

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to the study of the landscapes of ethnic festivals. The literature review briefly describes cultural geography as a discipline and discusses the influence of historical ethnic groups on the American cultural landscape. The review then surveys the influence of social processes in American society on ethnic landscapes and discusses the processes that affect the creation of the landscapes for ethnic festivals in the United States.

- **Cultural Landscapes**

According to Wagner and Mikesell in *Readings in Cultural Geography* (1962), the discipline of cultural geography has researched five interconnected themes: culture, culture area, cultural landscape, culture history, and cultural ecology. The themes are earthbound, focusing on human features imposed upon or created from the natural landscape to investigate the cultural origins and environmental implications of human communities and to formulate differences and similarities among cultures and areas. The cultural landscape theme studies the appearance of areas, the assemblage of objects which constructed those appearances, and the areas themselves (Johnston *et al.*, 1994). Since cultural landscapes represent many eras of natural evolution and generations of human efforts, the features are embodied with certain cultural preferences. The selections for the arrangement, style, and materials of the features reflect the distinctive way of life, or the *genre de vie*, of a culture (Leclaire, 1954). A comprehension of the processes affecting a landscapes then allows for a comparison with other landscapes displaying similar natural and cultural circumstances. Cultural landscape studies systematically classify, distinguish, and

describe human features within areas to gain insights into the role of humans in transforming the natural landscape and culture itself.

Although cultural landscape studies traditionally have focused on the dispersion of human features within areas to comprehend processes affecting landscapes and culture, the gaze of cultural landscape studies has expanded to include investigating the wider political, social, and economic structures in societies that initially produced these features. Cultural landscape studies, as a result, have begun to question the meanings embedded within these features and to view the landscape as a social expression of symbols, icons, and metaphors (McDowell, 1994). In *Re-Readings in Cultural Geography*, Foote, Hugill, Mathewson, and Smith (1994) have compiled articles that reflect several new perspectives in American cultural landscape studies. For example, one new perspective examines the landscapes of long-subordinate, sub-cultures within the greater cultural landscape of an area (Foote and Smith, 1994). A second perspective studies the differences between common landscapes, created to handle the everyday needs of people, and extraordinary landscapes, designed to express the authority, legitimacy, and power of the elite class (Hudson, 1994). While the more traditional perspectives of the cultural landscape have contributed knowledge about the details of human features in areas, the contemporary perspectives have furthered that knowledge by investigating the meanings of these features.

Despite the differences between more traditional and contemporary perspectives in cultural landscape studies, Zelinsky (1973) argues that any analysis of American cultural geography calls for the chronicling of immigration to the United States and a discussion of the

major processes in American society affecting ethnic groups. As a result, he delineates five periods for the immigration history of the United States and lists the dominant ethnic groups during each period (see Figure 2.1). He then aggregates the periods into two eras: the colonial era lasting up to 1775 and the national era starting after 1820. In discussing major processes in American society influencing ethnic groups, he writes that immigrants who arrived in the United States during the colonial era retained their ethnic identities, but immigrants arriving during the national era faced a dynamic and evolving American culture that has produced a “cultural shock” for these new immigrants. The cultural shock begins during the third period as the ethnic composition shifts away from the “old” ethnic groups of northern and western Europe to the “new” ethnic groups from southern and eastern Europe. The significance of this change in ethnic composition, he explains, is outlined in his Doctrine of First Effective Settlement.

- I. 1607-1700: The initial wave, strongly English and Welsh along with a major complement of Africans;
- II. 1700-1775: A still predominantly English, Welsh, and African movement but with strong Teutonic and Scotch-Irish components as well;
- III. 1820-1870: The Northwest European wave -- heavily British, Irish, Teutonic, and Dutch, but including the vanguard of other European groups and some Asians, Canadians, and Latin Americans;
- IV. 1870-1920: The Great Deluge -- large numbers of eastern and southern Europeans and Scandinavians joining those from Northwest Europe; Asians, Canadians, and Latin Americans in significant quantity;
- V. 1920 to present: A highly miscellaneous influx--less than in the preceding period but still of major absolute magnitude--from western and southern Europe, Latin America, Canada, and some Asian lands, with Latin America registering especially steady and major gains.

