

The Regional Concept—Its Place in Geographical Studies

GEOGRAPHY is concerned with the study of the nature of the earth's surface. Due to its vastness and complexity, geographers of all ages have found it necessary in their studies, to divide the earth's surface into small areas. Divisions of area, then, are a vital part of the geographer's craft. Regions are especially defined units of area. They should properly be conceived as devices to investigate the nature of the earth's surface and to organize our knowledge of its character. Much controversy, however, surrounds the "regional concept" for there is little agreement as to the definition, delimitation or the exact nature of what constitutes a region.

A.—Are Regions Objective Units?

During the latter part of the 19th century the thesis that regions were objective units gained ground. It was believed that regions were genuine entities.¹ The region was supposed to be a definite individual unit of the earth area, having form and structure and therefore forming a concrete object. Accordingly it represents a relatively closed unit in contrast to adjacent or distant areal units. At the extreme end of such ideas was the concept that regions are actual organisms.

The causes for the development of the theory of regions as concrete objects may be explained in the context of the scientific and philosophical climate of the 19th century. During this period there was a remarkable development of the natural sciences like Botany and Zoology which had individual objects of study. Therefore, if Geography was to attain the enviable position of a true science, then it seemed that geographers too must have individual objects of study. For this purpose the 'Region' was conceived as the geographers' object of study. Deterministic ideas which seemed to characterise the philosophy of many a geographer of that period held that man's activities were governed by the conditions of the natural

1. Hartshorne, R., *The Nature of Geography*, 1939, 1946, pp. 250-262. Originally published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 29, (1939).

environment.² Since it was held that man's activities conformed neatly to his physical background, the limits of cultural units would nearly coincide with the boundaries of the natural (physical) units. Since geographic regions are defined in terms of both cultural and natural factors, the earth's surface then would consist of finely defined, distinct individual units or regions. It appeared then that the supreme task of the geographer was merely to recognise and map the limits of those "self-given regions".

The theory of regions as concrete individual objects may be rejected on many grounds. Firstly, unlike in the systematic sciences, geography is not to be defined by any particular object of study. Geography is more a point of view focussed on the interrelations of phenomena, (rather than on the phenomena itself) that cause the varying character of the earth's surface. There is no compelling need to define geography in terms of regions, as forming the particular object of its study. The regional method is really a technique of study and the geographer's aim is to study the varying character of the earth's surface itself caused by the interrelations and associations of phenomena at one place and inter-connections of phenomena found in different places.

Secondly, crude determinism is no longer in vogue. Granted that culture is to a great extent conditioned by physical factors, it is not that man's activities are clearly confined within physical boundaries. Often man's activities have unified separate areas of contrasting physical characteristics. A case in point is the regional geography of California. Physiographically, California exhibits three distinct major physical units—the Coast Ranges, the Central Great Valley and the Sierra Nevada Ranges. Though the Central Great Valley and Sierra Nevada Ranges have contrasting relief features, they form interconnected parts of a single functional unit. The agriculture based on irrigation in the dry Central Valley would be inconceivable without the waters from the humid Nevada slopes.

Furthermore if a region has definite form, structure and function, it should clearly be tangible. We are no longer to be satisfied with explanations of the type that regions are things, which have a certain impalpable character that extends over a considerable tract of land. If such qualities exist, then a region must have fairly clear and definite areal limits. We are inclined to agree with Kimble that we cannot have substance without

2. Tatham George, Chapter on *Environmentalism and Possibilism*.

Taylor Griffith (ed.) *Geography in the Twentieth Century*. New York, London, 1951, pp. 131-147.

