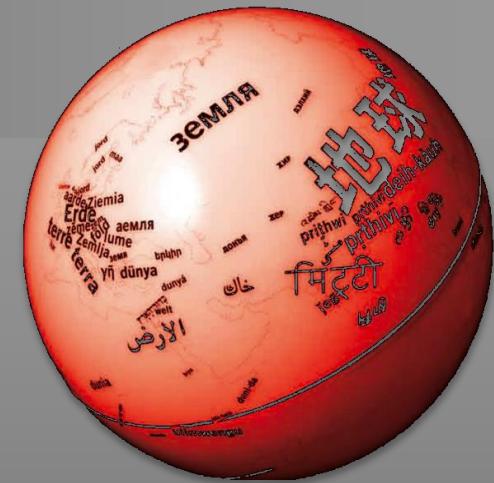




# HUMAN CULTURE

## PART I



The crucial differences which distinguish human societies and human beings are not biological. They are cultural.

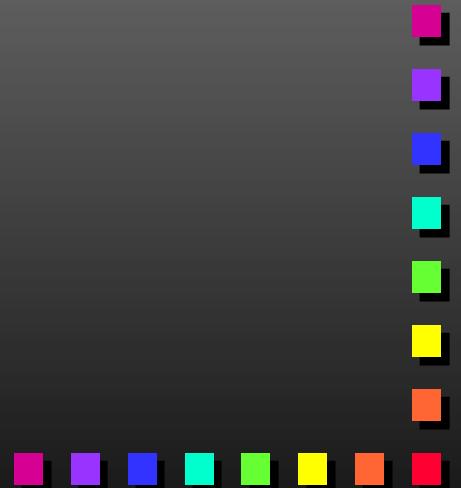
-Ruth Benedict





# Human Culture Part I

- The Basics
- Cultural Landscapes
- Cultural Ecology
- Popular and Folk Culture





# THE BASICS

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# Cultural Geography

- Geography: the study of where things are
- Culture: the body of customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a group of people
- Cultural Geography: the study of human cultures in relationship to their location or environment





# What is Cultural Geography?

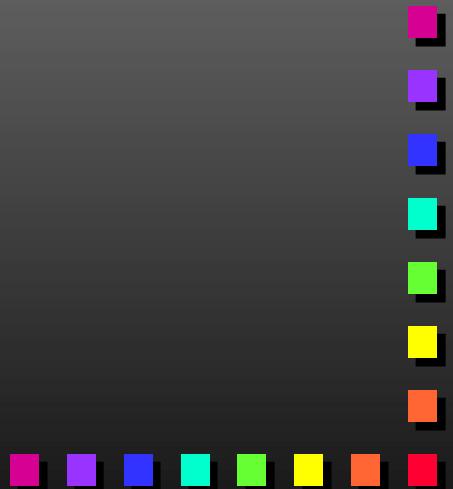
- the study of cultural products and norms, and their variations across and relations to spaces and places
- focuses on describing and analyzing the ways language, religion, economy, government and other cultural phenomena vary or remain constant from one place to another





# What is Cultural Geography?

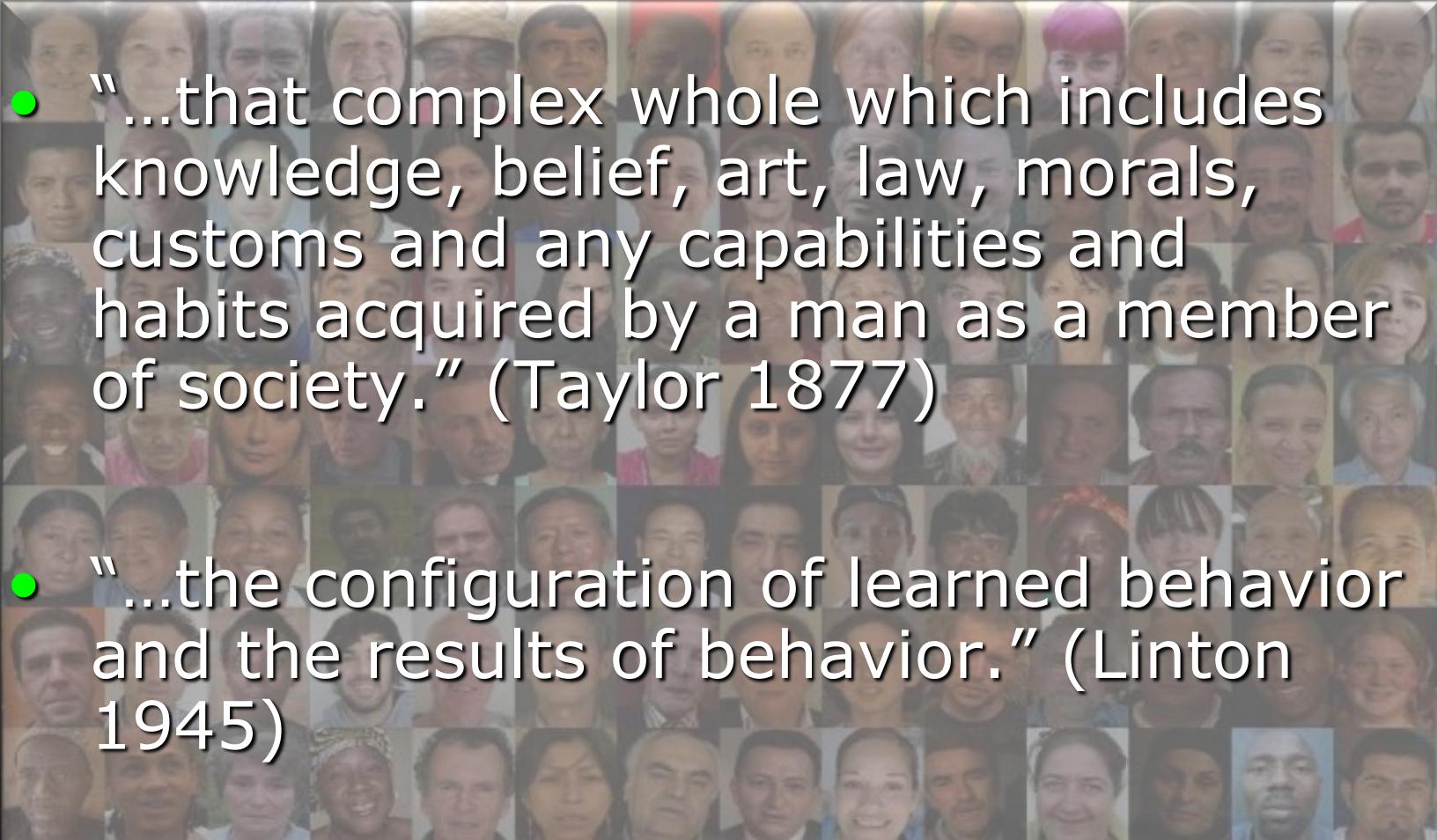
- focuses on cultural phenomena that may vary or remain constant from place to place
- explains how humans function spatially





# Culture is...

- "...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society." (Taylor 1877)
- "...the configuration of learned behavior and the results of behavior." (Linton 1945)





# Culture is...

...learned behavior passed on by imitation, instruction and example.