Figure 2.1 Five Distinct Periods of American Immigration (Zelinsky, 1973, 23)

The Doctrine of First Effective Settlement, in general, states that the first ethnic group to sustain a viable self-perpetuating settlement in an area establishes characteristics of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of this area. Subsequent ethnic groups arriving in the area conform to the established social and cultural geography. The basis for the social and cultural geography of the United States primarily belong to the predominant ethnic group immigrating in the colonial era -- the British. However, the social and cultural geography of areas is fluid, which has created a recognizable American social and cultural geography. For example, the first ethnic group in an area often engages in cultural borrowing and interchange with prior occupants of the area, subsequent ethnic groups, and the rest of the world (Noble, 1992). Since American society is a product of migration, new ethnic groups constantly broaden and expand American social and cultural geography with new cultural elements. Thus, the American cultural landscape has traces of the most diverse array of ethnic influences anywhere in the world (Conzen, 1990).

- **Ethnic Landscapes**

The presence of ethnic influences in the American cultural landscape is revealed via signatures of the ethnic groups. These ethnic signatures are the cultural traits of the ethnic groups and assume a variety of material and non-material forms ranging from the styles of vernacular architecture to naming of places in the area, such as streets and towns (Conzen, 1990). Cultural landscape studies have long researched ethnic signatures to identify the presence and contributions of ethnic groups to the cultural landscape. For example, Lewis (1972) has studied

the adaptation and evolution of English style houses, such as the single pen, high-style, four-over-four, and I-houses, in the United States. Even though critiques have accused this approach as taking a “naïve” view of cultural landscapes due principally to the minimal use of social theories (Duncan and Duncan, 1988), ethnic signatures act as indicators of common landscapes. For instance, in many areas of the southwestern United States, the cultural landscape has been shifting away from traditional Spanish adobe-style houses to mass-produced, cheaper trailers indicating major changes in American attitudes and economy (Jackson, 1990). Although ethnic signatures reveal the presence of ethnic groups in areas, the landscapes established by these groups express the effects of social processes, such as assimilation, on ethnic groups in American society.

The formation of ethnic landscapes in the United States occurs when ethnic groups emigrate in large numbers to a common destination which delineates an ethnic zone within this area. For example, in Miami, Florida, Cuban immigrants have delineated a section of the city as their ethnic zone, Little Havana. The delineation of ethnic zones represents the notion of territoriality -- a spatial strategy by a group to influence phenomena, people, and relationships by delineating and asserting control over an area (Sack, 1986). Often, ethnic groups delineate and control an area by establishing a variety of ethnic institutions such as restaurants, stores, and social clubs. These ethnic institutions not only support the ethnic population living within the area, but also produce an ethnic landscape which demarcates the boundaries of the ethnic zone (Conzen, 1990). Ethnic groups, however, need to have a consistently large ethnic population in

the ethnic zones to support the ethnic institutions, and hence ethnic landscapes, to retain control over their ethnic zone. The chain migration process traditionally has sustained the ethnic population of an ethnic zone.

Migration

The traditional impetus for immigration *en masse* to the United States has been the disparity between an improved standard of living in America and impoverishment in the homeland (Bodnar, 1985). Any migration process involves a combination of push and pull factors, for example socio-cultural structures, demographic pressures, political situations, and economic conditions, that compel individuals to leave the homeland in favor of a more attractive place. Push factors typically are associated with negative phenomena such as an oppressive political regime, resulting in situations not conducive to development in the homeland. On the other hand, pull factors are conditions in another place that function as magnets to encourage migration (Decroos, 1980). One process, chain migration, has been influential in the formation and maintenance of ethnic landscapes. Chain migration occurs when ethnic group members in the United States encourage others from the same location in the homeland to migrate to the United States. Usually, the ethnic group members in the United States entice those in the homeland with promises of employment, resulting in several ethnic groups becoming associated with certain occupations (Noble, 1992a). For instance, many Greek immigrants have entered the restaurant industry while many Polish immigrants have become known as steel workers and coal miners. Several ethnic groups also have entered place-specific occupations, including the Basques as

sheep herders in the American West (Zelinsky, 1973). Since the chain migration process sustains a large ethnic density in the ethnic zones, there is a sufficient ethnic population to support the ethnic institutions, and hence maintain the ethnic landscapes.