form or quality without quantity.³ In this context Dervent Whittlesey, who strongly urges the regional point of view suggests that a scheme of regions be based on statistical and quantitative rather than empirical or qualitative assessment.⁴ This question poses the problem of boundary delimitation. A little reflection shows that the eastern slopes of the Central Ridge in the hill-country of Ceylon form at the same time the boundary wall of the Uva Basin. It is obvious that the slope of a mountain is also the side of the adjacent valley. The problem becomes immensely more difficult when we draw upon the entire range of physical, biological and human factors, in fixing boundaries of regions. There is often little co-variance or coincidence of the extent of different features, because these features may be independent of each other causatively. This point may be seen when considering the uniform extension of tea plantations in the highlands of Ceylon, over areas where originally forest and patanas grew side by side. The spread of tea estates have today completely obliterated any differentiation of the former vegetation that may have existed. If we cannot discover clear boundaries, then we cannot assign to regions, the characteristic of being definite individual objects. Indeed if regions be identifiable objective units, that identity should have clear areal extent. In reference to the problem of establishing boundaries it has been previously pointed out that "we have no reason to ever hope for an objective solution. We not only have not yet discovered and established regions as real entities, we have no reason ever to expect to do so."⁵ Areas cannot easily be delimited into separate units because phenomena besides being associated in one place show significant interrelations between different areas. This point is well illustrated in the regional economic characteristics of Japan. Trade with foreign countries is the mainstay of the Japanese economy. Japan's industry is not only based on imported raw materials but is also oriented towards markets of the far flung corners of the globe. Now to explain the features of the regional economy of Japan, it is vitally necessary to consider regions and factors quite outside the territorial confines of Japan.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, it not only seems desirable but necessary that we abandon the theory of regions as individual objective units. For the theory of 'real regions' is an abstraction that cannot be tested nor proved. It poses more problems, than can ever be solved.

3. Stamp, E. D. and Woolridge, S. W. (eds.) *London Essays in Geography*, London, New York, Toronto, 1951, p. 155, see, Kimble, George, H. T., *Inadequacy of the Regional Concept*.

4. Freeman, T. W., *A Hundred Years of Geography*, London, 1961, p. 127.

5. Hartshorne, R., *op. cit.* p. 200.

B.—The Region—as a Method of Geographic Studies

The view that a system of regional division is only a technique of study is far more satisfactory and is logically consistent with the nature of our field. If regions are to be conceived as mere devices of geographic study, it would be advantageous to know some salient features of the earth's surface itself, whose nature we are trying to investigate by the method of the region. For our techniques of study should be adapted to and moulded by the nature of the material we handle.

The main thing that strikes the geographer's eye as regards the earth's surface, is its intense areal variation caused by the interaction of physical, biological and social processes over area. These processes produce phenomena that give rise to an intricately complex surface.⁶ We shall first consider something about the phenomena itself, which cause the complexity of the earth's surface. Phenomena which are present in some places are absent in other places. For example, the presence of a limestone cover over the Jaffna Peninsula of Ceylon explains the absence of a surface drainage pattern there. In no other part of the island is there a similar extensive limestone tract that gives rise to such distinctive features as in the Jaffna Peninsula. Furthermore single phenomenon is sometimes unequally distributed over area. For example, an annual rainfall of over 75 inches gives the South-West country of Ceylon fairly stable river regimes. A deficiency of rainfall in the Dry Zone has necessitated the construction of expensive irrigation projects for the successful settlement of these regions. Then, phenomena may have different rates of changes and movement. Generally physical processes are subject to slower rates of change than social processes. Cataclysms caused by physical processes such as floods, earthquakes and cyclones are, however, exceptional. A single process may proceed at varying rates in different areas. For example coastal erosion along the south western shores of Ceylon proceed at a more rapid rate than in the other parts of the island's shores. Further, heterogeneous phenomena caused by a given type of process are causally related or integrated. Then phenomena of different processes are also associated (exist together) over a given area. Such then is the essential nature of forces and events which determine the characteristics of the earth's surface. It is such a complexity with variegated facets and ceaseless changes that geographers are concerned to analyse and comprehend.

6. "A process is a sequence of events systematically related as in a chain of cause and effect. The phenomena that can be observed at any one moment of time result from the operation of these sequences of change." Refer James, Preston E. and Jones, Clarence, F., *Inventory and Prospect of American Geography*, Syracuse, 1954, p. 5.