...almost entirely relative. Proper behavior changes from culture to culture.

...something we seldom notice until we experience a culture different from our own.

...not taught in the US and so we have little shared culture.





# What is Culture?

- What are its elements?
  - language
  - religion
  - food
  - clothing
  - art
  - music
  - rituals and customs
- How is it transferred?
  - parents to children
  - schooling
  - television, films, radio and internet





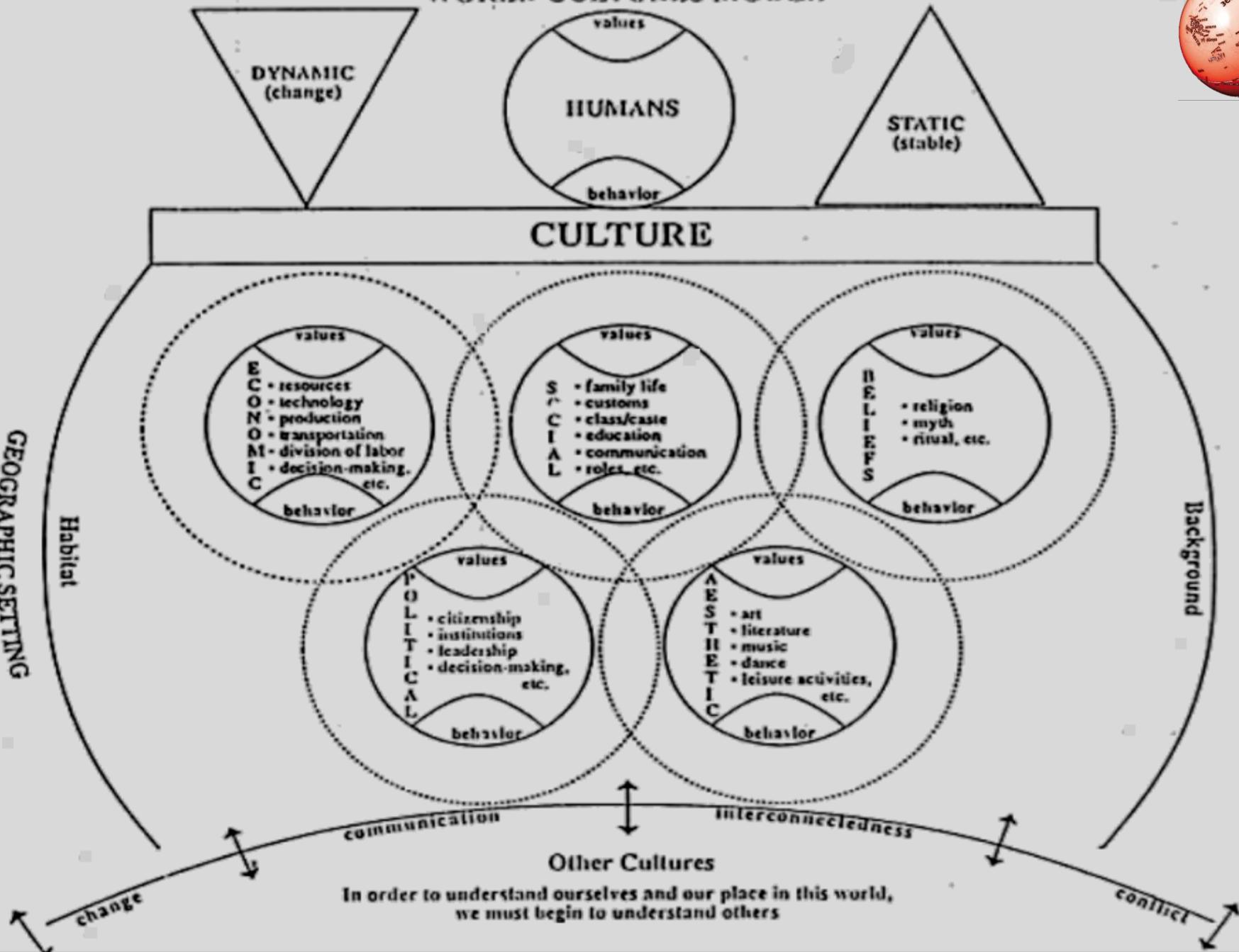
# Cultural Differences

for example:

- Western Culture
- tend to see categories, distinctions and separateness
- think from parts to the whole
- Eastern Culture
- tend to see continuity and connectedness
- think from the whole to the parts



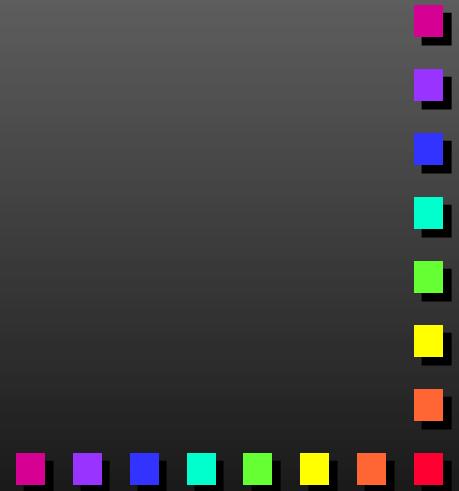
# WORLD CULTURES MODEL





# Seven Cultural Geography Ideas That Changed the World

- maps
- human adaptation to habitat
- human transformation of the earth
- sense of place
- spatial organization and interdependence
- central place theory
- megalopolis





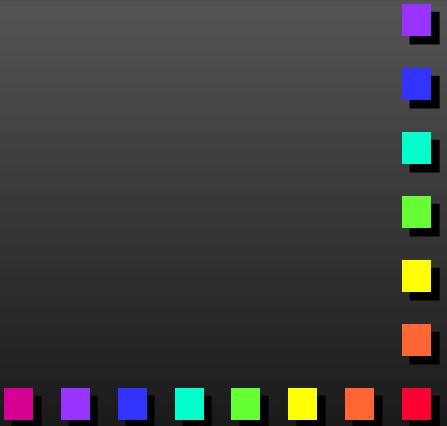
# The Geographic Importance of Culture

*Geographers study culture because it leaves dramatic physical and cultural imprints on the earth.*

