



World Regional Geography

ROBERT E. NORRIS

WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

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The Chang Jiang (or Ch'ang-Chiang) is the longest river in China, and among world rivers it is exceeded in length only by the Amazon and the Nile. Chang Jiang means "long" river. An ancient, but possibly more familiar, name for the river is Yangtze or Yang-tzu. In the southwest plateau section, between the cities of Chengdu and Chongqing, the river is known as the Chin-sha or "golden sand". This golden tone can be seen in the cover photograph.

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WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

■ This book is dedicated to the memory of L. Lloyd Haring (1922–82). Lloyd was my first college geography teacher and later became a close friend and co-author. Lloyd was always a source of encouragement for me and has been an inspiration even after his untimely death. Without Lloyd's help and guidance in the early part of my career, life would have been much tougher than it was.

PREFACE

This text was designed for a one-semester (or one-quarter) college course in world regional geography. Such a course is generally offered at the freshman or sophomore level, so little expertise in geography is expected. The information is presented with that in mind. The reading level of the book is for freshmen in college, for students with no geography training, and for students who may take only one course in geography.

From the human perspective, the world is a very large place. A course of study that covers the world could be a lifelong experience, and a book that attempts to cover all the elements of the world would take up many volumes. Authors of a world geography book therefore are confronted with the problem of reducing the vast array of information about the world to a form that is manageable and organizing the material so that it can be easily comprehended. The process is similar to threshing grain. The extraneous information (the straw) must be gleaned from the kernels (the seeds), then the seeds must be put into useful order (the grain bin). The study of geography, then, is a search for order.

Geographers use regions to help organize the pertinent information. This book is organized on the basis of 14 large world regions. Regions other than these could have been selected, but these 14 are useful and homogeneous enough to promote understanding of the information about them. The overall organization of the book follows economic lines. The regional discussion begins with what are called the “developed” areas of the world—the countries where advanced economic development is a common feature. The discussion then turns to the less developed areas and ends with the least developed.

Since about 1850 the study of geography has been divided into *physical* topics and *human* topics,

but in regional courses both these elements are considered. The physical setting, such as the home for humans, is an important factor in the study of any region. Each chapter on regions, then, begins with a discussion of the landforms, climates, and vegetation found in that region. The discussion on the human conditions of the region follows the physical aspects. The human geography section of each chapter is presented according to the major themes in human geography: population (including distribution and density, as well as racial and ethnic makeup), culture (including language and religion), economics (agriculture, mineral production and industry, trade and transportation), and politics. Other topics in human geography could have been selected, but these seem to be the most important for understanding the basic human aspects of any region.

The straightforward physical and human coverage in this book is designed to correspond to the “back to basics” movement in geography. A world geography textbook should contain as much information as possible about the physical and human parts of the world, so a balance between these important elements of geography was sought. History is important, but a world geography textbook should be a geography book first. Thus, history is not stressed in this book. The information contained here is as current as possible, but the book was not designed as a “current events” textbook. Current events, like history, also are important, but they should be stressed by the instructor as they occur. In fact, teachers are encouraged to emphasize their own interests, because the book was designed to be a reference, or guide, to information about the physical and human conditions of world regions. It is a supplement to lectures, not a replacement for them.

This book is largely descriptive. It was designed to provide information (facts) about the world. Many students who use this book will take only one college course in geography. Therefore, one chapter, Chapter 4, is devoted to some theories, concepts, and tools geographers have found useful, so the analytical part of geography appears in a single chapter instead of scattered throughout the text. The theories apply to many regions, not just one, and the tools can be used to advantage in understanding each region. In order to get the most benefit from Chapter 4, the teacher should refer to it, and the students should reread it, occasionally throughout the course.

This text is accompanied by a comprehensive instructor's manual with test bank prepared by Lou Seig of Oklahoma State University, which has been developed to correspond closely with each chapter in the textbook. An extensive test bank portion of the manual provides a substantive review of all major themes and concepts discussed within each chapter. The test bank is also available on *Westest*, a computerized testing system.

The final product is the result of many difficult choices concerning what to cover and what to leave out. The reviewers and editors helped with some of these decisions, while other decisions reflect the opinions of the author. Any errors are the responsibility of the author. Comments from readers on either the coverage or about errors are welcome.

The reviewers deserve special thanks for taking time to read the many typed pages of early manuscript carefully. Without their help, this book would be much less than what it is. These people are:

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Much indebtedness is owed to Gayle Maxwell (Coordinator, Cartography Services, Oklahoma State University) and Chris Head (Assistant to the Cartographer). Gayle took rough sketches of maps, designed the layouts for the finished maps, and oversaw the construction of each map. The effort involved in this work was great. Thanks, then, to all the cartographers who worked on the project, most of whom are geography students at Oklahoma State University.

Many other people should be recognized and receive my sincere thanks for their help while the writing was in progress. My family always gave me encouragement and provided the time to write by doing jobs that I should have done. Thanks to my wife Edith, daughter Jennifer, and long-distance cheerleader, daughter Liz McKinley.

The many students that have taken my courses over the years should be mentioned also. They have shown where some ideas work and others do not. They have pointed out the things they like and dislike about textbooks. This book was written with them in mind.

Robert E. Norris

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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