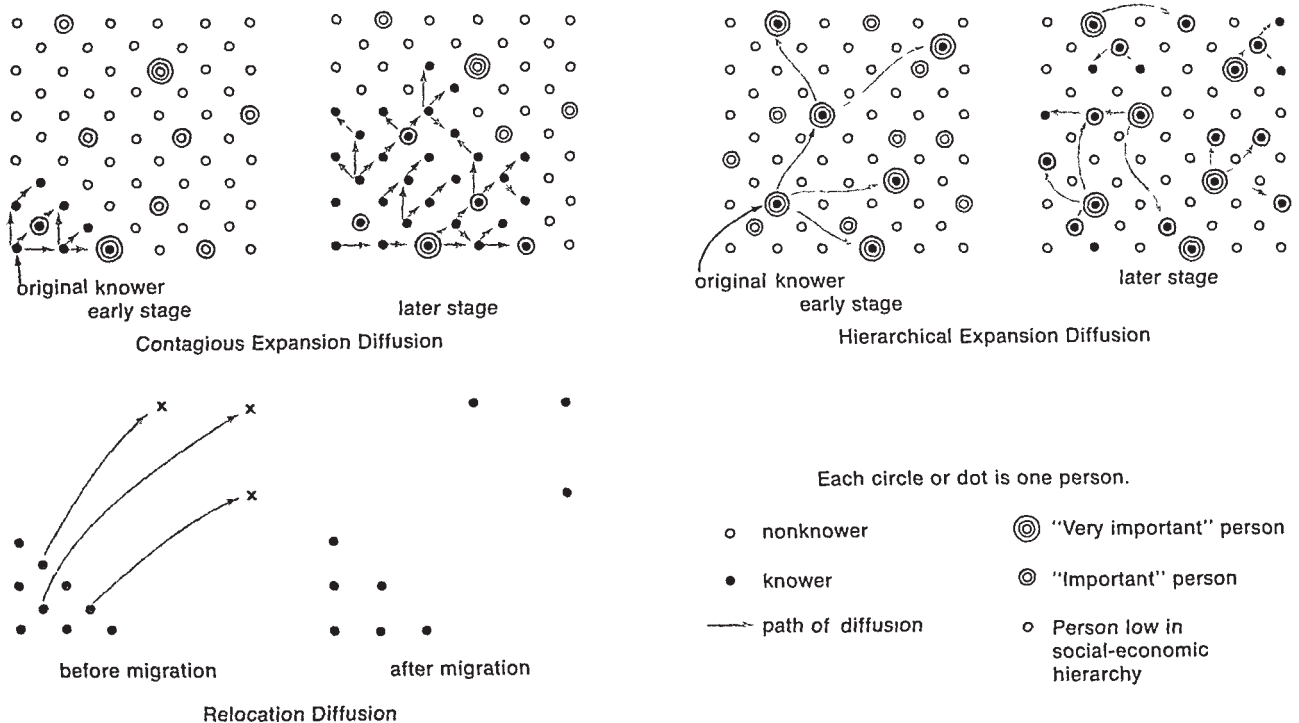
spread of ideas, innovations, and attitudes. As Figure 1-6 shows, each element of culture originates in one or more places and then spreads. Some innovations occur only once, and therefore geographers can sometimes trace a cultural element back to a single place of origin. In many other cases, *independent invention* occurs. The same or very similar innovation is independently developed at different places by different peoples. The study of cultural diffusion—the origin and spread of ideas and innovations throughout an area—is a very important theme in cultural geography. Through the study of diffusion, the cultural geographer can understand how spatial variations in culture evolved.

Any culture is the product of almost countless innovations that spread from their points of origin to cover a wider area. Geographers recognize several different kinds of diffusion. Two important types are *expansion diffusion* and *relocation diffusion*. In expansion diffusion, ideas spread throughout a population, from area to area, in a snowballing process, so that the total number of knowers and the area of occurrence become ever greater. Relocation diffusion occurs when individuals or groups with a particular idea move bodily from one location to another, thereby spreading the innovation to their new homeland. Religions are frequently spread this way. An example is the migration of Christianity with European settlers who came to America.

Expansion diffusion can be further divided into subtypes called *stimulus diffusion*, *hierarchical diffusion*, and *contagious diffusion*. In hierarchical diffusion, ideas leapfrog from one important person to another or from one urban center to another, temporarily bypassing other

FIGURE 1-6

Types of cultural diffusion are presented here. These diagrams are merely suggestive; in reality, spatial diffusion is far more complex.



persons or rural territory. We can see hierarchical diffusion at work in everyday life by observing the acceptance of new modes of dress or hairstyles. By contrast, contagious diffusion involves the general spread of ideas, without regard to hierarchies, in the manner of a contagious disease. Sometimes a specific trait is rejected, but the underlying idea is accepted. This is stimulus diffusion. For example, it is generally believed that early Siberian cultures domesticated reindeer only after exposure to the domesticated cattle and horses raised by cultures to their south. The Siberians had no use for these domesticated animals; however, the idea of domesticated herds was appealing, so they applied the concept to their homeland and began domesticating reindeer.