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Although the earth's surface is studied from a wide variety of angles, geographers have their own distinctive view-point of study. This requires an explanation of the nature of the conception of the earth's surface that geographers hold and nurture. In other words what are the fundamental principles of Geography? Firstly, many have sought to expound a Geography which is not concentrated on any particular category of phenomena. Instead they have tried to establish coherence or *Zusammenhang*, i.e., the interrelations of phenomena. Thus for example, the very heavy rainfall of Watawala is not to be considered as an isolated fact. It should be discussed in terms of its causes—the atmospheric and relief conditions and also in terms of its influence on the rainfall regimes, the water balance, the vegetation and agricultural activities of the area and so on. The second principle is areal diversity. It seems hardly necessary to illustrate this principle, for the fact that different areas have varying colour, nature and characteristics is easily perceptible.

1. *The two approaches in geographic study—systematic and regional:*

In keeping with the two principles outlined above have arisen the two basic methods of geographic investigation, the systematic approach and the regional approach illustrated diagrammatically in Fig. 1.

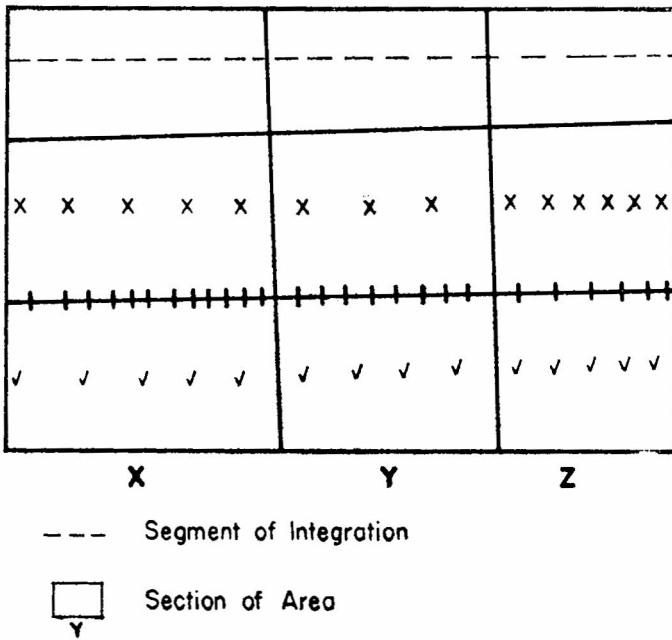


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of Regional and Topical approaches in Geographical studies.

The larger rectangle represents earth's area. The horizontal lines denote the areal extension of phenomena. Each of these lines represents phenomena such as relief, climate, vegetation and so on (a,b,c in Fig.). Each of these may be called a segment of integration. The smaller rectangles X-Y-Z show the sub-division of area (sections of area) where the different segments of integration are associated together.

In the systematic approach, the subject of geographic investigation may be a single segment of integration (this is different from a single element) such as the climate or the agriculture of an area. In the regional approach, the subject of geographic study would be a section of area such as a continent, a sub-continent, an island, a small area or a town. It is commonly believed that the regional concept matters only in regional geography. It will be shown later in this paper that the regional concept is basic to both systematic as well as regional geography.

Combinations of phenomena vary from place to place in very complicated ways. It is impossible to say that one specific combination of phenomena extends from A to B where another begins. Though it is traditional and convenient to limit the Wet Zone in Ceylon by using the Walawe Ganga and the Deduru Oya as boundaries, a clear-cut Dry Zone does not begin on the eastern banks of the Walawe Ganga and the northern banks of the Deduru Oya.

It is for such a study, that the region is here presented, as a useful means of investigation and organization of facts.

