CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

SECTION I

Humans are geographers by nature. They can think territorially or spatially and have an awareness of, and curiosity about the distinctive nature of places. Even children possess qualities of geographers, creating carefully mapped realms in tiny places. Places possess an emotional quality, and we all must belong somewhere. Humans' insatiable curiosity and the place-centered element within us gave birth to geography as an academic discipline. Conquest and commerce generated a need to know about the world and pragmatism was added long ago by traders and explorers. Geography literally means "to describe the Earth," and the practical aspects of geography first arose among the Greeks, Romans, Mesopotamians, and Phoenicians.

Divisions
Physical and human geography are two great branches of the discipline, and their origins can be traced to the Greeks and later the Romans. Greek scholars were curious about the world, particularly the physical aspects, and collected information from traders and travelers. The Romans, unlike the Greeks, were empire builders and brought many different cultures under their control. They added to the Greek knowledge of the physical Earth and added information about different cultures they encountered or conquered. By the end of the Roman era, theories about a spherical Earth, latitudinal climatic zones, environmental influences on humans, and humans' role in modifying the Earth were established. The latter two are quite significant because today environmental geography is emerging as a link between human and physical geography.

Traditions
During the twentieth century, geography was marked by four durable traditions: earthscience (physical geography); cultural-environmental (encompasses a wide range of topics with a difficult, even controversial history); locational theory (the spatial focus of the discipline), which has become a modern element of human geography; and area-analysis (primarily involving the description of areas and regions), giving rise to what is today called regional science. These Four Traditions of Geography were first identified in an article by University of Chicago geographer W.D. Pattison in 1964. He argued that these were the four areas where geographic teaching, research, and other activity were concentrated.

New Themes
In the 1980s, rising concerns about geographic illiteracy in America prompted the National Geography Society, and several other organizations, to begin campaigns to reintroduce geography into school curricula. In a 1986 publication, the NGS proposed a useful five-theme framework for geography as developed by the Geography Education
National Implementation Project (GENIP). Three of the themes correspond to traditions identified earlier: location, human-environment inter-action, and regions. As the fourth tradition, the NGS proposed a single word, place, because all places on the surface of the Earth have distinguishing human and physical characteristics. A fifth theme, movement, refers to the mobility of goods, ideas, and people, an appropriate theme in light of the mobile world we live in today.

Maps
Maps—graphic representations of all or part of the Earth's surface drawn to scale—are the most important tool of geographers. Maps and geography are practically synonymous, and mapmaking (cartography) is as old as geography itself. The spatial perspective is geography's unifying bond and there is no better way to demonstrate insights gained through spatial analysis than through the use of maps. Maps are our "window on the world."

Maps are used to portray the distinctive character of places; their relationship to environmental issues; the movements of people, goods, and ideas; and regions of various types. Maps are used to wage war, make political propaganda, solve medical problems, locate shopping centers, bring relief to refugees, warn of natural hazards—in short, for countless purposes.

Maps are not always printed. Everyone has a mental map—a map in their mind—that has developed over years of looking at wall maps, atlas maps, and maps in books, magazines, and newspapers. People's perception of places and regions is influenced by their individual mental maps as well as printed maps. Since one's perception of different places is a combination of general information, personal experiences, and what is called "hearsay" in the legal profession, that perception is not always accurate. Look carefully at text Figure 1-9 in your text and you will begin to get some idea of the influence that mental maps and perception of places have on people.

CHAPTER QUIZ
MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. This text focuses on human geography. What is the other half of geography called?
   a. environmental
   b. spatial
   c. physical
   d. regional

2. When geographers look at the way places and things are laid out on the cultural landscape, they are taking a:
   a. pattern analysis
   b. distribution measurement
   c. spatial perspective
   d. map measurement
3. Which of the following is not true regarding remote sensing?
   a. began with air photography
   b. does not involve satellites
   c. involves aircraft
   d. reveals environmental changes

4. When the National Geographic Society developed what they called the "five themes" of geography they did not specifically include a traditional theme of geography, which is:
   a. location
   b. human-environment
   c. landscape
   d. movement

5. Of the following, which cannot be shown on a map?
   a. housing styles
   b. river flow direction
   c. diffusion of disease
   d. relative location

6. What event markedly changed Chicago's relative location (which already had good centrality)?
   a. new interstate highway
   b. more railroads
   c. opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway
   d. new airport

7. Symbols on maps represent many different things. Arrows can show:
   a. direction of migration
   b. numbers of people
   c. intensity of traffic on routes
   d. all of the above