If you throw a rock into a pond and watch the spreading ripples, you can see them become gradually weaker as they move away from the point of impact. In the same way, the acceptance of a cultural innovation decreases with distance. An innovation will be accepted most in the areas closest to where it originates. This concept can be called distance decay. Time decay is also a factor: It takes increasing time for innovations to spread outward. Because acceptance decreases with distance, acceptance also decreases with time. This is what geographers mean by *time-distance decay*.

In addition to the "natural" weakening or decay of an innovation through time and distance, barriers tend to retard its spread. *Absorbing barriers* completely halt the diffusion, allowing no further progress. For example, television was for decades prevented from entering the Republic of South Africa because the government there objected to it. The border of the Republic thus served as an absorbing barrier to the spread of television. More commonly, barriers are *permeable*, allowing part of the innovation wave to diffuse through it but acting to weaken and retard the continued spread. For example, when a school board objects to long hair on boys, the principal of a high school may set a limit on hair length for male students. This length will likely be longer than the haircuts before the "long hair" innovation, but it will be shorter than the length of the new hairstyle. In this way, the principal and school board act as a permeable barrier to a cultural innovation.

Barriers may be either cultural—in the form of social or governmental taboos and restrictions—or environmental. The old joke about selling refrigerators to Eskimos as the ultimate test of a salesperson's ability reveals the environmental barrier that can be encountered by innovations. Indeed, the cultural geographer is much concerned with the physical environment, as we will see in the following section on cultural ecology.

Acceptance of innovations at any given point in space can be depicted with an S-shaped curve that includes three distinct stages. The first stage sees acceptance taking place at a steady, yet slow, rate, perhaps because the innovation has not yet caught on, the benefits have not been adequately demonstrated, or the trait is not physically available. But then during the second stage, there is rapid growth in acceptance—the trait will spread widely, as with a fashion style or dance fad. Often diffusion on a microscale will exhibit what is called the *neighborhood effect*, which means simply that acceptance is usually most rapid in small clusters around an initial adopter. Think of a fad that first appeared in your



TORSTEN HÄGERSTRAND
1916–

A native and resident of Sweden, Hägerstrand is professor of geography at the University of Lund, where he received a doctorate in 1953. His doctoral research was on innovation diffusion, and his findings were published in 1953. His work on diffusion is significant because it is based on models and statistical techniques. As a result, it has been the basis for many theories and has elevated cultural geographers' research on diffusion to a higher, more scientific level. Sweden, and particularly Lund, has become a major center of innovative work in cultural geography.

CULTURAL DIFFUSION: A 100 PERCENT AMERICAN

"Our solid American citizen awakens in a bed built on a pattern that originated in the Near East but that was modified in Northern Europe before it was transmitted to America. He throws back covers made from cotton, domesticated in India, or linen, domesticated in the Near East, or silk, the use of which was discovered in China. All of these materials have been spun and woven by processes invented in the Near East. He slips into his moccasins, invented by the Indians of the Eastern woodlands, and goes to the bathroom, whose fixtures are a mixture of European and American inventions, both of recent date. He takes off his pajamas, a garment invented in India, and

washes with soap, invented by the ancient Gauls. He then shaves—a masochistic rite that seems to have been derived from either Sumer or ancient Egypt.

" On his way to breakfast, he stops to buy a paper, paying for it with coins, an ancient Lydian invention. At the restaurant, a whole new series of borrowed elements confronts him. His plate is made of a form of pottery invented in China. His knife is of steel, an alloy first made in southern India, his fork—a medieval Italian invention, and his spoon, a derivative of a Roman original.

" When our friend has finished eating, he reads the news of the day, imprinted in

characters invented by the ancient Semites upon a material invented in China by a process invented in Germany. As he absorbs the accounts of foreign troubles, he will, if he is a good, conservative citizen, thank a Hebrew deity in an Indo-European language that he is 100 per cent American."

*From Ralph Linton, The Study of Man
Copyright © 1936, renewed 1964,
by Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey*

neighborhood one day, then a few days later it seemed that everyone on the block was doing the same thing. Direct exposure to an innovation is the best advertisement. The third stage of growth shows a slower rate than the second, perhaps because the fad is passing, or because an area is already saturated with the innovation. The people who adopt a new trait in the third stage are called late adopters or "laggards."

The Theme of Cultural Ecology

Cultures do not exist in a vacuum. Each human group and the way of life they have developed occupy a piece of the physical earth. Cultures, as you might expect, interact with the environment, and it is necessary for the cultural geographer to study this reciprocal interaction in order to understand spatial variations in culture. This study is called *cultural ecology*. The word *ecology*, as used here, refers to the two-way relationship between an organism and its physical environment. It comes from two ancient Greek words. *Oikos* means "house," or "habitat"; *logia* means "words," or "teachings." Thus the Greek *oikologia* could be rendered "teachings about the habitat." Cultural ecology, then, is the study of the cause-and-effect interplay between cultures and the physical environment. A *physical environment* is understood to include climate, terrain, soils, natural vegetation, wildlife, and other aspects of the physical surroundings.

A closely related term is *human ecology*. The basic difference is that cultural ecology implies the study of interaction between physical environment and people as culture-bearing animals, whereas in human ecology, human populations are studied in their physical environments.