2. *The definition of a region:*

Actually scores of definitions of the word exist and the word has a range of meanings extending far beyond geography.⁷ For example T. W. Freeman mentions a map dividing Ireland into regions, each with its centre for the distribution of a popular brand of stout. Kimble states that there are no less than one hundred definitions of the word region in geographic literature.⁸ Hartshorne writes that, on an empirical basis the most that can be said is, that a region is an area of specific location which is distinctive from other areas and which extends as far as that distinction extends.⁹

Wittlesey's definition that was presented to the Committee on American Geography claims that a region 1. could be an area of any size; 2. is an area homogeneous in terms of specific criteria; 3. is an area distinguished from

7. Freeman, T. W., *op. cit.* p. 118.

8. Kimble, George, H. T. *op. cit.* p. 151.

9. Hartshorne, R. *Perspective on the Nature of Geography*, Chicago, 1959, p. 130.

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bordering areas by a particular association of features and therefore has internal cohesion.¹⁰

This means that a region is a special type of unit area, while an area constitutes a mere section of earth space. The distinction is better understood in the words of Whittlesey: "An area is a geometric portion of the earth's surface with no implication of homogeneity or cohesion."¹¹ This distinction may also be illustrated diagrammatically as in (Fig. 2).

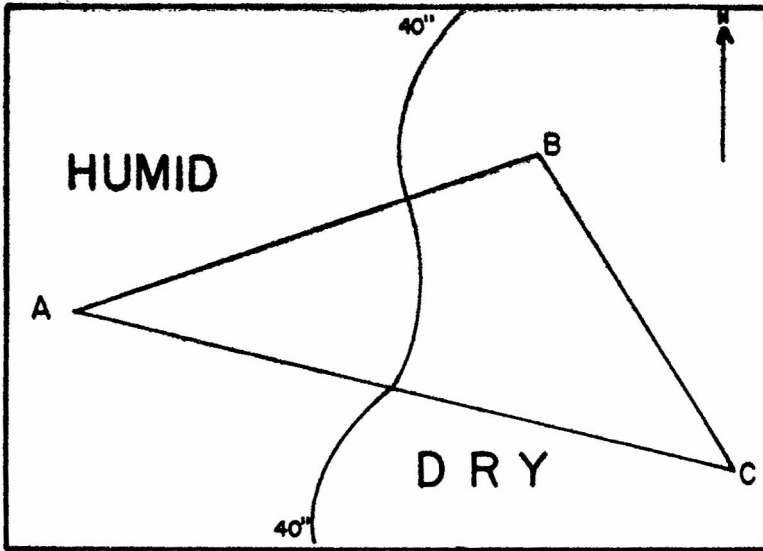


Fig. 2 Distinguishing a section of area from a region

The 40 inch isoheyt distinguishes a dry area to the east and a wet area to the west. Due to prevailing wet characteristics throughout the western area a humid region is defined and similarly a dry region to the east. A triangle *ABC* which is drawn across the 40" isoheyt to include portions of the humid as well as the dry region clearly lacks any homogeneity and therefore remains as an area and does not become a region with respect to the humidity criterion used—the 40" isoheyt.

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10. James, Preston, E., and Jones, Clarence, F., *op. cit.* p. 9.

11. *ibid.* p. 22.

3. *Justification of the regional concept:*

Many geographers attempting to discover "true regions" and naturally finding none to their satisfaction, have urged the rejection of the regional concept. In the words of Kimble "To spend our days regionalising is to chase a phantom and to be kept continually out of breath for our pains."¹² We are however justified in retaining the regional concept as a practical framework, when we conceive of the region as a device to generalise facts concerning area. Areal variation is so minute, so omnipresent, that we cannot discover even two adjacent points which are identical, i.e. exactly alike in all respects. However, even the layman may recognise some area throughout which a more or less marked homogeneous association or features exists. The Jaffna Peninsula is a striking example from Ceylon. This sense of uniformity or regionality may be felt even where precise definition of boundaries is not possible. Such areas then may be recognised as regions. But even the smallest of our regions may be further subdivided. Whittlesey was referring to this idea when he said that there are no 'unit areas.' For example, in a small areal unit such as a paddy field, homogeneity may be said to exist throughout the field, because paddy covers the field uniformly. Yet even within a single paddy field one may recognise numerous varieties of paddy in the different parts and sub-divide the field according to the varieties grown. Such microscopic sub-division, however, would only be necessary for special purposes. Examination of differentiation at such minute levels would no doubt defeat our purpose of understanding the broad nature of areal variations. Therefore we ignore differences deemed minor and construct homogeneous areas, where none exists in a real and precise sense. That regions exist nowhere except in the geographer's mind is then not a fatal criticism, but a statement of fact. The study of the complexity of the earth's surface necessitates the division of the surface into manageable units of study.

