

Local culture, popular culture, and cultural landscapes

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Overview

- Motivation: Why study cultural geography?
- Cultural Geography
 - What is culture?
 - Spatial organization of culture
 - Spatial diffusion of culture
- Examples:
 - Surf culture
 - Geography of the death penalty
 - The Balkans

Motivation: Why study cultural geography?

- As a humanistic pursuit... important in its own right.
- Improve our understanding of the present culture and how it differs from past cultures and the origins of the culture.
- Proactive intervention in the culture or preservation of fading cultural traits/complexes.
- Explore concrete examples of cultural diffusion and the spatial organization of culture (region, core, domain,...)

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

What is culture?

- "... culture describes patterns of learned human behavior that form a durable template by which ideas and images can be transferred from one generation to another, or from one group to another." Haggett (2001, pp. 204)
- complexity, persistence is distinct from non-human animal cultures

What is culture? (cont.)

- Culture traits (atoms or basic units of culture)
- Cultural complex (interrelated set of traits)
- Acculturation process (young or immigrant group)
 - Culture is acquired through speech and behavior (imprinting).
 - Increasing level of familiarity and comfort with a culture – acceptable responses to a given situation.

What is culture? – Taxonomy: The Huxley Model

- **Mentifacts:** Central core of culture related to ideas, ideals, and beliefs. They are fundamental to intergenerational transmission of culture. Examples include language, religion, and folklore.
- **Sociofacts:** Aspects of culture related to social behavior, cohesion, and control. Examples include norms related to family, marriage, and childrearing, as well as institutional manifestations such as educational or political systems.
- **Artifacts:** The material manifestations of culture: clothing, tools, technologies, athletic equipment.
- Haggett: sometimes an "...intractable knot..."

Material and Nonmaterial Culture

Material Culture

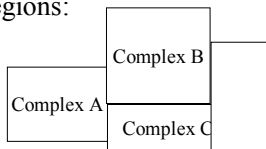
The things a group of people construct, such as art, houses, clothing, sports, dance, and food.

Nonmaterial Culture

The beliefs, practices, aesthetics, and values of a group of people.

Cultural geography

- How does "place" mediate culture?
- How do natural environments imprint on culture?
- Cultural regions:



- Cognitive maps and cultural regions

Cultural geography

Local Culture:

A group of people in a particular place who see themselves as a collective or a community, who share experiences, customs, and traits, and who work to preserve those traits and customs in order to claim uniqueness and to distinguish themselves from others.

Popular Culture:

A wide-ranging group of heterogeneous people, who stretch across identities and across the world, and who embrace cultural traits such as music, dance, clothing, and food preference that change frequently and are ubiquitous on the cultural landscape.

Urban Local Cultures

- Can create ethnic neighborhoods within cities.
- Creates a space to practice customs.
- Can cluster businesses, houses of worship, schools to support local culture.
- Migration into ethnic neighborhoods can quickly change an ethnic neighborhood.

For example:

Williamsburg, NY, North End (Boston), MA

Key Question:

How can Local and Popular Cultures be seen in the Cultural Landscape?

Cultural Landscape

The visible human imprint on the landscape.

- How have people changed the landscape?
- What buildings, statues, and so forth have they erected?
- How do landscapes reflect the values of a culture?

Placelessness: the loss of uniqueness in a cultural landscape – one place looks like the next.



Commodification

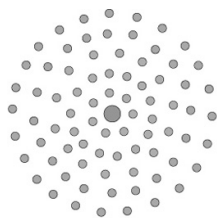
How are aspects of local culture (material, non-material, place) commodified?



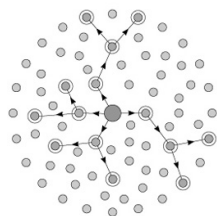
what is commodified?
who commodifies it?

Spatial diffusion of culture

- Do cultural regions persist through time?
- How are ideas and culture exchanged over time? (mentafacts, sociofacts, artifacts) – what is exchanged?
- How quickly can a cultural complex change?
- What attributes of a region or culture act as barriers or propellants to diffusion?



A. Contagious Diffusion



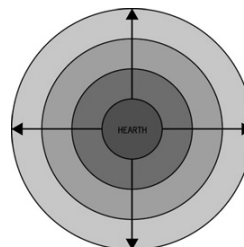
B. Hierarchical Diffusion

How do cultural traits diffuse?

Hearth: the point of origin of a cultural trait.

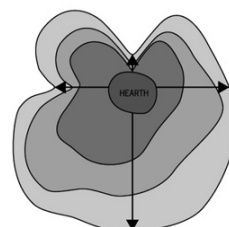
Contagious diffusion
Hierarchical diffusion

- LEGEND**
- Hearth
 - Early diffusion
 - Later diffusion
 - Important person or place
 - No diffusion



A. DISTANCE DECAY

With Distance Decay, the likelihood of diffusion decreases as time and distance from the hearth increases.



B. TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION

With Time-Space Compression, the likelihood of diffusion depends upon the connectedness among places.

Which applies more to popular

How are hearths of popular culture traits established?