Assimilation

Although the presence of ethnic signatures reveals the cultural traits of an ethnic group, ethnic groups in American society continuously experience assimilation, a process in which ethnic group members become more similar with American society. The rate of assimilation, however, is influenced by a variety of factors such as economic status, level of education, and kinship ties. The first stage of assimilation, often referred to as cultural assimilation or acculturation, is “a process whereby the members of a group acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other groups and--by sharing their experiences and history--are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Johnston *et al.*, 1994, 28). Following cultural assimilation, ethnic groups experience structural, also called economic assimilation, which is “the distribution of migrant ethnics through its [American society] system of occupation stratification” (Johnston *et al.*, 1994, 28). The level at which ethnic groups are assimilated culturally and economically is indicated by the residential patterns of the ethnic group members (Massey, 1985). As ethnic groups become more assimilated culturally and economically, group members tend to move away physically from the ethnic zones into more ethnically diverse areas. This physical movement represents spatial assimilation which further reinforces cultural assimilation and increases

economic assimilation (Allen and Turner, 1996). After spatial assimilation, ethnic groups are more likely to accept an American identity.

The presence of ethnic groups in American society indicates that assimilation is more a continuous rather than total process. As the ethnic populations decrease within the ethnic zones due to spatial assimilation, the ethnic landscapes in the zones are exposed to the influences of other groups. For example, the spatial assimilation of Italians from Little Italy, New York City has resulted in the Chinese encroaching upon the center of the ethnic zone (Jackson, 1980). One way ethnic groups have responded to the challenge for control of their ethnic zone by other groups has been to transform the ethnic landscape from the functionality of a common landscape to the experience of an extraordinary landscape. For example, the Danish of Solvang, California, have reproduced a medieval Danish landscape along Main Street by decorating the facades of buildings with natural wood, constructing huge windmills at both ends of the street, and raising the Danish and American flags along side each other. This landscape, Conzen (1990) argues, evokes an idealized image of the past since Danish immigrants would not have been likely to build in this style even if they had remained in Denmark. Extraordinary landscapes, then, have become a way for ethnic groups to maintain control over the ethnic zones without needing a large ethnic population within the zones.

- **Festival Landscapes**

Festivals are special occasions in American society in which people take “time out” from their normal routines to celebrate a particular theme. While there are many different kinds of

festivals in the United States such as ethnic, religious, and town, all festivals offer enjoyable experiences (Manning, 1983). The power of festivals lies in the transformation of everyday values and norms. During the specified time period, festivals invert the social order of society, even to the point of transgression (Abrahams, 1987). For example, there are actions and behaviors ordinarily discouraged in public, such as displays of sexuality or the drinking of alcoholic beverages, which may be allowed during festivals. Thus, festivals have become highly popular and anticipated events on the local social calendars which also provide recreational opportunities, generate revenue, and instill pride within communities (Janiskee, 1996).

Although festivals may allow certain actions and behaviors normally discouraged in public, these actions and behaviors only are tolerated within specific places designated for the festivals. According to Cadaval (1989), places such as a business district or residential neighborhood are organized by society into rationalized spaces that have a distinct code of behavior, a spatial order. For example, public domain spaces such as streets and sidewalks are spaces that place no restrictions on who may use the space. On the other hand, private domain spaces such as businesses and households are closed spaces that restrict the access of the public to this space. During the festivals, regions of rationalized spaces in societies are transformed and activated into a “festival space” (Abrahams, 1987). In order to create festival space, festivals demarcate boundaries to temporarily suspend the spatial orders of the different domains within these boundaries (Willems-Braun, 1994). This suspension of the spatial orders then allows the transformation of everyday values and norms inside the boundaries.

