

Chapter 20: Culture and Community in the Global Age: 20-2c The Spread of Popular Culture  
Book Title: The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History 7th Edition Update, AP® Edition  
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## 20-2c The Spread of Popular Culture

For most of history, popular culture consisted of folktales and localized styles of dress, cooking, music, and visual expression (see Issues in World History: Popular Culture—Words of Warning). Only the literate few had full access to the riches of a broader “great tradition,” such as Confucianism, Islam, or Buddhism. In modern times, government school systems increased literacy rates but also promoted specifically national values and cultural tastes. Prescribed languages of instruction eroded the use and memory of local languages and traditions. In their place there arose [global popular culture \(Popular cultural practices and institutions that have been adopted internationally, such as music, the internet, television, food, and fashion. \(p. 592\)\)](#) .

Initially, the content was heavily American. Singer Michael Jackson was almost as well known to the youth of Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) and Bangkok (Thailand) as to American fans. Businesses sought out worldwide celebrities like basketball star Michael Jordan and championship golfer Tiger Woods to endorse their products. American television programs, following in the footsteps of American movies, acquired immense followings and inspired local imitations.

But the United States had no monopoly on global popular culture. Latin American soap operas, *telenovelas*, had a vast following in the Americas, eastern Europe, and elsewhere. Mumbai, India, long the world’s largest producer of films, made or inspired more films for international audiences, like the 2009 Academy Award–winning *Slumdog Millionaire*. And the martial arts filmmakers of Hong Kong saw their style flourish in high-budget international spectacles like director Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and the *Matrix* trilogy (1999–2003), which relied heavily on Hong Kong fight choreographers.

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