- Typically begins with an idea/good and contagious diffusion.
- Companies can create/manufacture popular culture. (ie. MTV)
- Individuals can create/manufacture popular culture. (ie. Tony Hawk)

SURF CULTURE



History of Surfing: Time Periods

- Origins: 2500BC – 1900AD
 - Settlement of Polynesia (migration waves)
 - Development / refinement of board surfing
 - Near eradication of surfing by Europeans
- Renaissance: 1900-1930s
 - Rediscovery of surfing and culture
 - Diffusion to early culture hearths (Australia, California)
- Modern: 1930s-present
 - Mass production / mass culture
 - Longboards / Shortboards / materials

History of surfing - origins

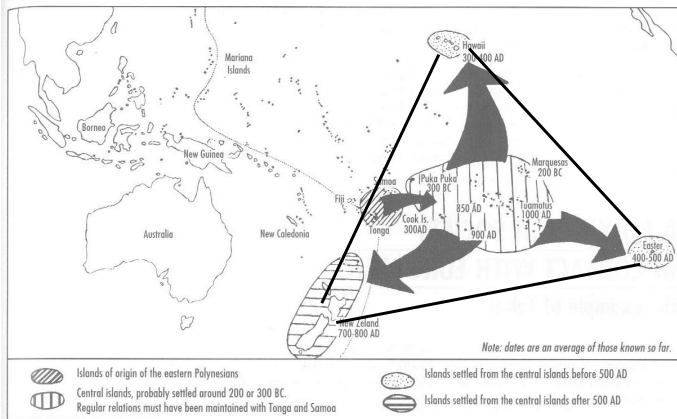
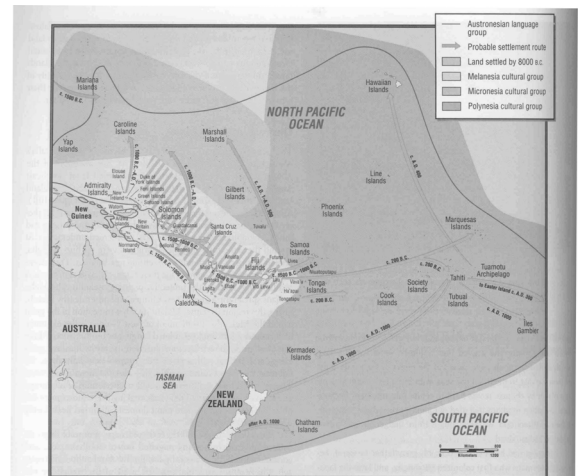


Fig. 1 The settlement of the polynesian triangle

From "Tererao, voyages et peuplement des îles du Pacifique", E. Conte

History of surfing – migration waves



Pulsipher and Pulsipher (2002)

History of surfing – migration waves

- Lapita voyagers, ancestors of Polynesians, left trail of Lapita pottery.
 - Push factors caused initial migrations. If resistance encountered pushed further eastward.
 - Over time, Polynesian peoples and culture emerged from these and subsequent migrations; not as a migration per se.
- Culture traits: Excellent navigators, sailors, endurance paddlers, watercraft makers
- Exploring parties would carry food plants, domesticated animals, craft specialist, and other necessities for colonizing territory.
- Later migrations (3rd wave) based on language evidence.

HISTORY OF SURF CULTURE: RENAISSANCE

History of surfing – Reinventing the sport



Three young surfers from late 1930s (source: Severson 1964)

History of surfing – Reinventing the sport

- Individuals interacting with place, 1900-1930.
- Big Three:
 - Jack London
 - Alexander Hume Ford
 - George Freeth
- Duke Kahanamoku
- Tom Blake

History of surfing – Hawaii 1900

- “Circumstances were emerging...” that would allow a revival.
- Changing situation of Hawaii
 - becomes an American Territory
 - Pacific Cable, communication link
 - Steamship service
 - Strategic location for military and trade
- Political / Economic leaders wanting to seize the moment

History of surfing – Alexander Hume Ford

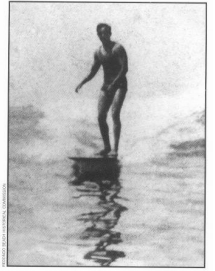
- Arrives in Hawaii, 1907, age 39
 - Stalled career.
- Hooked on surfing
- Part of traveling delegation touring islands with objective of fostering economic development.
 - Connected to “movers & shakers”
 - Has idea to “brand” islands with surfing.
- Recruits Jack London, funds George Freeth and Duke, founds Outrigger Canoe Club.
- Working from a base of “pure stoke”

History of surfing – Jack London

- Arrives in Hawaii, May 1907
 - Celebrity writer and adventure seeker (Snark)
 - Approached by Ford to try sport and promote it.
- Publishes “Riding the South Seas Surf”, Oct. 1907, *Women’s Home Companion*
 - republished 1908 (Pall Mall Magazine)
 - republished 1911 *Cruise of the Snark*
- Impact almost immediate
 - starts stream of national / international media attention.
 - coordinated effort by Ford

History of surfing – George Freeth

- Born in Hawaii, mixed race (“hapa haole”)
 - starts with 16’ olo borrowed from uncle
 - central figure in local resurgence of surfing
 - Kahanamoku brothers part of his group.
- Travels to California 1907
 - Mission: introduce surfing in CA
 - Financing from “Hawaiian Promotion Committee”
 - Paid surfing demos in Venice, Redondo



History of surfing – George Freeth

- “First great waterman of the modern era”
 - Swimmer, diver, boatman, fisherman, outrigger canoeist, sailor, first professional lifeguard in California, Congressional Gold Medal for bravery, founds lifesaving service in California, and introduces water polo to California.



Freeth headlined at the opulent Redondo Plunge, but he swiftly drew swimmers out of the pools and into the ocean.

History of surfing – George Freeth

- Planted the “seeds of the new surf culture on the West Coast.”
 - Fit with emerging beach lifestyle.
 - Unemployment / underemployment – lived to surf.
 - Dies 1919 (age 35)



Freeth with a pod of young surfers in Redondo Beach, laying the foundation for California's emerging beach culture.