Our regional division may be appreciated if we view the historian's craft of dividing the course of events over time into numerous periods. By using certain dates, historians arbitrarily speak of a beginning and an end of a period. Akin to the way that there are significant inter-connections between areas, there are also similar interconnections between events of different periods. Nevertheless historians have established and demonstrated the advantages of organising the unbroken continuation of data throughout time, into periods. Historians study the nature of the course of events over time and geographers study the nature of phenomena extending over area.

12. Kimble, George, H. T., *op. cit.* p. 174.

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The geographer's technique of organising area into regions, should be pictured as a parallel to the historian's method of dividing the historical course of events into periods.

This undoubtedly involves the generalisation of facts. Students of history conceive of ancient, medieval and modern periods in Ceylon History. This is for mere convenience of organising historical data. A student who is dissatisfied with such broad generalisations may concern himself with more detailed analysis, and may view the modern period of Ceylon history as being divided, for instance, into the Portuguese, Dutch and the British periods. In a similar way, geographers pursuing greater detail may sub-divide their major regions, which are the products of a large degree of generalisation. Again a student of research finding the entire British period quite unwieldy, may confine himself to a few decades of the whole period. The parallel here with the geographers' technique of constructing micro-regions is indeed remarkable.

The method of generalisation and classification is basic to all science. "The mental grouping of things separately recognizable as different, but in which some resemblance is seen is the process of classification . . . the seeing of similarities is as necessary to life as the seeing of differences."¹³ The biologists' classification involves the grouping together in successive major and minor divisions, of forms more and more closely related.¹⁴ Though dissimilar in certain respects, because of common points of similarity (in this case indicative of genetic connections) the mammals, the birds, the reptiles, the amphibians and fishes are grouped together into the Phylum Vertebrata. The geologist may group together multifarious rocks on the basis of integrating factors such as age, composition or mode of occurrence. A regional division too is a similar type of classification, involving a process of recognizing similarities of character by the method of generalisation. In arranging the similar characteristics of area into regions, categories of area are first defined by announced criteria. For example, Köppen by using certain quantitative criteria first distinguished the major climatic categories or regions of the world. Using further quantitative criteria the major categories were divided into smaller units. Thus the A type of climate determined on the basis of temperature is divisible into the Af, Am, As, Aw types. The sub-divisions are based on the season and extent of rainfall. By using further quantitative criteria, Köppen and later—workers have defined numerous other sub-divisions.

13. George, W. H. *Scientist in Action*. New York, 1938. p. 189.

14. Newbigin, Marion, I. *Plant and Animal Geography*. London, 1936. pp. 197-204.

Accordingly, regions are constructed in our mind subjectively, by observing the objective nature of areas around us. The entities then exist in our thought and not in the area itself. The nature of the phenomena may only suggest a division when viewed in a particular way. The division itself is the brainchild of the research worker. "...the classifier is an essential part of a classification for a classification is based upon the perception of similarity by a human being. Since judgement of similarity... is not a judgement where universal agreement has been reached in classification, it is not surprising that no universal agreement has been reached in classification."¹⁵ It is then in keeping with a basic method of science, to view the region as a mental construction, which provides some sort of intelligent basis for organizing our knowledge of the earth's surface. "We can only seek the most intelligent basis for determining areal limits, i.e. for dividing the earth into regions. It is then a device for selecting and studying areal groupings out of the complexity of phenomena. Any portion of the earth's surface is a region, if homogeneous in terms of a stated areal grouping."¹⁶ To illustrate this, if relief is used as a criterion both Mannar and Anuradhapura may belong to a single region—known as the northern lowlands, of Ceylon. Further sub-division based on climate would demarcate a dry and an arid zone along the 50 inch isoheyt assigning Mannar and Anuradhapura into two separate humidity provinces or regions. Here too other criteria may be used to give numerous other refinements. "The region then is not an object either self-determined or nature-given. It is an intellectual concept, an entity for purposes of thought created by the selection of certain features relevant to an interest and disregarding those irrelevant for a given purpose."¹⁷