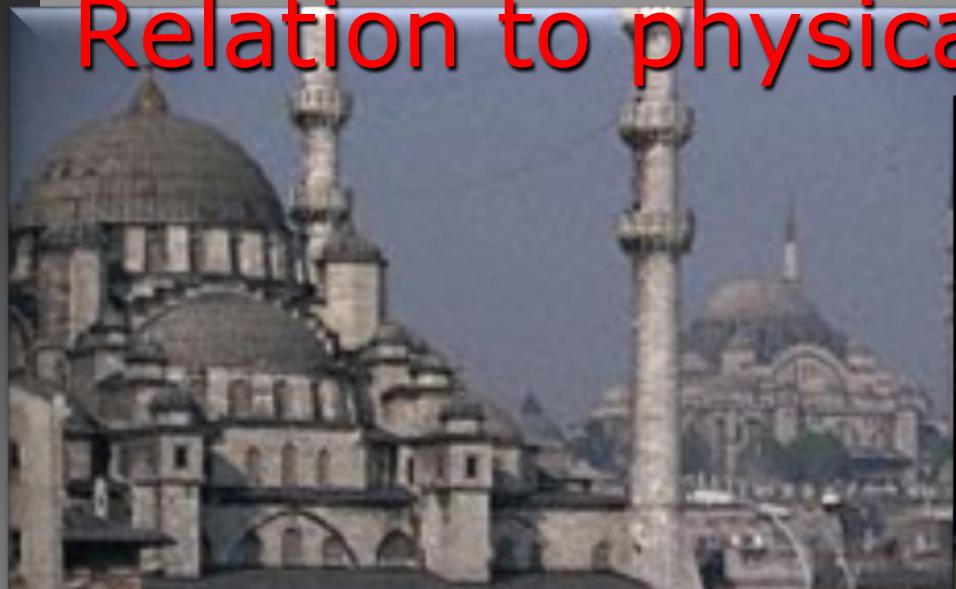
- language: a crystal ball into culture
- religion: strongest determinant of ethics
- nationalism and borders
- material culture: tools, clothes, toys, etc
- architecture: suburban garages vs. earlier porches
- religion: affects societal choices, creates sacred space



What kinds of cultural values are reflected in these American houses?



# Where are we? What values are reflected in each? Relation to physical environment?



# Where are we? What values are reflected in each? Relation to physical environment?



Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey



Timber House, Switzerland



Yurt on Mongolian Steppe



Suburban Home, Chicago



# Cultural Geography



Cultural geography focuses on where cultural ideas and practices developed, how and where they diffused, and how they affect landscape, human perception and human–environment relations.





# CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

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# Cultural Landscapes

- The cultural landscape is the visible, material landscape that cultural groups create in inhabiting the earth.
- Cultures shape landscapes out of the raw materials provided by the earth.
- Each landscape uniquely reflects the culture that created it.
- Much can be learned about a culture by carefully observing its created landscape.





# Reflect Basic Beliefs

- Some geographers regard landscape study as geography's central interest.
- It reflects the most basic strivings of humankind.
  - shelter
  - food
  - clothing
- It contains evidence about the origin, spread and development of cultures.



# What kinds of cultural values are reflected in this landscape?





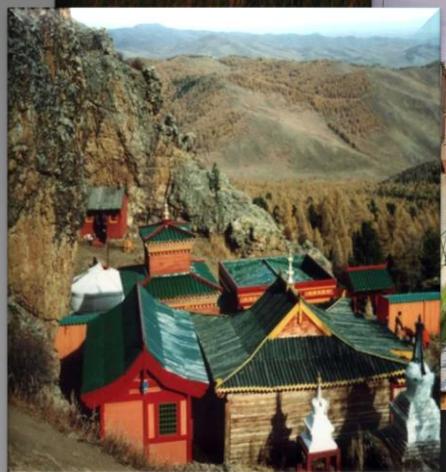
# What do cultural landscapes tell us?

- accumulation of human artifacts, old and new
- They can reveal much about a past forgotten by present inhabitants.
- Landscapes also reveal messages about present-day inhabitants and cultures.
  - They reflect our tastes, values, aspirations and fears in tangible form.
  - The spatial organizations of settlements and the architectural forms of structures are expressions of people's values and beliefs.
  - They can serve as a means to study the nonmaterial aspects of culture.





# Examples



- how architecture reflects the past and present values of landscapes
  - examples of centrally located, tall structures built of steel, brick or stone
- examples of medieval European cathedrals and churches that dominated the landscape





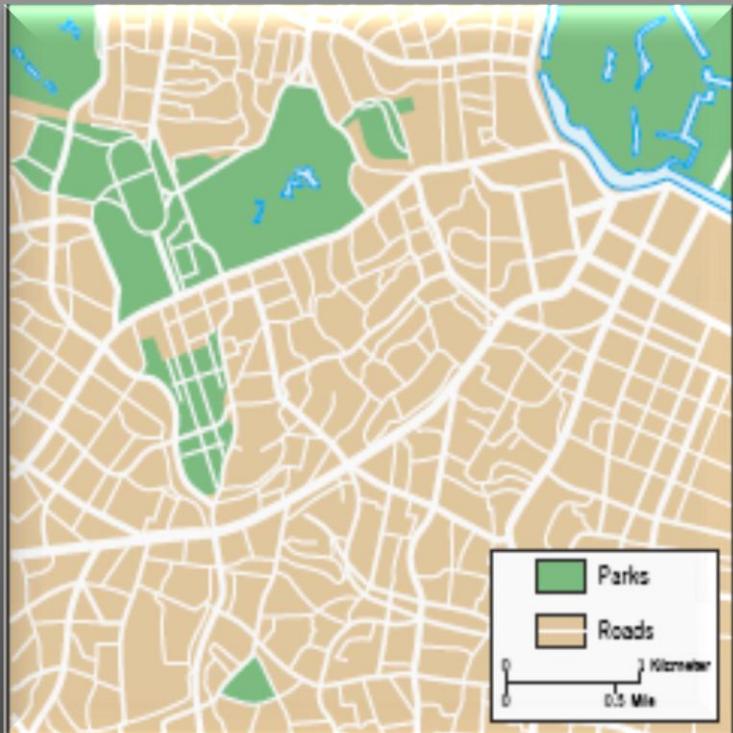
# Cultural Landscape Aspects

- Most geographic studies have focused on three principal aspects of landscape.
  - Settlement forms - Describe the spatial arrangement of buildings, roads and other features people construct while inhabiting an area
  - Land-division patterns - reveal the way people divide the land for economic and social uses
    - land division of small and large farms
    - urban housing and street patterns
  - Architecture
    - North America's different building styles
    - regional and cultural differences





# Examples



Both San Francisco (L) and Tokyo (R) are laid out on a comparatively high-relief urban topography but their street patterns differ markedly. As a result, moving around in these two cities is quite different.





# CULTURAL ECOLOGY

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# Cultural Ecology

- Ecology is a two-way relationship between an organism and its physical environment.
- Cultural ecology is the study of the cause-and-effect interplay between cultures and the physical environment.
- Ecosystem entails a functioning ecological system where biological and cultural *Homo sapiens* live and interact with the physical environment.





# Cultural Ecology

Culture is the human method of meeting physical environmental challenges.