Human modification of the earth includes such severe soil erosion as on this farm in Kentucky. The erosion could have been caused by poor farming methods, overgrazing the cattle, or other careless abuses to the land.

in much the same manner as noncultural animal populations. Some regard human ecology as more oriented to the study of people as instruments of environmental modification. In reality, however, the two terms are often used interchangeably by geographers. Another frequently used word is *ecosystem*. By this, we seek to describe the functioning ecological system in which biological and cultural *homo sapiens* live in and interact with the physical environment. In sum, we may define cultural ecology as the study of (1) environmental influence on culture and (2) the impact of people, acting through their culture, on the ecosystem. Cultural ecology, then, implies a "two-way street," with people and the environment exerting influence on one another.

The theme of cultural ecology is the meeting ground of cultural and physical geographers and has traditionally provided a focal point for the academic discipline of geography. In fact, some geographers have proposed that geography is cultural ecology. They argue that study of the intricate relationships between people and their physical environments constitutes a valid academic discipline. While few accept this narrow definition of geography, most will agree that an appreciation of the complex people-environment relationship is a necessary undertaking for concerned citizens of the late twentieth century. Through the years, cultural geographers have developed various perspectives on the spatial interaction between humans and the land. In a broad sense, four schools of thought have developed: *environmental determinism*, *possibilism*, *environmental perception*, and *humans as modifiers of the earth*.

Environmental Determinism During the first quarter of the twentieth century, many English-speaking geographers adhered to the doctrine of environmental determinism. These geographers believed that the

physical environment—especially the climate and terrain—was the active force in shaping cultures, that humankind was essentially a passive product of the physical surroundings. According to the logic of the determinist, humans were clay to be molded by nature. Similar physical environments were likely to produce similar cultures. In effect, environmental determinists view cultural ecology as a “one-way street.”

There are many examples of determinist beliefs. Determinists believed that peoples of the mountains were predestined by the rugged terrain to be simple, backward, conservative, unimaginative, and freedom loving. Dwellers of the desert were likely to believe in one god, but to live under the rule of tyrants. Temperate climates produced inventiveness, industriousness, and democracy, whereas coastlands pitted with fjords produced great navigators and fishermen. Environmental determinists had a handy explanation for England’s preeminent position in the world at that time: The surrounding waters demanded seamanship, and an optimum climate produced genius for government and a work ethic.

From the perspective of the late twentieth century, we can see that the determinists overemphasized the role of environment in human affairs. This does not imply that environmental influence is inconsequential or that the cultural geographer should not study such influence. Rather, it suggests that the physical environment is only one of many forces affecting human culture and rarely the sole determinant of human behavior and beliefs.

Possibilism. Since the 1930s, environmental determinism has fallen from favor among cultural geographers. Possibilism has taken its place. Possibilists do not ignore the influence of the physical environment. They realize that the imprint of nature shows in many cultures. However, possibilists stress that cultural heritage is at least as important as the physical environment in affecting human behavior.

According to possibilists, people, rather than their environment, are the primary architects of culture. Possibilists claim that any physical environment offers a number of possible ways for a culture to develop. How people use and inhabit an area depends on the choices they make among the possibilities offered by the environment. These choices are guided by cultural heritage. Possibilists, then, see the physical environment as offering opportunities and limitations; people make choices among these in order to satisfy their needs. In short, local traits of culture and economy are the products of culturally based decisions made within the limits of possibilities offered by the environment. The higher the technological level of a culture, the greater the number of possibilities and the weaker the influences of the physical environment.

Environmental Perception. Each person has mental images of the physical environment, and within a cultural group these perceived images are largely shared. To describe such mental images, cultural geographers use the term *environmental perception*. Whereas the possibilist sees humankind as having a choice of different possibilities in a given physical setting, the environmental perceptionist declares that the choices people make will depend more on what they perceive the environment to be than on the actual character of the land. Perception, in

"THE FACTS ARE INCONTESTABLE": AN ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINIST'S VIEW OF CREATIVE GENIUS

"The absence of artistic and poetic development in Switzerland and the Alpine lands [may be ascribed] to the overwhelming aspect of nature there, its majestic sublimity which paralyzes the mind . . . This position [is reinforced] by the fact that the lower mountains and hill country of Swabia, Franconia and Thuringia, where nature is gentler, stimulating, appealing, and not overpowering,

have produced many poets and artists. The facts are incontestable. They reappear in France in the geographical distribution of the awards made by the Paris Salon of 1896. Judged by these awards, the [people of the] rough highlands are singularly lacking in artistic instinct, while art flourishes in all the river lowlands of France. French men of letters, by the distribution of

their birthplaces, are essentially products of fluvial valleys and plains, rarely of upland and mountain."

From Ellen Churchill Semple, Influences of Geographic Environment Copyright 1911 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston Copyright © 1939 by Carolyn W. Keene

A POSSIBILIST REACHES A DIFFERENT CONCLUSION

"All [European] patent offices report the Swiss as the foremost inventors. . . . A partial list of books published in different countries showed Switzerland to be far ahead of any other country in this sphere . . .

"The Swiss themselves attribute [this] . . . to the religious persecutions in neighboring countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries—persecutions which drove thousands of intelligent men into Switzerland. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 is credited with driving sixty thousand Huguenots from France into Switzerland. They founded the silk industry of Zurich and Bern. It was a Huguenot who founded the watch business at Geneva. Spanish

persecution in the Low Countries and Swiss neutrality during the Thirty Years' War added to the human resources of Switzerland."