The purpose of a classification then, is all important in a critical assessment of a system of regional division. For the criteria are selected in terms of a specific problem or purpose. For a stated purpose, it is possible to identify homogeneous areas with respect to relevant criteria, disregarding as all scientific classifications do, conditions which are not relevant to the problem. Therefore any system of homogeneous areas should be evaluated only in terms of the purpose for which the classification was made. It follows then, that there can be several systems of regions depending on the purpose of classification. It is not that the world is neatly parcelled out into a given set of regions and that it is the supreme task of the geographers

15. George, W. H., *op. cit.* p. 190.

16. James, Preston, E. and Jones, Clarence, F., *op. cit.* p. 30.

17. *ibid.* p. 30.

to somehow recognise them. "When assessment of value is applied to a classification, it is rated as of high value or is called natural or good, if the members of each class have many points of common similarity of interest to the classifier. If the members of each class have few points of common similarity of interest to the classifier, the classification is called artificial or is of low value."¹⁸ Thus geographers should not feel perturbed if we cannot agree on any system of division. We should strive to attain a classification with the greatest number of advantageous and the least number of disadvantages. The advantages, however, are determined by the purpose for which any particular classification is devised.

C.—The Hierarchy of Regions

There are not only regions but also a hierarchy of regions. If a region is a result of generalisation of facts, then it must be the product of a certain degree or amount of generalisation. Since there can be different degrees of generalisation, then it follows that there are different orders of regions depending on the degree of generalisation. Accordingly, regional systems could vary from major to minor and from macro to micro. The circle in the diagram (Fig. 3a) represents a hypothetical unit of area. At a certain level of generalisation it is divided into three homogeneous units X-Y-Z. If more detail be required in the study of each of these units, by using another set of criteria each of these units could be further sub-divided into smaller homogeneous units. This process of sub-divisions and grouping produces a hierarchy of regions,¹⁹ Fig. 3(a) and 3(b).

When regions are studied at various levels of generalisation, a primary concern is the scale of the maps.²⁰ For the study and representation of the different orders of regions, maps of different scales should be utilised. Large scale maps are used for detailed studies of micro regions which are far down in the hierarchy. Small scale maps are used for highly generalised studies (therefore less accurate) of very large regions, placed higher up in the hierarchy. For the regions of the intermediate orders varying scales should be used depending on the degrees of generalisation. Let us illustrate this theme with regional examples from Ceylon. A layman may rest content

18. George, W. H., *op. cit.* p. 189.

19. An admirable example of the rule of the concept of the hierarchy of regions is contained in the essay Linton, D. L. "The Delimitation of Morphological Regions." *London Essays in Geography*, *op. cit.* pp. 199-219.

20. The use of varying scales at different levels of generalization is discussed in James, P. E., 'Towards a further understanding of the Regional Concept,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 42 (1952) No. 3, pp. 195-222, especially pp. 206-215.