In addition to reorganizing spatial orders of rationalized spaces to generate festival space, the festivals transfigure the cultural landscape within the boundaries to support their festivities. Existing structures are modified and new temporary structures are constructed to generate festival landscapes in which to present a *mélange* of cultural performances and symbols (Hudson, 1994). For example, theater festivals not only utilize performance halls and warehouses as places to present their plays, but also build their own outdoor stages in the streets and parks (Willems-Braun, 1994). Although ethnic festivals are similar to other festivals in creating festival spaces and transfiguring cultural landscapes, a major difference of many ethnic festivals from other festivals is that the ethnic festivals often are held within ethnic zones and use the ethnic landscapes as the basis for the festival landscapes. Ethnic festivals provide ethnic groups with a means, via the cultural performances and symbols in the festival landscapes, to project a self-image to other ethnic group members and the rest of American society. Ethnic festivals, therefore, are dynamic socio-spatial phenomena in American society that transfigure the cultural landscapes of rationalized spaces, commonly the ethnic landscapes of the ethnic zones, into metaphors of ethnicity (Cadaval, 1989).

Cultural performances are collective symbolic forms which use bodily movements and gestures to express and articulate meanings (Bocock, 1974). During ethnic festivals, ethnic groups include cultural performances into the festivities to manifest ethnic identity for both members and non-members of the ethnic groups (Farber, 1983). Typically, there are four kinds of cultural performances at an ethnic festival: artistic, celebratory, dramatic, and ritual. Artistic

performances are the high culture of the ethnic group, such as musical concerts and traditional dances. Celebratory performances display the playful aspects of the ethnic group, like outdoor dances and athletic competitions. Dramatic performances manifest the historical experiences and contributions of the ethnic group through events such as parades and re-enactments. Ritual performances, including the opening and closing ceremonies, are social dramas that present the leadership of ethnic groups (Turner, 1982; Shultz, 1995). The power of cultural performances lies in the ability to condense complexity, finesse contradiction, and evoke intuitive comprehension (Conzen, 1989).

According to Turner (1982), symbols are physical objects that represent something else, such as an idea or notion, by either association, resemblance, or convention. During ethnic festivals, ethnic groups utilize symbols as a means to manifest what they conceive as being important to them as a group. For example, these symbols may reflect the historical experiences or value system of the group. Often, ethnic groups place symbols such as the colors and national flag of the homeland within the festival landscape to affirm, unify, and reinforce a broad range of conceptual and emotional significances (Manning, 1983). Also, ethnic groups use symbols to illustrate their historical contributions to the local community and American society (Shultz, 1983). Symbols in the landscapes of ethnic festivals capture the essence of the ethnic group within a discernible form.

Ethnic groups incorporate a colorful variety of cultural performances and symbols in the landscapes of ethnic festivals to generate a metaphor of ethnicity. In contemporary American

society, ethnicity is a term viewed as both a means for an individual to define a personal identity and a social stratification for persons who create groups based on either real or perceived origins (Johnston *et al.*, 1994). American society historically has been a product of migration, and ethnic groups have contributed new elements to the social and cultural geography of the United States. While American culture is dynamic and evolving, immigrants to the United States experience a cultural shock from differences between the ethnic and American cultures (Zelinsky, 1973). Differences between American society and ethnic groups appear strongest in the first and second generations, but tend to fade in later generations since later generations generally have greater socio-economic opportunities in American society (Alba, 1990). Later generations, for example, are more likely to achieve higher educational levels and attain better paying jobs than earlier generations. However, later generations have tended to have a minimal knowledge of their ethnic language and to marry across ethnic and religious lines. Despite diminishing differences between American society and ethnic groups across generations, the perseverance of ethnic groups and ethnic institutions indicates that ethnicity still has an important role in American society.

As a metaphor of ethnicity, the landscapes of ethnic festivals are not only a tool for ethnic groups to maintain their ethnic boundary in American society, but also are a form of symbolic ethnicity for many assimilated ethnic group members. Ethnic groups are socially constructed groups whose members perceive a sense of a common heritage and culture as the criterion which differentiates their group from others. Based on this perception, ethnic group members share a consciousness of “something” requiring the mutual cooperation of each other

(Alba, 1990). For example, Glazer and Moynihan (1970) suggest examples for this consciousness such as the suffering of discrimination by the members, an awareness of some shared interests to advance the ethnic group which in turn furthers the members, or the preservation of the ethnic heritage. Although members share a consciousness with one another, the involvement of members with the group varies strongly between members and even throughout the lifetime of each member (Johnston *et al.*, 1994). The solidarity of the group, then, depends on the interaction of members with each other to achieve a common purpose such as influencing the outcome of a political issue affecting the group (Yancey *et al.*, 1976). Thus, this interaction contributes to the ethnic boundary maintenance of ethnic groups in American society.