From Mark Jefferson, "The Geographic Distribution of Inventiveness," Geographical Review, 19 (1929), 660-661

turn, is colored by the teachings of culture. The perceptionist maintains that people cannot perceive their environment with exact accuracy and that decisions are therefore based on distortions of reality. To understand why a cultural group developed as it did in its physical environment, geographers must know not only what the environment is like, but also what the members of the culture think it is like.

Some of the most productive research done by environmental perceptionists has been on the topic of natural hazards, such as floods and droughts. Different cultural groups react to the same hazards in varied ways. Some reason that natural disasters are unavoidable acts of the gods; others seek to cope with environmental hazards by placating the gods; and still others place responsibility for preventing calamities on the government. In Western cultures, people tend to regard hazards and disasters as natural phenomena that they can manipulate and control through technology.

The perceptionists' ideas are particularly striking when applied to migrations. They have found that people migrating from one environment to another usually imagine their old and new homelands to be environmentally more similar than is actually the case. For example, American farmers migrating from the humid eastern regions of the

BUFFALO NO BIGGER THAN INSECTS: THE PYGMY AND THE RAIN FOREST

The sun is a network of flickering lights dotting the ground, not a bright disk moving across the sky. The stars are not visible at night. The seasons hardly vary. The chief landmark of the area is no landmark at all—no distant rise of ground, no special tree standing out against the sky, nothing. Sound is supreme. In hunting, game is merely heard until it appears yards away from the hunter. The clearest idea of the supernatural that the inhabitants of this land have is not God, not a visual land to which the dead depart, but a sound the "Beautiful Song of a Bird."

Although this may seem like science fiction, it is in fact the world of the Ba Mbuti pygmies, who live in the Congo rain forest. As an environment, the rain forest is all-enveloping and naturally affects every aspect of pygmy life even the way they see. Living underneath a thick, almost impenetrable canopy of branches and leaves, hemmed in on all sides by lush, green foliage the pygmies never have the

experience of seeing anything from a distance. As a result, their sense of perspective is severely curtailed.

Can you imagine what it would be like to step out of that all-sustaining world for the first time? Kenge, a pygmy of the Ba Mbuti tribe, actually had the experience. The anthropologist Colin Turnbull took him to an area of open grasslands. A flock of buffalo grazed several miles away, far below where they were standing. Familiar with the size of buffalo in the forest, Kenge could make no sense of these tiny dots in front of him. He asked Turnbull "What insects are those?" "When I told Kenge that the insects were buffalo," Turnbull wrote, "he roared with laughter and told me not to tell such stupid lies." When Turnbull tried to explain how far away they actually were, Kenge "began scraping mud off his arms and legs, no longer interested in such fantasies."

Later, as the men approached the herd in a car, Kenge became frightened. He could see the animals

growing bigger and bigger and feared that a magic trick was being played on him. In fact his eye/brain had never learned something we take for granted: the ability to correct for changes in the size of the retinal image when looking at an object so that the image remains relatively the same size as the object moves closer or farther away. Bewildered by distance, the lack of trees, and the sharpness of relief, Kenge's brain was making wrong guesses based on inadequate experience. Used to the environment of the rain forest, Kenge, for a moment at least, found the world a less stable and predictable place.

Adapted from Colin M. Turnbull, The Forest People. Copyright © 1961 by Colin M. Turnbull. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

United States onto the semi-arid Great Plains consistently overestimated the rainfall of their new homeland. Accustomed by the experience of many generations to living and farming in moist climates, they were initially unable to perceive the realities of their new climatic setting. They made decisions based on their experience and had to learn by trial and error that the realities of the Great Plains climate were not what they imagined (see Chapters 3 and 9).

Different cultures, surveying their environment, treat the natural resources around them quite differently. What to one cultural group is a major resource may be completely worthless or even a nuisance to another. To hunters and gatherers, the principal resources of an area may be wild berries, game animals, and flint deposits from which weapons can be fashioned. An agricultural group in the same environment may regard level land, fertile soils, and reliable sources of water as their most valuable resources. An industrial society may cherish the oil, coal, and other minerals buried beneath the land. In this way, people of three cultures perceive the resources of the same environment in quite different ways.

Humans as Modifiers of the Earth Some cultural geographers, observing the changes people have wrought in their physical environment, have chosen to study humans as modifiers of the earth. This exposes yet

another facet of cultural ecology. In a sense, this human-as-modifier theme is the opposite of environmental determinism. Whereas the determinists proclaim that nature molds humankind, those cultural geographers who study the human impact on the land emphasize that humans also mold nature.

Of course, this belief is no surprise to any American who has emphysema (a lung disease) and lives in a smoggy city such as Los Angeles; nor to the Japanese parents from the fishing village of Minamata whose children were born deformed because a chemical company dumped mercury wastes into the waters where their fish were caught; nor even to the scholars of classical Greece who first recorded the observation that humankind is a modifier of its habitat. The Greek philosopher Plato, commenting on the soil erosion around Athens around 400 B.C., lamented that the once fertile district had been stripped of its soil so that "what now remains compared to what formerly existed is like the skeleton of a sick man, all the fat and soft earth having wasted away, and only the bare framework of the land being left."