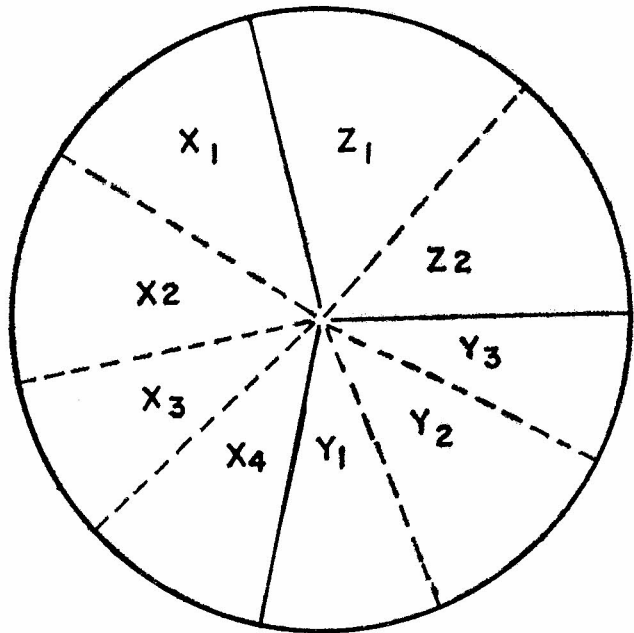


Fig.3 (a). The concept of the hierarchy of the Regions shown graphically.

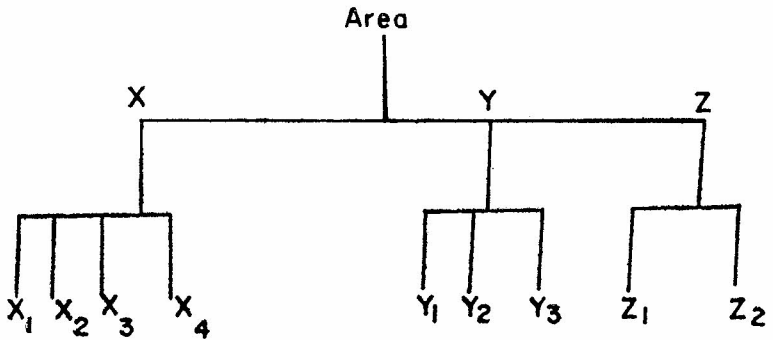


Fig.3(b) In the hierarchy of regions various orders of regions exist at different levels of generalisation shown by horizontal lines.

with the meagre knowledge that Ceylon has a central highland mass, surrounded by a lowland tract. He may be aware too, of a dry zone studded with irrigation tanks and heard of a hot wet region to the south-west with a luxuriant forest growth. But a student at high school level needs more refined divisions with less generalisation and more details. Therefore his scheme of regions would consist of more sub-divisions. A research student may require far more sophisticated and detailed units when working at levels of least generalisations. This involves the gathering of first hand information and long hours of work out in the field. The failure to recognise that different levels of generalisation exist and therefore regions at various orders has in the past led to much confusion in our literature of regional geography. In a classification of regions for Ceylon S. F. de Silva divides the larger climatic unit, the Dry Zone into smaller regions.²¹

- (a) The arid belt of land (25-50")
- (b) The dry zone (proper) (50-75")
- (c) The Jaffna peninsula.

The dry zone proper and the Jaffna Peninsula have been classed as regions of the same order though the former is many times larger than the latter and exhibits very great areal diversity.

D.—The Regional Concept and the Apparent Dualism in Geography

It was shown earlier that geographic studies may be classified in terms of two approaches. A common belief is that such studies represent a dualism in geography between systematic and regional geography. It is also supposed that the former is the study of elements and the latter is the study of area. It is true that in many universities, under the guise of systematic geography, the work which is done more properly belongs to geology, meteorology, and so on. Tudor David writing 'Against Geography' in an issue of the *Universities Quarterly*, May, 1958 was raising the same point when he stated that the questions appearing in the examination papers of economic geography, historical geography, and so on, could equally well have found a place in the economics and history papers. Within the scope of this paper we could only state the theoretical position, that systematic geography represents a view-point which is different from the systematic sciences. While a systematic science is focussed on a certain

²¹ de Silva, S. F., *A Regional Geography of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1952, p. 81.

category of phenomena, systematic geography studies the interrelationships of a certain category of phenomena, as a part of the total complex of phenomena.

