

Class 6b: Intro to Cultural Geography

What is culture?

- Material objects (artifacts)
- Interpersonal relations (sociofacts)
- Ideas and beliefs (mentifacts)
- Each element has a spatial distribution

Artifacts of culture

- Survival vs. leisure activities
 - Housing, food, clothing
 - Arts, recreation
- Folk vs. popular culture
 - Local, homogenous groups
 - Large, heterogeneous groups

Environmental influence

- Old: environmental determinism
 - Physical environment shapes everything
 - Prone to racist conclusions
- New: possibilism
 - People are the driving force
 - But environment shapes cultural activity

Architecture

- Building materials based on environment
 - Wood in forested areas
 - Brick in hot, dry places
 - Grass or sod on prairies
 - Skins for nomads

Architecture

- House shape may depend on environment
 - Interior courtyards for privacy
 - Open plan for letting in air
 - Tall, narrow to maximize land
 - Steep roofs in snowy areas

Architecture

- House form and orientation as sociofacts
 - Front porches, front stoops
 - Sacred direction, sacred wall
 - Sleeping orientation

Clothing

- Based on climate
 - Warm or cold
 - Wet or dry
- May reflect occupation/status
- Also reflect values, traditions

Food

- Strong part of group identity
- Demonstrates innovation, diffusion, acculturation, and assimilation
- Can be part of place identity
- Back and forth between culture and place

Food

- Preferences may depend on environment
 - Staple foods: rice, sorghum, maize, wheat
 - Salted meats, fish
 - Fresh vegetables
- Or genetics (lactose intolerance)

American foodways

- Colonial foods (Thanksgiving)
- Foods diffused back to New World
 - Potatoes to Ireland
 - Tomatoes to Italy
 - Chocolate to Spain
 - Peanut and sweet potato to Africa
- Mixing of foods (creole)

American foodways

- Acculturation (or not)
- Southern cooking retains strong regional identity
 - African slaves cooked on plantations
 - Less urban influence
 - Anti-North attitudes discouraged

American foodways

- More immigrants mean more foods
- Similar diffusion pattern to place names
- Anti-immigrant attitudes through dieticians
 - Chili power bad for stomach
 - Common pot unsanitary
 - Pickles unhealthy

American foodways

- Towards “fusion cooking”
- Depression, wars encouraged thriftiness
- Soldiers ate same food, encountered diversity
- Middle class: “exotic” foods
- Melting pot → salad bowl

Food and place identity

- Historical connections
- Deliberate marketing
- Tourism and place “consumption”
 - Pineapples and Hawaii
 - Lobster and Maine
- Wine appellations and *terroir*

Pineapples and Hawaii

- Originally South American
- Plantations since 1800s
- Dole's national ad campaign in 1907: *Hawaiian* pineapple
- Cheaper to grow in Thailand, Philippines
- Hawaii focuses on fresh fruit for tourists

Lobsters and Maine

- Originally food for poor, or fertilizer
- Wealthy New Englanders in 1860s
 - Summering in Maine
 - Imitating the locals
 - Only for wealthy vacationers
- Now negative symbol for locals

Wine geography

- Production based on environmental factors
 - Temperate climate (hot summer, wet winter)
 - Hillsides allow drainage, sunlight
 - Coarse, well-drained soil
- And social factors that determine consumption

Wine geography

- *Terroir*: how environment shapes wine flavor
 - Soil, sunlight, slope, rainfall, etc.
 - Varies at the vineyard scale
- Appellation: place-of-origin label
 - Champagne, Bordeaux, Burgundy, etc.
 - Parmigiana Romano, Stilton, Camembert

Introduction to cultural geography

- Material, social, ideological expressions
- Spatial distribution of culture traits
- Folk vs. popular, survival vs. recreation
- Environmental influence on culture
- Diffusion and acculturation
- Food and place identity