In more recent times, cultural geographers began to concentrate on the human role in changing the face of the earth long before North Americans gained their present level of ecological consciousness. They found, not surprisingly, that different groups have widely different outlooks on humankind's role in changing the earth. Some, such as those rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, tend to regard environmental modification as divinely approved, viewing humans as God's helpers in completing the task of creation. North Americans particularly have viewed humans as creatures apart from, and often at war with, nature. Some other groups are much more cautious, taking care not to offend the forces of nature. To many of these latter groups, humans are part of nature, meant to be in harmony with their environment. Obviously, the outlooks that go with such contrasting styles can produce markedly different degrees of environmental modification. The events of recent decades suggest that the Judeo-Christian tradition concerning environmental alteration may be leading Western culture and the rest of the world toward ecological catastrophe (see Chapter 6).

The Theme of Cultural Integration

The relationship between people and the land, the theme of cultural ecology, lies at the heart of traditional geography. However, the explanation of human spatial variations requires consideration of a whole range of cultural factors. The cultural geographer recognizes that all facets of culture are spatially intertwined, or *integrated*. The theme of cultural integration reflects the geographer's awareness that the immediate causes of some cultural phenomena are other cultural phenomena. It is impossible to understand the distribution of one facet of culture without studying the spatial variations in the other facets of that culture in order to see how they are interrelated and integrated with one another.

For example, religious belief has the potential to influence a group's voting behavior, diet, shopping patterns, type of employment, and social standing. Traditional Hinduism, the religion of India, segregated people into social classes called *castes* and specified what forms of livelihood were appropriate for each. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints forbids the consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and

THE FINAL TOUCHES?

As it crosses an area of the Mediterranean Sea south of Italy, an American ocean exploring vessel, *Atlantis II* sights several thousand "lumps" of tar on every square mile of the sea's surface, the result of oil humans have spilled into the ocean. A man-made "dead sea" of sewage floats off the coast of New York City. Pesticides used on African land are detected in the Caribbean Sea, many thousands of miles away. A scientific report suggests that pollution from man-made nuclear wastes is gradually seeping into the oceans and polluting the human food chain. The report suggests that, in the future, people eating fish may become increasingly prone to cancer.

Industrial societies have normally treated the oceans as a giant garbage dump—a bottomless pit for their wastes. As a disposal system, offshore waters have the advantage of being both cheap and relatively invisible. "Out of sight, out of mind" might be the industrial credo in dealing with the waters that cover three-fourths of the earth's surface.

As a result, the oceans have been the receptacle of raw sewage, factory waste products, giant oil spills, cyanides, mercury compounds, pesticides, and numerous other man-made poisons.

Unfortunately for humankind, the oceans—a giant hundred-million-year-old ecosystem—have developed an incredibly effective system of circulation. What starts out in one spot is hardly likely to remain there. In addition, the oceans are a complex life system, so large that the harm done to them takes a long while to get back to humans. Consequently, the effects of industrial pollution are not only presently incalculable, but also hardly likely to be noticed until major damage has already been done. For instance, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) are an industrial product similar chemically to DDT. They appear to have been accumulating in the oceans for twenty years without anyone noticing them. Their presence in global waters was discovered quite by accident. The

toxic effect of PCB's on marine wildlife and the birds and mammals that feed on marine life has already been significant. Similarly, oil wastes spilled purposely or accidentally in the oceans have hurt or killed countless thousands of diving birds.

The diving bird seems biologically a long way away from humankind. However, Jacques Cousteau, the scientist who has spent a lifetime at underwater exploration, claims that "life in the sea has diminished by 40 percent in the last twenty years." Whether Cousteau has overestimated or not, today the ocean's food resources account for over 15 percent of humankind's protein intake. Thus, what affects birds now will undoubtedly affect human populations later on. It might, then, be worth asking: Is humankind making its final modifications on earth?

*Adapted from Harry Rothman
Murderous Providence (Indianapolis
Bobbs-Merrill 1972) pp 218-247*

certain other products, thereby influencing both the diet and shopping patterns of its members. There are countless other ways in which one facet of a culture influences other facets. Any culture is thus an integrated whole, with many causal forces at work within it. The cultural integration theme allows the geographer to see how these intracultural causal forces help determine spatial variations.

Indeed, it is through the theme of cultural integration that geographers have made the greatest strides in developing theories to help explain spatial variations of culture. Ironically, to get at the ways a culture is integrated and why it is integrated the way it is, geographers have generally gone through a stripping down process, separating cultural causal factors. Geographers are aware that, in the real world, so many causal factors are involved in any problem that confusion may result. So they have developed a simpler way of testing how a culture works. It is called *model building*. Unlike physical scientists, scholars studying cultures are unable to achieve laboratory conditions, where certain causal forces can be isolated from those forces surrounding them. To simulate a laboratory, social scientists imagine model situations in which they can observe certain isolated forces. For example, the nine-

teenth-century scholar Johann Heinrich von Thünen created a model consisting of a single country isolated from all others. Physically, he envisioned it as a flat plain surrounding a central city. He declared the soils and climate uniform throughout the country and assumed that all persons living a given distance from the city could transport goods to it in equal time and at equal rates. Von Thünen's purpose in creating this model of an isolated country was to study the effect of transportation costs and increased distance from the market on agricultural land use. The result was a theory that could then be applied to more complex real situations. His model is still recognized as valid and helpful by today's geographers (see Chapter 3). The task of building models and formulating theories goes on with increased vigor in modern cultural geography. In the following chapters, you will be introduced to some of the models that geographers have built.