Regional geography, on the other hand is widely held to be the study of the entirety of phenomena of a region. Pearson reporting on the 'Progress in Regional geography in New View Points in Geography' states that the goal of regional formulation should include the totality of place and people in association.²² A little reflection would show how and why it is impossible to learn 'everything', even about a very small place, for the totality of a region is not a practical goal for analysis.²³ In regional analysis, attention should be concentrated on the key features, i.e. only on those that are significant in causing similarities and differences over areas. In systematic geography, because we study the interrelations of a few closely related phenomena, it is possible to extend our study over large areas, because it is impossible to have a complete knowledge even of a few things over the entire world. A systematic geography is then the study of partial integrations of phenomena usually over large areas. In regional geography where attention is paid to complex integrations of phenomena (for the study of a totality of a region is not a practical goal) we should necessarily restrict our attention to smaller areas because of the large number of topics being handled. As the number of topics increase, the number of variable factors too increase, thus reducing the size of the area, over which any homogeneity may exist. The essential difference between the systematic and regional view-point, then lay in the number of topics being handled and therefore the size of areas. The difference then is quantitative and is not of a fundamental kind. It follows, that geography cannot be divided into studies of individual elements over the world and studies of complete totality of elements in regions. All studies in geography analyse the areal variations of phenomena which exist in integration. Therefore, there is no dualism, but a gradational range from those which analyse the most elementary integrations over large areas to those which analyse the most complex integration in small areas.²⁴ The regional method is basic to all such studies and thus helps to illuminate, the essential nature of the field of geography.

By the application of the regional concept to all types of geographic studies, many categories of regions have been formulated. In the more

22. Preston, James, E., (ed.) *New View Points in Geography*, Washington, 1959, p. 12.

23. Ackerman, Edward, E., *Regional Research—Emerging Concepts and Techniques*, *Economic Geography*, 29, July, 1953, pp. 189-197.

24. Hartshorne, R., *Perspective on the Nature of Geography*, p. 144.

elementary systematic studies there are single-feature regions. The classification of slopes by the slope angle and determining thermal provinces by using isotherms are examples of the systems of single feature regions. Though climate appears to be a single element, it is actually a synthesis of various features such as temperature, rainfall amounts, its distribution and variability and evaporation etc. Climatic regions belong to the category known as multi-feature regions because a whole range of features are considered. An economic region is an example of a very complex type of multi-feature region because a very wide range of features including the physical conditions, resources, peoples and their economic activities would be relevant in such a study. Geographic regions are the most complex of the multi-features regions, since all features determining the character of an area would be relevant. Since study of total geography (all the features of an area) is both impossible and undesirable, in the definition of a geographical region we need consider, only those features that are significant, in causing the notable similarities and differences of area. Whittlesey suggests the term "Compage" for such a complex study, which is less than the totality of the region.²⁵

E.—Summary

The region is not a concrete object like the botanist's plant or the zoologist's animal. Regions are special units of area, subjectively devised for the purpose of dividing the complex earth's surface into manageable units of study. A commonsense and practical definition of the region would be a meaningful homogeneous unit of area, defined in terms of a stated criteria. A region is constructed by the method of generalization. Therefore, a regional system may be conceived of as a parallel to the botanist's plant associations, the geologist's rock categories and the historian's periods. A region is the product of a certain degree of generalization. There can be different degrees of Generalization or levels of regions and thus a hierarchy of macro and micro regions. Any geographic work studies the inter-relations of phenomena. Therefore, systematic geography is not the study of an individual element, but rather, the study of partial integrations of phenomena. In regional works, the study of totality, i.e. of all features, is a practical impossibility. Regional geography is then the study of complex integrations of phenomena. In other words, regional geography studies a larger number and a greater variety of topics than systematic geography. The difference between the two is primarily one of a quantitative kind i.e. in the number of topics. The technique of constructing homogeneous areas is basic to both types of studies. This consideration helps to understand the essential unified nature of geography.

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25. Preston, James, E. and Jones, Clarence. *F. op. cit.* p. 36.