8. The spread of various aspects of culture, such as language, knowledge, skills, religion, etc., from one place to another is called:
   a. distribution
   b. relocation
   c. diffusion
   d. infection

9. Geographers define and delimit a region by:
   a. establishing criteria
b. walking the region
c. asking others how they define the region
d. using climate changes

10. A city is an example of a region.
   a. formal
   b. functional
   c. perceptual
   d. physical

TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

1. Human geography encompasses several sub-fields and has an environmental component. (TF)
2. Medical geography is not a part of human geography. It belongs to physical geography. (TF)
3. Movement is not an important theme in the study of geography. (TF)
4. The geographical hypothesis of continental drift was actually developed by a climatologist. (TF)
5. The only thing maps can tell us is the absolute location of places. (TF)
6. The relative location of a place can change constantly but only for the better. (TF)
7. A map of worldwide precipitation can show us areas prone to droughts and floods. (TF)
8. The Pacific Ocean affects precipitation on more continental landmasses than any other ocean. (TF)
9. All regions have clear and concise boundaries. (TF)
10. A country is divided into separate regions. No region overlaps another and each is equal in importance. (TF)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. We all live in a region as well as a country or state. What region do you live in? How is it defined? Is it a formal, functional, or perceptual region as defined in your text? Do you have different perceptions about your region?

2. Make a list of some of the many ways maps are used. Do you understand the importance of relative location as shown in Figure 1-3? Can you find a map of another place that shows good relative location as described in the text?

3. Why is the spatial perspective so important to geographers? How do patterns and distribution fit into this concept?

4. How is your mental map of the city and/or region you live in? After reading the part about mental maps in this chapter, do you think you need to improve yours?
Close your eyes. How many Western European nations can you visualize? Go to a map of Europe and see how well you did. Can you accurately visualize the major city locations in your country?

SECTION II

*Culture* is an all-encompassing term that defines the tangible lifestyle of a people and their prevailing values and beliefs. The concept of culture is closely identified with anthropology. Over more than a century ago most anthropologists believed that culture was learned. However, recent advances in sociobiology and related fields suggest that certain behaviors may be genetically determined, so that culture has an "instinctive" component as well as a "learned" one. This chapter discusses the development of culture, the human imprint on the landscape, culture and environment, and cultural perceptions and processes. The key points covered in this chapter are outlined below.

**Culture and Human Geography**

The concept of culture lies at the heart of human geography. Locational decisions, patterns, and landscapes are fundamentally influenced by cultural attitudes and practices. The concept of culture, like the regional concept discussed in the previous chapter, appears to be deceptively simple, but in fact is complex and challenging. The definitions of culture vary widely, as does our use of the word itself, but all refer in one way or another to humans— their development, ideas, and adaptation to the world in which they live.

**Components**

Culture is made up of four major components. The first of these is a *cultural trait*—a single attribute of a culture—such as eating with certain utensils. The second component is a *cultural complex*—a discrete combination of traits exhibited by a particular culture—such as keeping cattle for different purposes. The third component is a *culture system*—culture complexes with traits in common that can be grouped together—such as ethnicity, language, religion, and other cultural elements. The final component, the *cultural region*—the area within which a particular culture system prevails—is marked by all the attributes of a culture. Cultural regions may be expressed on a map, but many geographers prefer to describe these as geographic regions since their definition is based on a combination of cultural properties plus locational and environmental circumstances.

**Topics**

Key topics in cultural geography include *cultural landscapes*—the human imprint on the Earth's surface. These create a distinct and characteristic landscape that reveals much about the culture presently occupying the area, as well as those that came before. A second key topic focuses on *cultural hearths*—the sources of civilizations from which radiate ideas, innovations, and ideologies. Cultural geographers identify both ancient and modern cultural hearths.

*Cultural diffusion*—the process by which innovations and ideas spread to other areas—involves several types of diffusion. *Expansion diffusion* may take the form of contagious diffusion, where some item of culture is spread through a local population by contact from person to person. In the case of *hierarchical diffusion*, another form of expansion diffusion, an idea or innovation spreads by trickling down from larger to smaller adoption units. Innovations often leapfrog over wide areas, with geographic distance a less important influence. The early
spread of the FAX machine is a good example of this type of diffusion. A third type of expansion diffusion is *stimulus diffusion*, a process where an idea or innovation is not readily adopted by a population but results in local experimentation and eventual changes in the way of doing things. The Industrial Revolution, for example, did not immediately spread to pre- or non-industrial societies, but did stimulate attempts to mechanize local handicraft production.