However, a number of cultural geographers have gone about the job of explaining cultural variations without attempting to apply their findings to situations other than the one they are studying. These scholars, who perhaps form the majority of cultural geographers, tend to regard geography as an *idiographic science*, one that deals with phenomena that are never alike and therefore not susceptible to the type of generalization required for formulating theories. The theorists, on the other hand, believe that geography is a *nomothetic*, or law-giving, science and that the chief purpose of geographical scholarship should be the discovery of universal principles. Many geographers value both of these approaches and feel that each has a contribution to make. We will become acquainted with both approaches in this text.

The danger inherent in cultural integration and model building is that it will lead the geographer to *cultural determinism*. Advocates of this extreme viewpoint, developed in reaction to the earlier environmental determinism, maintain that the physical environment is inconsequential as an influence on culture. Any facet of a culture, they would argue, is shaped entirely by other facets of culture. Cultural integration, for them, offers all the answers for spatial variations. People and culture are the active forces; nature is passive and easily conquered. You should be as wary of cultural determinism as of environmental determinism.

The Theme of Cultural Landscape

The *cultural landscape* is the artificial landscape that cultural groups create in inhabiting the earth. Cultures have shaped their own landscapes out of the raw materials provided by the earth. Every inhabited area has a cultural landscape, fashioned from the natural landscape, and each uniquely reflects the culture that created it (see Figure 1-7). Landscape mirrors culture, and the cultural geographer can learn much about a group of people by carefully observing the landscape. Indeed, so important is this visual record of cultures that some cultural geographers regard landscape study as the core of geographical concern, geography's central interest. Those who specialize in the study of the cultural landscape are often referred to as *settlement geographers*.

Why is such importance attached to the cultural landscape? Perhaps part of the answer is that it visually reflects the most basic strivings of humankind: for shelter, food, clothing, and entertainment. The cultural landscape also reflects different attitudes concerning modification of the

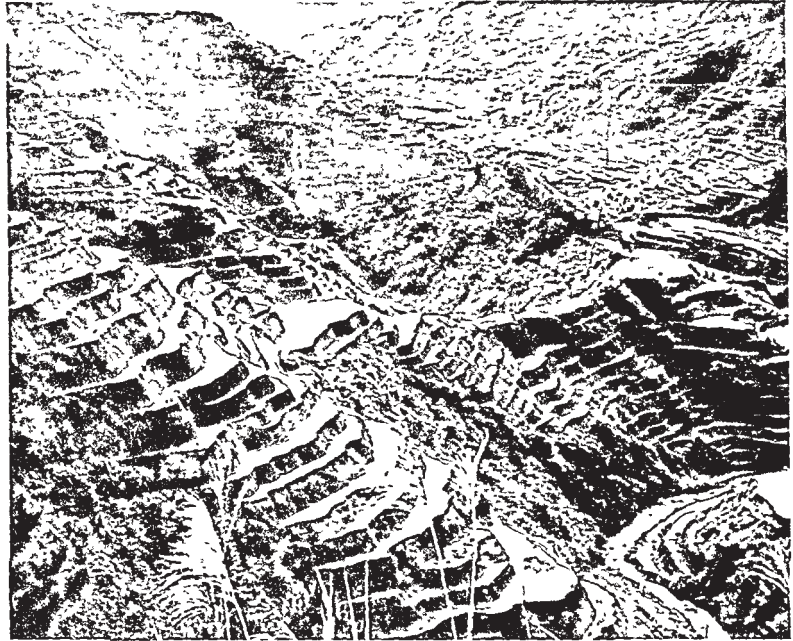
FIGURE 1-7

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The rice terraces of northern Luzon in the Philippines were built more than 3000 years ago. They are irrigated by an intricate system of bamboo tubes fed by waterfalls. Such ingenious land management indicates the harmony that certain cultures share with their landscapes. What evidence, if any, can you find in your own culture of a similar kind of harmony with the land?

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earth by people. In addition, the landscape contains valuable evidence about the origin, spread, and development of cultures. It is this potential for interpretive analysis that most attracts the geographer to study the landscape. Properly studied, this visible evidence can teach the observer much about the aspects of culture that are invisible, about a past long forgotten by the present inhabitants, and about the choices made and changes wrought by a people. Although we may not notice it in our daily lives, the cultural landscape constantly changes across both space and time. The unraveling of its mysteries has occupied the attention of many of the foremost cultural geographers.

The content of the cultural landscape is both varied and complex. Most geographical studies have focused on three principal aspects of this landscape: settlement patterns, land-division patterns, and architecture. In the study of settlement patterns, cultural geographers describe and explain spatial variations in the arrangement of the buildings, roads and other features that people construct while inhabiting an area. Land-division patterns reveal the way people have divided the land for economic and social uses. Such patterns vary a great deal from place to place. They range from huge corporate-owned farming complexes to small family-operated farms composed of tens or even hundreds of separate tiny parcels of land; from the fenced, privately owned home lots of American suburbs to the public squares and skyscrapers of the central cities. Perhaps the best way to glimpse settlement and land-division patterns is through an airplane window. Looking down, you can see the awesome physical landscape: snakelike rivers winding through the land, crumpled mountain ranges. But just as striking is the mark of human culture: the multicolored abstract patterns of planted fields, as vivid as any modern painting; the sprawl of cities, particularly impressive at night when millions of electric lights lend a jewellike effect.

