

FOUR TRADITIONS OF GEOGRAPHY



W.D. Pattison

- In 1964, W.D. Pattison, a professor at the University of Chicago, wanted to counter the idea that geography was an undisciplined science by saying that geographers had exhibited broad enough consistency such that there were four distinctive, but affiliated traditions.

Tradition One

□ An earth-science tradition - physical (natural) geography.

Intellectual legacy:

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.); Greek philosopher who looked at natural processes, Earth is spherical, matter falls together toward a common center.

Modern geographer:

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804); German

- 1) All knowledge can be classified logically or physically
- 2) Descriptions according to *time* comprise history, descriptions according to *place* compromise geography
- 3) History studies phenomena that follow one another chronologically, whereas geography studies phenomena that are located beside one another.

Tradition Two

2) A man-land tradition - relationships between human societies and natural environments.

Intellectual legacy:

Hippocrates; a Greek Physician of 5th century B.C. who wrote that places affect the health and character of man.

Modern geographer(s):

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) and Carl Ritter (1779-1859); German

- 1) Move beyond describing earth's surface to explaining why certain phenomena are present or absent.
- 2) Origin of “where” and “why” approach
- 3) Environmental determinism – how the physical environment causes social development

Tradition 3

3) A spatial tradition - spatial unifying theme, similar patterns between physical & human geography.

Intellectual legacy:

Claudius Ptolemy (A.D. 100?-170?); a Greek, who wrote 8-volume *Geographia* in the second century A.D. containing numerous maps (also father of geometry).

Modern geographer:

Alfred Wegener; climatologist

- 1) Studied spatial arrangement of landmasses, used geographical and geological evidence
- 2) Continental drift – landmasses were once part of supercontinent (plate tectonics)

Tradition 4

4) An area-studies tradition - regional geography

-

Intellectual legacy:

Strabo (63? B.C.-A.D. 24?); Roman investigator, who wrote a report called *Geography*, a massive production for the statesmen intended to sum up and regularize knowledge of location and place, their character, and their differentiation.

Modern geographer:

Carl Sauer (1889-1975); American

1) The work of human geography is to discern the relationships among social and physical phenomena

2) Everything in the landscape is interrelated.