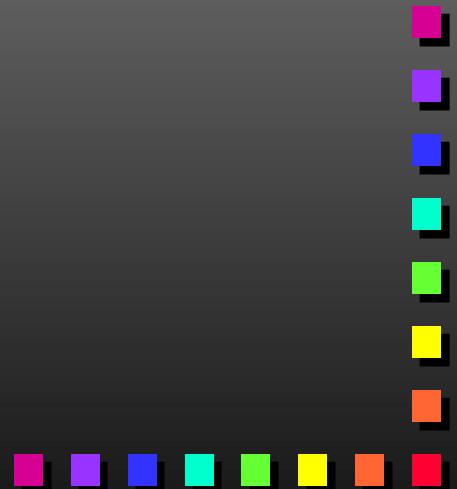
- adaptive system
- assumes relevant plant and animal adaptations
- facilitates long-term, successful, non-genetic human adaptation to nature and environmental change
- adaptive strategy that provides necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, defense
- No two cultures employ the same strategy, even within the same physical environment.





# Four Schools of Thought Developed by Cultural Ecology Geographers

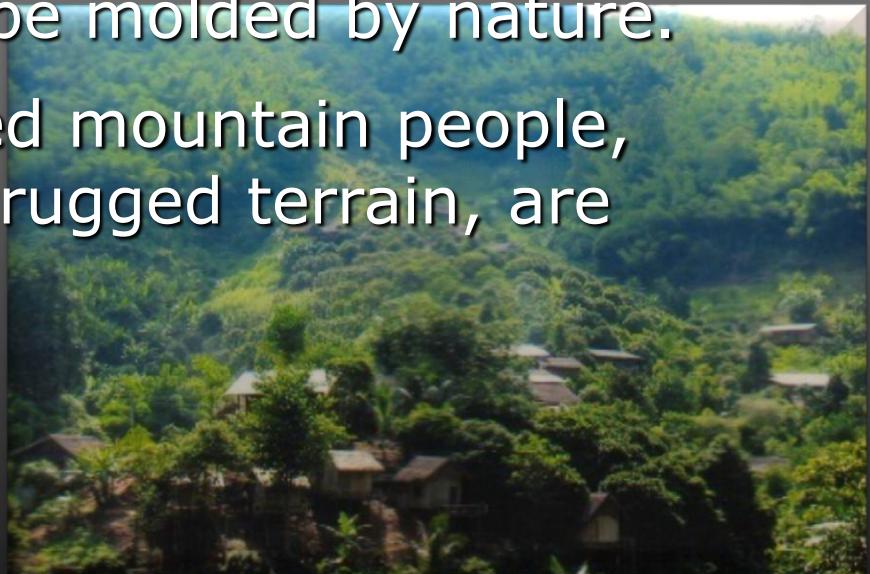
- Environmental Determinism
- Possibilism
- Environmental Perception
- Humans as Modifiers of Earth





# I. Environmental Determinism

- developed during first part of 20<sup>th</sup> century
- The physical environment provides a dominant force in shaping cultures.
- Humans are clay to be molded by nature.
- For example, believed mountain people, because they live in rugged terrain, are
  - backward.
  - conservative.
  - unimaginative.
  - freedom loving.





# I. Environmental Determinism

- Believed desert dwellers
  - are likely to believe in one god.
  - live under the rule of tyrants.
- Believed temperate climates produce
  - inventiveness.
  - industriousness.
  - democracy.
- Believed coastlands with fjords produce navigators and fishermen.
- They overestimated the role of the environment.





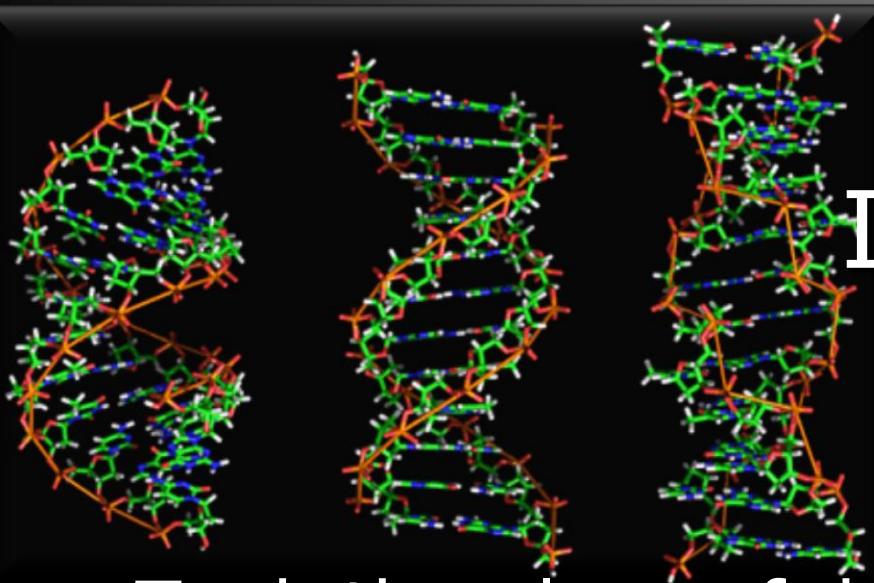
# Is NYC environmentally determined?





# What about Bali, Indonesia?





## II. Possibilism

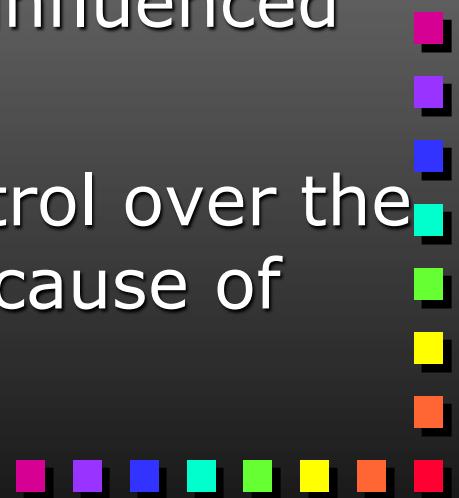
- Took the place of determinism in the 1920s.
- Believed cultural heritage is at least as important as physical environment in affecting human behavior.
- Believed people, not environmental factors, are the primary architects of culture.