Perhaps no other aspect of the human landscape is as readily visible from ground level as the architectural style of a culture. In North American culture, contrasting building styles cannot help catching the eye: modest white New England churches and giant urban cathedrals, hand-hewn barns and geodesic domes, New York City's rocket-shaped Empire State Building, a monument to the doctrine of progress, the last of the little red schoolhouses and the new windowless schoolbuildings of the urban areas. This architecture provides a vivid record of the resident culture. For this reason, cultural geographers have traditionally devoted considerable attention to such structures.

We can distinguish two basic types of architecture in the cultural landscape, as Figure 1-8 shows: folk architecture (see Chapter 7) and



FIGURE 1-8

The log house is an example of rural folk architecture. It stands in sharp contrast to the professional architecture of the New York skyline. What kinds of folk architecture and professional architecture are found in your own community?



professional architecture. Folk architecture includes all buildings erected without professional architectural help. The styles and methods used to build them are derived from the folk culture rather than from drawing boards and schools of architecture. The resultant structures are monuments to traditional practices and skills. Folk houses are often faithful copies of dwellings built in the same style for perhaps thousands of years. The works of professional architects and draftsmen also reflect their culture, although on a different level of technology. The professionally designed skyscraper or the mass-produced mobile home are as revealing of the North American material culture and way of life as the Brazilian Indian farmer's thatched hut is of that culture.

THE CULTURAL-HISTORICAL METHOD

We must now discard Kant's neat division of geography and history. The spatial distribution of cultural features is the result of changes through time, so cultural geographers have traditionally been concerned with variations in both space and time. Cultural landscapes are often the products of centuries of human action. Ecological decisions made by humans are rooted in their past interactions with the environment, and cultural diffusion by its very nature depends on the passage of time. In short, if the cultural geographer hopes to understand and explain spatial variations in culture, she or he must adopt an historical perspective and delve into the past for answers. For this reason, cultural geographers often call their field *cultural-historical geography*.

The cultural landscape illustrates this point. Much of what meets the eye in that landscape comes from vanished causal forces and circumstances. To see this, all you have to do is stroll through any large American city. Like the ancient cities that archeologists sometimes discover—built one on top of the other over thousands of years—American cities, too, are really layered by time, cities inside cities inside cities. The modern office buildings of two decades ago are already being covered over by new steel and glass giants. The buildings they had once replaced are often still standing, although perhaps less noticed today. Even the use of buildings changes over time. New York City's Academy of Music, in the 1890s an elegant meeting place for high society, still exists. Today, however, it shows Spanish-language films to Puerto Rican immigrants who inhabit the now rundown neighborhood. Members of society, on the other hand, listen to their music and attend their theaters about two miles (three kilometers) to the north, where in the 1890s, their antecedents drove their carriages through rural woodlands. In other areas of the world, geographers must often delve thousands of years into the past to explain elements in the cultural landscape. Cultural geographers are interested in determining when and especially where cultural artifacts, practices, and beliefs originated.

The cultural landscape theme is a valuable tool for examining the sequence of settlement by different groups in an area, for usually each group leaves some sort of visible reminders of their presence that show up in the landscape. This concept of *sequent occupance*—or the sequence of settlement—is an important part of the cultural-historical method. For example, in California, it is still possible today to pick out traces of past

cultures in the landscape. Grassland and forest vegetation show the effects of prehistoric Indian burning; Spanish roads and missions dot the countryside, as do the land-division lines from the Mexican rancho period. Reminders of the early American period are everywhere, from Eucalyptus trees covering large parts of the state (after being introduced from Australia in the 1860s) to the mine tailings and dredging deposits of the Gold Rush days. All of these parts of the cultural landscape tell us something about how past cultures interacted with their environment.

If cultural geographers study variations in both space and time, why are they geographers rather than historians? The answer is that their first concern is always spatial variation; they study changes through time mainly because that study helps them understand spatial variations.

CONCLUSION

The interests of cultural geographers are, as we have seen, quite diverse. It might seem to you, confronted by the various themes, viewpoints, and methodologies described in this chapter, that cultural geographers are running off in all directions, that they lack unity of purpose. What does a geographer studying folk architecture have in common with a colleague studying the human role in shaping the earth? What interests do an environmental perceptionist and a student of cultural diffusion share? Why do scholars with such apparently different interests belong in the same academic discipline? Why are they all geographers?

The answer is that, regardless of the particular topic the cultural geographer studies, he or she necessarily touches on several or all of the five themes we have mentioned. The themes are all closely related segments of a whole. Spatial variation in culture, as revealed by maps of culture regions, is reflected in the cultural landscape, requires an ecological interpretation, implies cultural diffusion, and suggests cultural integration.