An ethnic boundary, according to Woon (1985), is a cognitive and social boundary separating the ethnic group members, “us”, from others, “them”. Since ethnic groups only persist in American society by implying marked differences in behavior, the members must interact with one another on a primary level, minimize contact with American society, and consider themselves to be part of the ethnic group to maintain the ethnic boundary (Barth, 1969). One way in which ethnic groups have maintained their ethnic boundaries has been by creating social, economic, and educational institutions separate from American society. These ethnic institutions not only allow members to interact with one another in a familiar setting, but produce ethnic landscapes as well (Johnston *et al.*, 1994). As ethnic groups in American society experience assimilation, the ethnic landscapes become exposed to other ethnic groups which has resulted in ethnic group members coming together to establish an extraordinary ethnic landscape

to reassert their traditional claim over this geographic area. The transformation of an ethnic landscape into an extraordinary landscape has produced a common purpose for ethnic group members, and has contributed to the maintenance of the ethnic boundary.

According to Li *et al.* (1994), ethnic identity is one of the multiple identities which defines and categorizes an individual in relation to others. While a gender identity defines and categorizes an individual based on sex or a political identity by voting preferences, the criterion for an ethnic identity is ancestry. An ethnic identity, then, focuses on the past of an individual, such as the familial lineage, the origins within the homeland, and the history of the ethnic group. The knowledge of ancestry, however, does not necessarily equate to a saliency for an ethnic identity. Rather, the saliency fluctuates throughout the lifetime of an individual (Stryker, 1968). The assimilation process in American society has influenced greatly the saliency for an ethnic identity in many individuals from later generations. As a result of cultural, economic, and spatial assimilation, these individuals have tended to enter more specialized occupations, marry spouses from different ethnic or religious groups, and move out of the ethnic zones. Since these individuals no longer depend on a single ethnic culture or on ethnic institutions, an ethnic identity has little saliency in the normal routines for these individuals. Therefore, an expression of the intensity for an ethnic identity by these individuals represents symbolic ethnicity (Alba, 1990).

Although an ethnic identity has little saliency in the normal routines for individuals from the later generations, Gans (1979) argues that these individuals still want to maintain and express an ethnic identity in suitable ways. The process of assimilation, however, has removed these

individuals from the ethnic culture, thereby making the ethnic culture more of a memory or exotic tradition only to be experienced every so often. One way in which these individuals express an ethnic identity is through symbols, such as having a traditional ethnic meal on holidays. Symbols not only embody the essence of ethnic culture, but also affirm, unify, and soberly reinforce a broad field of conceptual and emotional significance for these individuals (Turner, 1987; Manning, 1983). Symbolic ethnicity then allows these individuals to experience, temporarily, ethnic culture and to feel intensity for an ethnic identity without having to abide by an ethnic value-system or spend extra time being ethnic.

- **Summary**

Cultural landscapes result from human features imposed upon or created from the natural landscape of an area. The study of cultural landscapes examines the appearance of areas, the assemblage of objects producing those appearances, and the areas themselves to understand processes affecting a landscape and meanings embedded in the human features of the landscape. Two processes that influence the development and maintenance of ethnic landscapes in American society are migration and assimilation. Migration, notably chain migration, has contributed to delineating ethnic zones and to sustaining large ethnic populations within these zones. Assimilation, on the other hand, decreases the density of ethnic populations within ethnic zones, thus exposing ethnic landscapes to the influences of other groups. One way ethnic groups have responded to these influences has been to transform the common landscape of the ethnic zone into an extraordinary landscape to reassert their territorial claim. Because many ethnic festivals

are held in ethnic zones, the symbols embedded within the extraordinary ethnic landscapes become part of the festival landscapes. In addition, ethnic festivals sponsor different cultural performances to project a self-image to other group members and the rest of American society. The landscapes of ethnic festivals, therefore, have become metaphors of ethnicity.