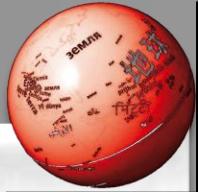


## II. Possibilism

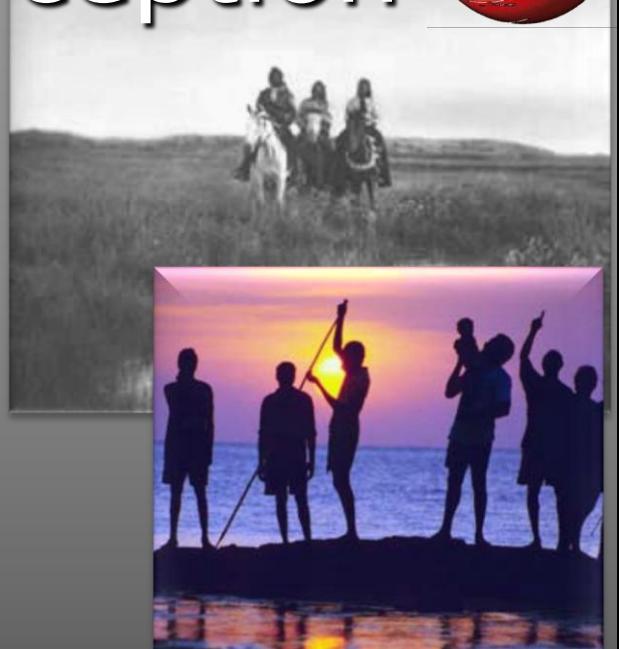
- The physical environment offers numerous ways for a culture to develop.
- People make cultural trait choices from the possibilities offered by their environment to satisfy their needs.
- High technology societies are less influenced by physical environment.
- Geographer Jim Norwin warns control over the environment may be an illusion because of possible future climatic changes.



# III. Environmental Perception



- Each person's or cultural group's mental images of the physical environment are shaped by knowledge, ignorance, experience, values and emotions.
- Environmental perceptionists say the choices people make depend more on how they perceive the land's character than on its actual character.
- People make decisions based on distortions of reality regarding their surrounding physical environment.



© Yezid Campos/Survival





# III. Environmental Perception

- Geomancy: traditional system of land-use planning dictating that certain environmental settings, perceived by the sages as auspicious, should be chosen as sites for houses, villages, temples or graves
  - an East Asian world view and art
  - affected the location and morphology of urban places in states such as China and Korea





# IV. Humans as Modifiers of the Earth

- another facet of cultural ecology
- in a sense, the opposite of environmental determinism
- Human modification varies from one culture to another.
- Geographers seek alternative, less destructive modes of environmental modification.
- The Judeo-Christian tradition tends to regard environmental modification as divinely approved.
- Other more cautious groups take care not to offend the forces of nature.





# POPULAR AND FOLK CULTURE

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# Cultural Characteristics

Cultural characteristics are part of everyday life.

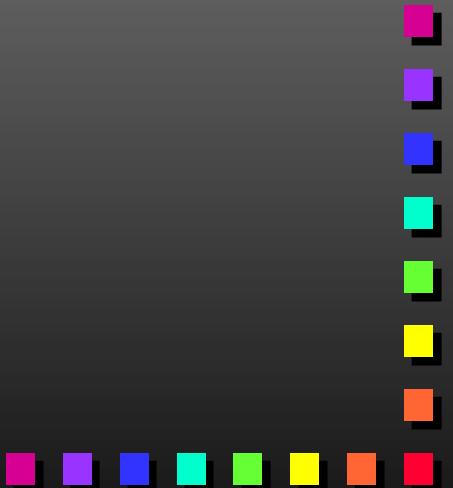
They are the ideas and themes that the group teaches to all members.

These same characteristics can also link or divide a region.





Language, religion and ethnic heritage are examples of cultural characteristics.





# Important Terms

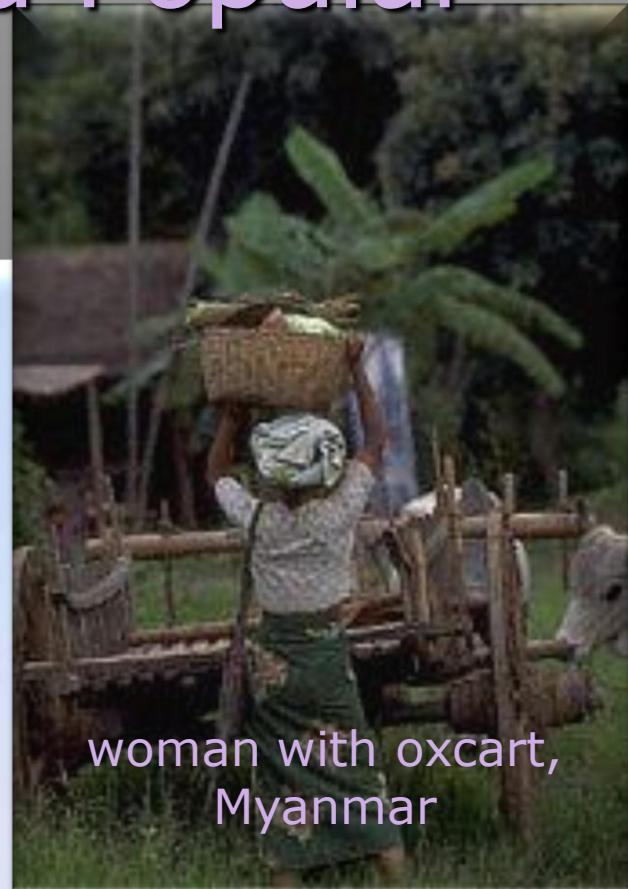
- Custom - frequent repetition of an act until it becomes characteristic of a group of people
- Habit - repetitive act performed by an individual
- Folk Culture - traditionally practiced by a small, homogeneous, rural group living in relative isolation
- Popular (Pop) Culture - found in a large, heterogeneous society that shares certain habits despite differences in personal characteristics
- Material Culture - physical objects produced by a culture in order to meet its material needs: food, clothing, shelter, arts and recreation (Carl Sauer, Berkeley, 1930s – 1970s)