As an example of how the various themes of cultural geography overlap and intertwine, let us look at a specific example from the realm of folk architecture—the American log house. Once found widely on the American frontier, many log cabins can still be found in the mountains of the South and West. They are obviously part of the *cultural landscape*, and their spatial distribution constitutes a formal *culture region* that can be mapped. In addition, the geographer studying such a house needs to employ the other themes of cultural geography to gain a complete understanding. He or she can use the cultural-historical method to learn where people first discovered how to build houses from logs. He or she can use the concept of *cultural diffusion* to learn when and by what routes these techniques diffused and what barriers retarded their diffusion. In this particular case, the geographer would be led back to the history of the Neolithic period in Central and Northern Europe and, later, to the early Swedish and German colonies in the Delaware Valley. Further, the cultural geographer would need an *ecological* interpretation of the log house. How does the environment influence the log cabin? Is the form of the house related to types of trees? How do houses built of pine differ from those built of oak? Does the use of logs for houses decline as the forests become thinned out? Do log houses differ from one climatic

zone to another? Finally, the cultural geographer wants to know how the use of log houses is *integrated* with other facets of the culture. Did changes in the economy and standard of living lead people to reject log houses? Did changes in technology lead to more elaborate houses? Are American political images linked to log cabins?

Thus the geographer interested in folk housing finds himself or herself firmly bound by the total fabric of cultural geography, unable to segregate a particular topic such as log houses from the geographic whole. In this way, culture region, cultural landscape, cultural integration, cultural ecology, and cultural diffusion are interwoven. Geography's focus on spatial variation, together with the five interrelated themes, distinguishes the cultural geographer from other students of culture such as anthropologists.

GLOSSARY

Absorbing barrier one that completely halts diffusion of innovations and blocks the spread of cultural elements

Contagious diffusion a type of expansion diffusion, the spread of cultural innovation by person to person contact, moving wavelike through an area and population without regard to social status

Cultural determinism the viewpoint that the immediate causes of all cultural phenomena are other cultural phenomena

Cultural diffusion the spread of elements of culture from the point of origin over an area

Cultural ecology the study of the complex, intricate relationships between the physical environment and people as culture bearing animals

Cultural geography the description and explanation of spatial variations in human culture

Cultural-historical geography the study of how cultural distributions change through time and are diffused throughout space

Cultural integration the relationship of different elements within a culture

Cultural landscape the man-made landscape, the visible human imprint on the land

Culture a total way of life held in common by a group of people, including such learned features as speech, ideology, behavior, livelihood, technology, and government

Culture area a composite formal culture region based on whole cultures, on the totality of cultural traits

Culture region an area or region occupied by people who have something in common culturally, a spatial unit that functions politically, socially, or economically as a distinct entity

Ecology the study of the relationship between an organism and its physical environment

Ecosystem the functioning ecological system in which biological and cultural *homo sapiens* live in and interact with the physical environment

Environmental determinism the school of thought based on the belief that cultures are, directly or indirectly, shaped by the physical environment, that cultures are molded by physical surroundings

Environmental perception the school of thought based on the belief that cultural attitudes shape perception of the environment, causing people of different cultures to perceive their surroundings differently and to make different decisions as a result

Expansion diffusion the spread of innovations within an area in a snowballing process, so that the total number of knowers becomes greater and the area of occurrence enlarges

Formal culture region a region inhabited by people who have one or more cultural traits in common

Functional culture region a region or area that functions as a unit politically, socially, or economically

Geography the study of spatial variations, of differences from one place to another in environment and culture

Hierarchical diffusion a type of expansion diffusion, innovations spread from one important person to another or from one urban center to another, temporarily bypassing persons of lesser importance and rural areas

Human ecology the study of the relationship between biological *homo sapiens* and their physical

environment, with particular emphasis on people as agents of environmental change.

Idiographic science one that involves the study of phenomena that are never alike and that therefore do not lend themselves to the development of explanatory laws.

Independent invention cultural innovations that are developed in two or more locations by persons or groups working independently

Model an abstraction, an imaginary situation, proposed by geographers to simulate laboratory conditions so that they may isolate certain causal forces for detailed study.

Neighborhood effect the rapid acceptance of an innovation in a small area or cluster around an initial adopter.

Node in a functional culture region, a central point where functions are coordinated and directed.

Nomothetic science a law-giving science

Permeable barrier one that permits some aspects of an innovation to diffuse through but weakens and retards continued spread, an innovation can be modified in passing through a permeable barrier

Physical environment includes all aspects of the natural physical surroundings, such as climate, terrain, soils, vegetation, and wildlife

Possibilism the school of thought based on the belief that humans, rather than the physical environment, are the primary active force, that any environment offers a number of different possible ways for a culture to develop, and that the choices among these possibilities are guided by cultural heritage

Push-and-pull factors unfavorable, repelling conditions and favorable, attractive conditions that interact to affect cultural distributions

Relocation diffusion the spread of an innovation or other element of

culture that occurs with the bodily relocation (migration) of an individual or group that has the idea.

Sequent occupance a sequence of settlements, implying distinct occupance phases.

Settlement geography the study of the cultural landscape and the processes that created it.

Stimulus diffusion when a specific trait fails to diffuse but the underlying idea or concept is accepted.

Time-distance decay the decrease in acceptance of a cultural innovation with increasing time and distance from its origin.

Topical geography the division of geographical subject matter into topics, such as agricultural geography, rather than into regions.

Vernacular culture region a perceptual region; one perceived to exist by its inhabitants.

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