The different forms of expansion diffusion take place through populations that are stable. It is the innovation or idea that does the moving. *Relocation diffusion*—the spreading of innovations by a migrating population—involves the actual movement of individuals who have already adopted the idea or innovation, and who carry it to a new, perhaps distant locale, where they disseminate it. The spread of European emigrants around the world during the period of Europeanization is a classic example.

The topic of *cultural perception*—the way that members of a culture view themselves as well as how they view other cultures—is a combination of tangible and intangible elements that help to define the personality of a region. We all have impressions and images of various regions and cultures, even though they may not always be accurate. *Perceptual regions* are intellectual constructs designed to help us understand the nature and distribution of phenomena in human geography. These perceptions are based on our accumulated knowledge about such regions and cultures. Perceptual regions can differ considerably, depending on the individual's mental maps of various communities and cultures.

The final considered topic, *cultural environment*—the relationships between human societies and the natural environment—is complex. Environment affects societies in countless ways from the types of crops grown to the houses they build, but societies also modify their natural environments in ways that range from slight to severe. One thing is certain, however. While human behavior is not controlled by the environment (as the now-defunct concept of environmental determinism suggested), no culture, no matter how sophisticated, can completely escape the forces of nature.

**CHAPTER QUIZ**

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS**

1. When a discrete number of culture traits is combined it is referred to as a culture:
   a. region
   b. complex
   c. realm
   d. system

2. Features placed on the land change its natural look. Geographers call this the cultural:
   a. realm
   b. system
   c. landscape
   d. land change

3. The birth place of a civilization is called a/an:
   a. culture hearth
   b. origin region
   c. agricultural home base
   d. source region
4. When an idea or invention spreads outward from its source area and also remains strong in its source area, it is said to have spread by:
   a. stimulus diffusion
   b. migrant diffusion
   c. expansion diffusion
   d. transculturation

5. When the Spanish overthrew the Aztecs in Mexico, they adopted some of the Aztec ways and ideas. At the same time the Aztecs adopted some of the Spanish ways and ideas. This process is called:
   a. migrant diffusion
   b. relocation diffusion
   c. transculturation
   d. acculturation

6. An assemblage of cultural or geographic regions forms a cultural:
   a. system
   b. realm
   c. complex
   d. trait

7. Perceptual culture regions are:
   a. known to have sharply defined boundaries
   b. different in definition from person to person
   c. defined by using at least three criteria
   d. found only on islands

8. The idea that human cultural behavior is controlled by the environment in which we live is called:
   a. possibilism
   b. environmental ecology
   c. environmental determinism
   d. environmental regional identity

9. The influence of the natural environment on humanity declines:
   a. toward higher latitudes
   b. with increasing technology
   c. in agrarian societies
   d. in urban societies

10. Broad generalizations about the impact of the environment on humans are:
    a. more accurate today than in the past
    b. almost always sustained
    c. rarely sustained
    d. more accurate for traditional agrarian societies
TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

1. Culture does not include the behavior of people. (TF)
2. The same cultural trait can often be found in more than one culture. (TF)
3. Cultural systems are only found in the developed countries of the world. (TF)
4. Cultural landscapes usually vary from one country to another. (TF)
5. Nomadic people leave a large imprint on their cultural landscape because they keep traveling the same routes over and over. (TF)
6. Culture hearths first appeared in the Eastern Hemisphere. (TF)
7. Most information spread from culture hearths by hierarchical diffusion. (TF)
8. The wheel, after being introduced into Mesopotamia, did not diffuse quickly to Egypt. (TF)
9. Culture regions can become political battlegrounds and even physical battlegrounds because of people's emotional attachments to the land and traditions. (TF)
10. People must learn to live with their physical environment because changing or trying to control it causes problems. (TF)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Define the components of culture. In your own geographical region, can you think of any culture traits that seem to stand out from the normal traits with which you are familiar?

2. After reading about cultural landscapes, can you see signs of how your culture region's landscape has changed over time? If you are attending a college or university away from home, look for material changes in the landscape. Talk to a long-time resident who can tell you about changes that have taken place.

3. Why do you think it is important to study cultural hearths? When you look at Figure 2-4 in your text, can you understand how expansion and relocation diffusion worked in carrying ideas and inventions to distant lands?

4. If you live in a large city, can you see signs of acculturation in ethnic neighborhoods? If you come from a rural environment, is everyone alike or are there ethnic differences that might be evident in the way people layout farm buildings or in house-building styles dating from an earlier time?