# Examples: Folk and Popular Culture

The Forbidden City  
Beijing, China



woman with oxcart,  
Myanmar





# Examples: Folk and Popular Culture



Beijing,  
China



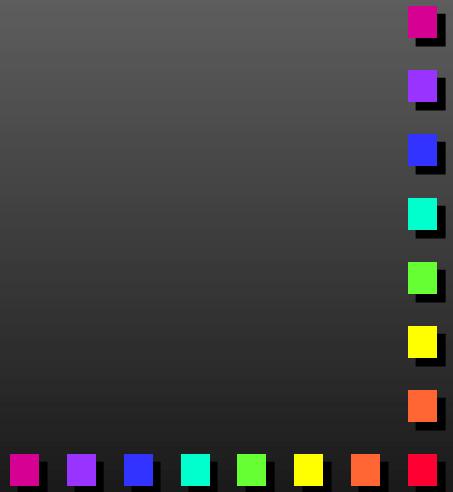


# Example: Marlboro Man in Egypt



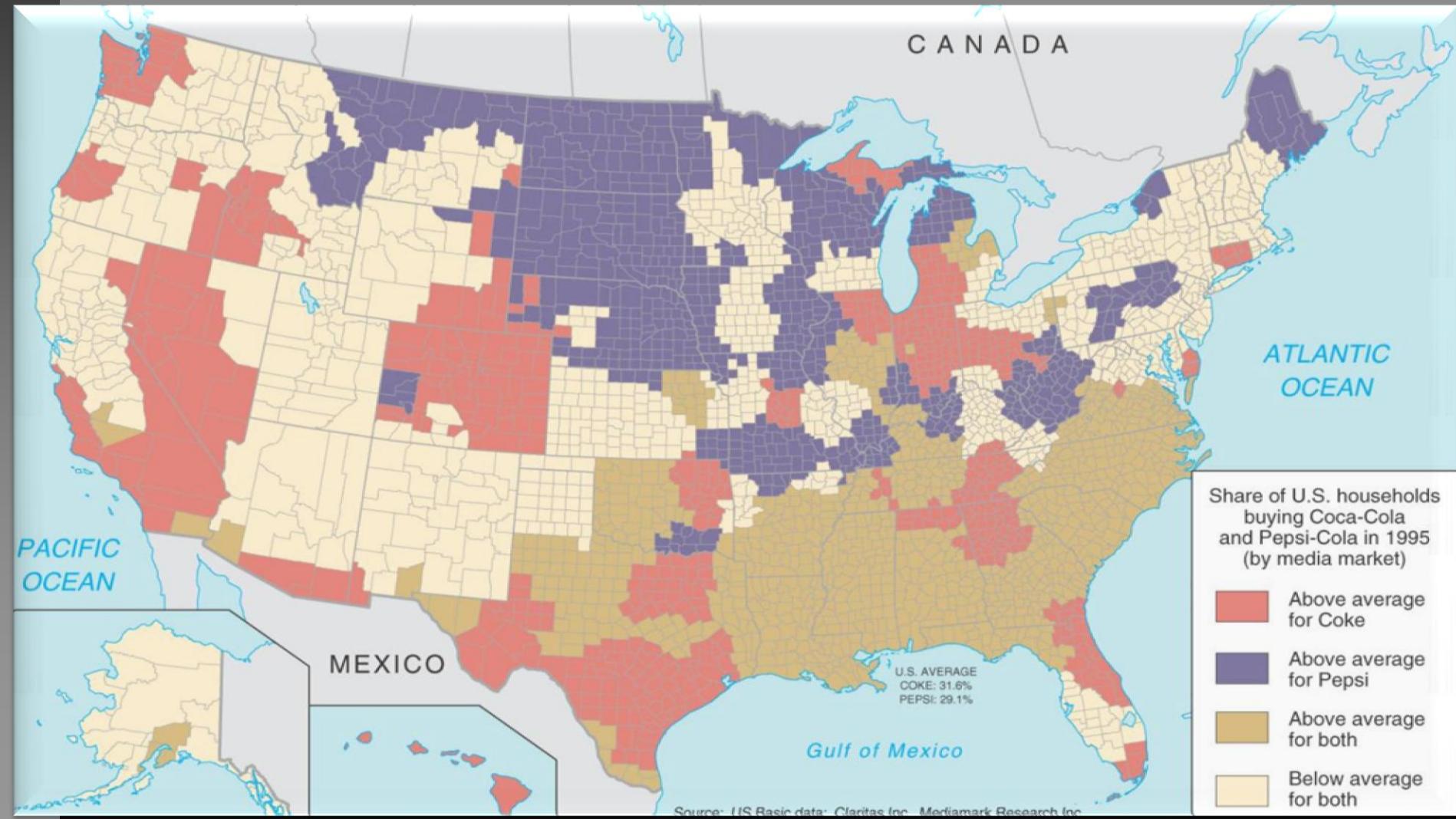


## Example: Coca Cola in Panama



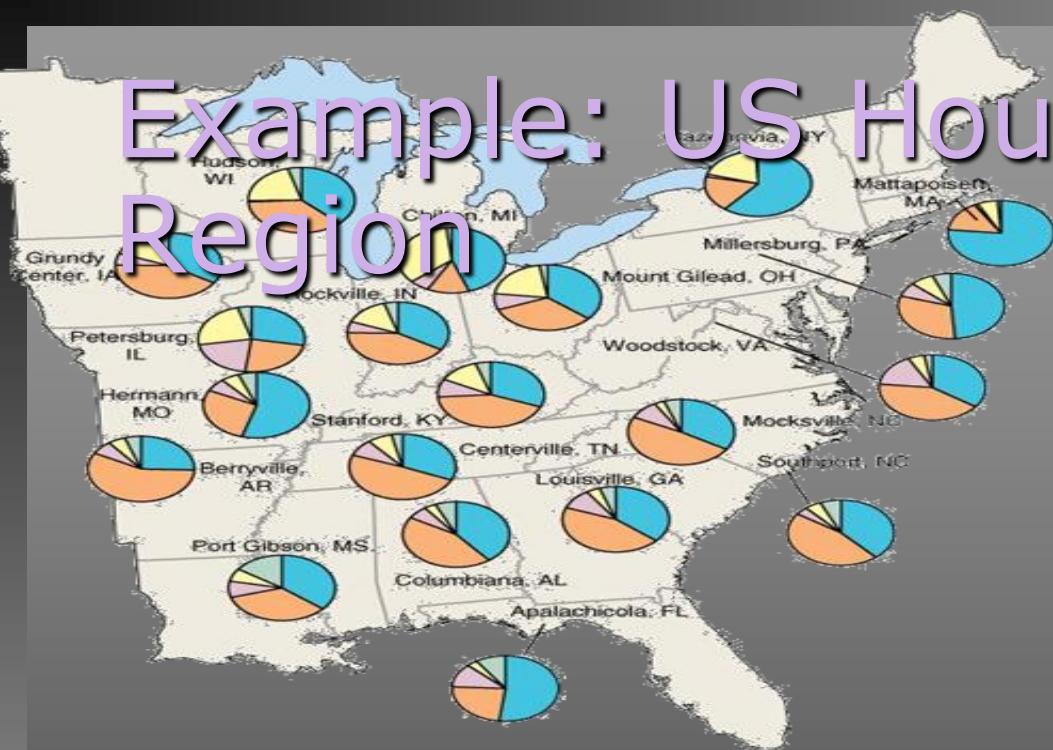


# Example: US Households Buying Coke and Pepsi





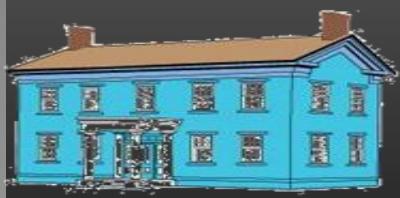
# Example: US House Types by Region



■ Bungalow



■ Irregular Gabled



■ Double Pile



■ Single Pile



■ Federal

Small towns in different regions of the eastern US have different combinations of five main house types.





# Folk Culture

rapidly changing and/or  
disappearing throughout  
much of the world





# Folk Culture

- stable and close knit
- usually a rural community
- tradition controls
- resistant to change
- buildings erected without architect or blueprint using locally available materials
- anonymous origins ... diffuses slowly through migration
- develops over time
- clustered distributions: isolation/lack of interaction breed uniqueness and ties to physical environment





# Example: Folk Architecture

Effects on Landscape:  
usually of limited scale  
and scope

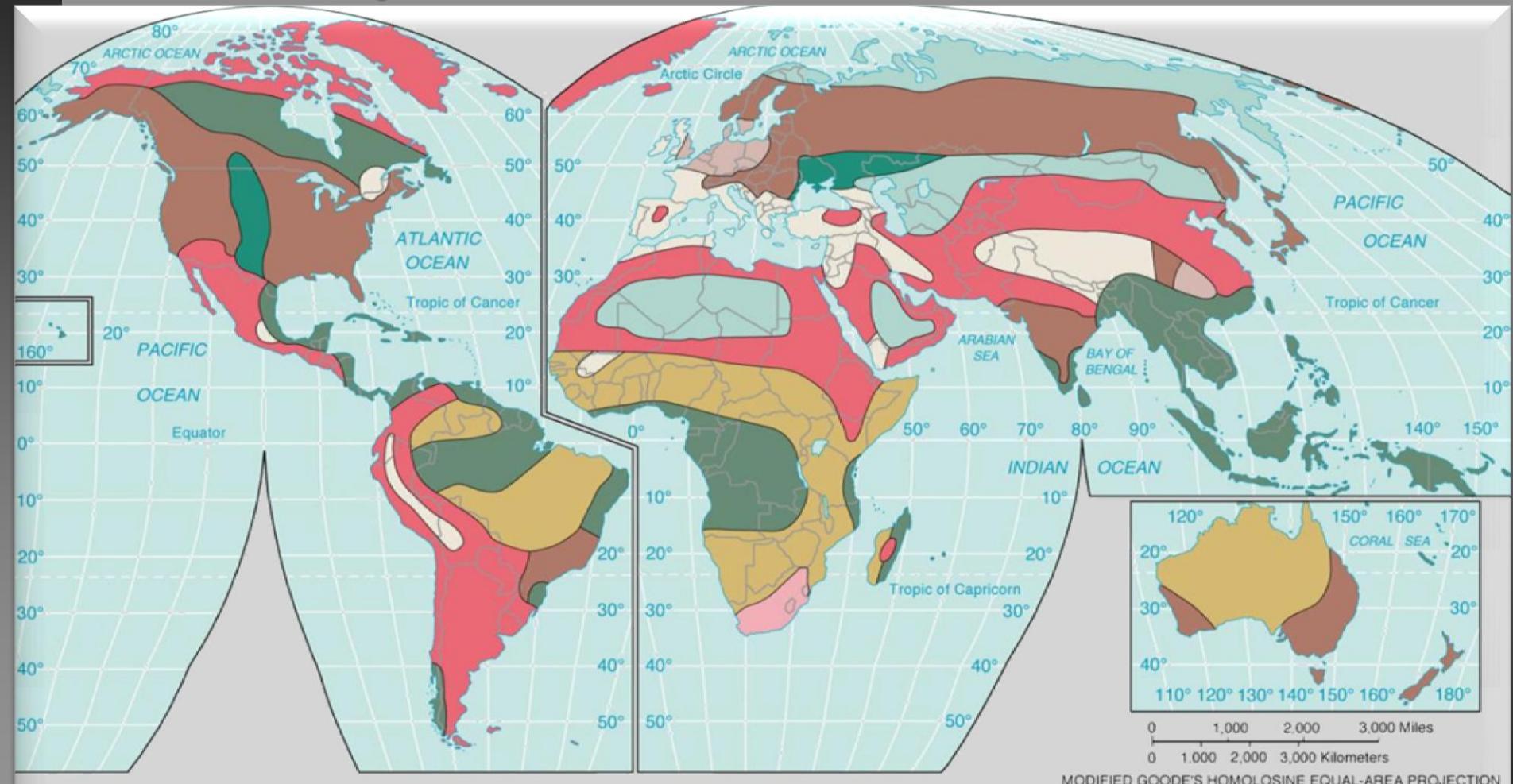
Agriculture: fields,  
terraces, grain storage

Dwellings: historically  
created from local  
materials (wood, brick,  
stone, skins), often  
uniquely and traditionally  
arranged, always  
functionally tied to  
physical environment





# Example: Folk Architecture



Stone construction

Fired brick

Earthen construction  
(including sun-dried brick)

Sod construction

Tent housing

Logs or sawn lumber

Half timbering

Poles, bamboo, leaves and bark

Brush-thatch



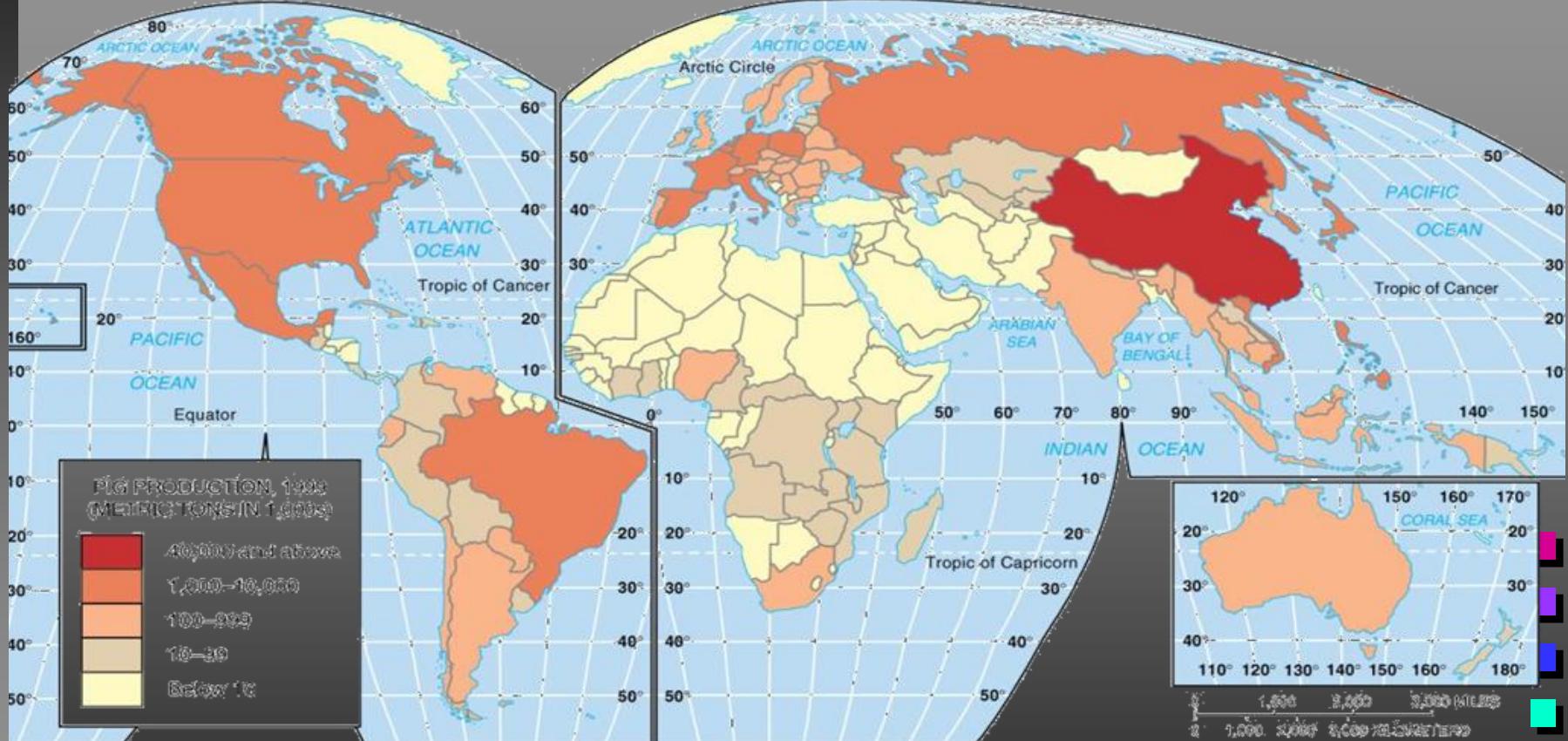
# Example: Folk Food



How did  
such  
differences  
develop?



# Example: Hog Production and Food Cultures



Annual hog production is influenced by religious taboos against pork consumption in Islam and other religions. The highest production is in China, which is largely Buddhist.





# North American Folk Culture Regions

- Québec French
- Acadian French
- Yankee
- Upper Canadian
- Pennsylvanian
- Upland southern
- Mexican
- Highland Hispanic
- Mormon
- Mountain western
- African-American
- Northern Forest Native American
- Southwestern Native American
- Plains ranch
- Ukrainian



# Taboos

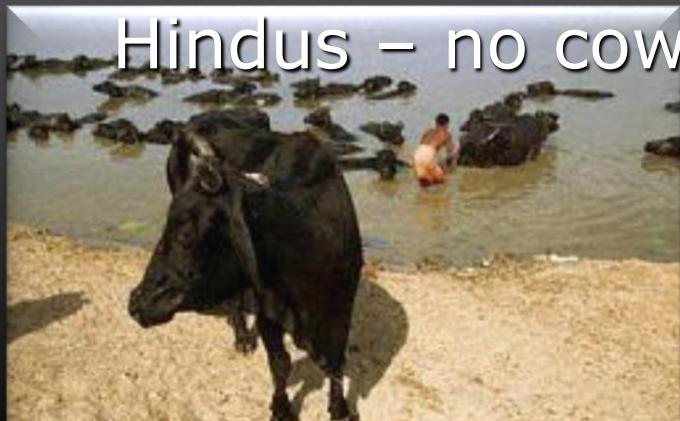
...restrictions on behavior imposed by social custom

## Food Taboos:

Jews – can't eat animals that chew cud, have cloven feet; can't mix meat and milk, or eat fish lacking fins or scales

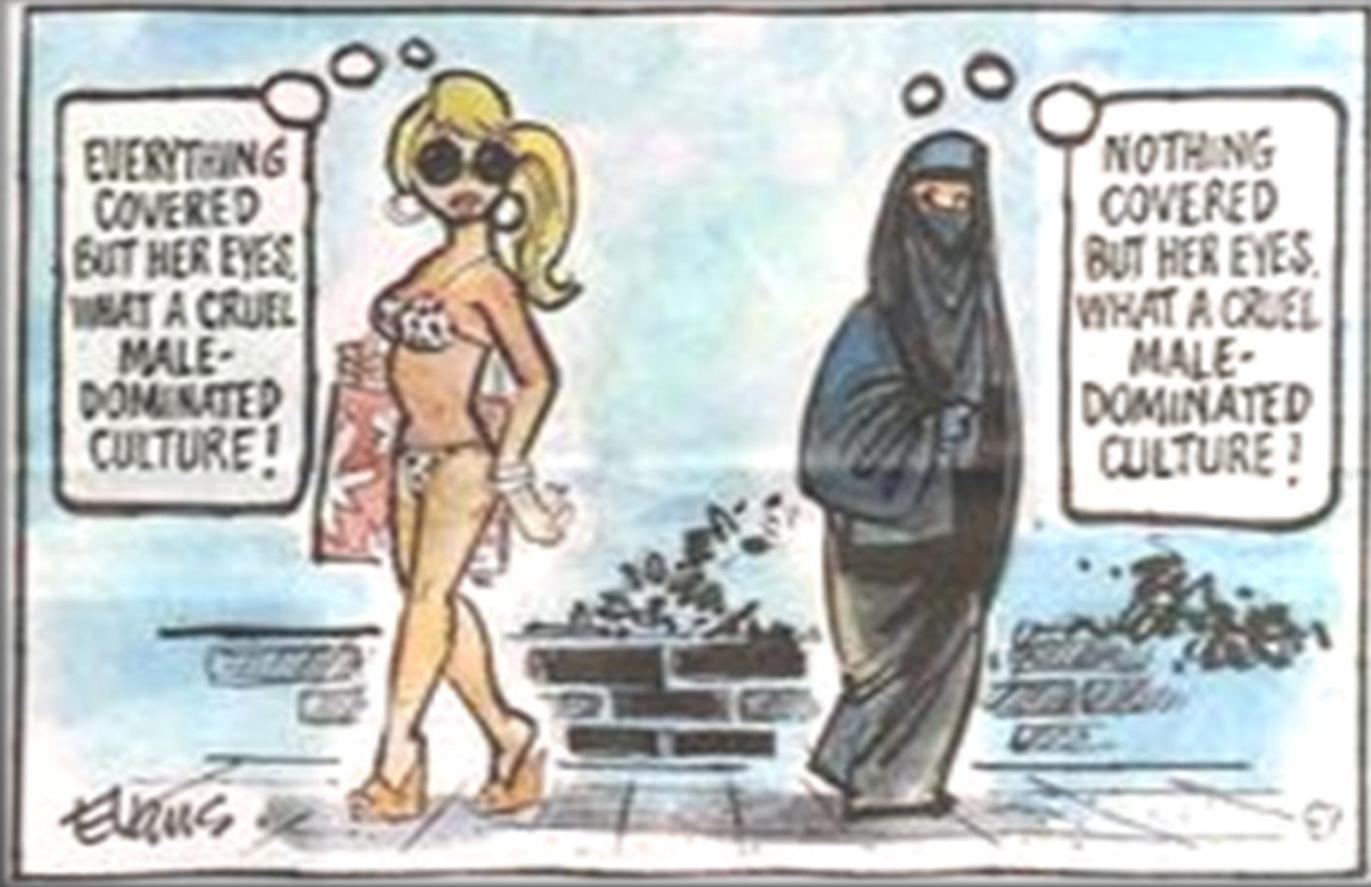
Muslims – no pork

Hindus – no cows (used as oxen in monsoons)



Washing a Cow  
in the Ganges





# CONTINUED IN *HUMAN CULTURE PART II*

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