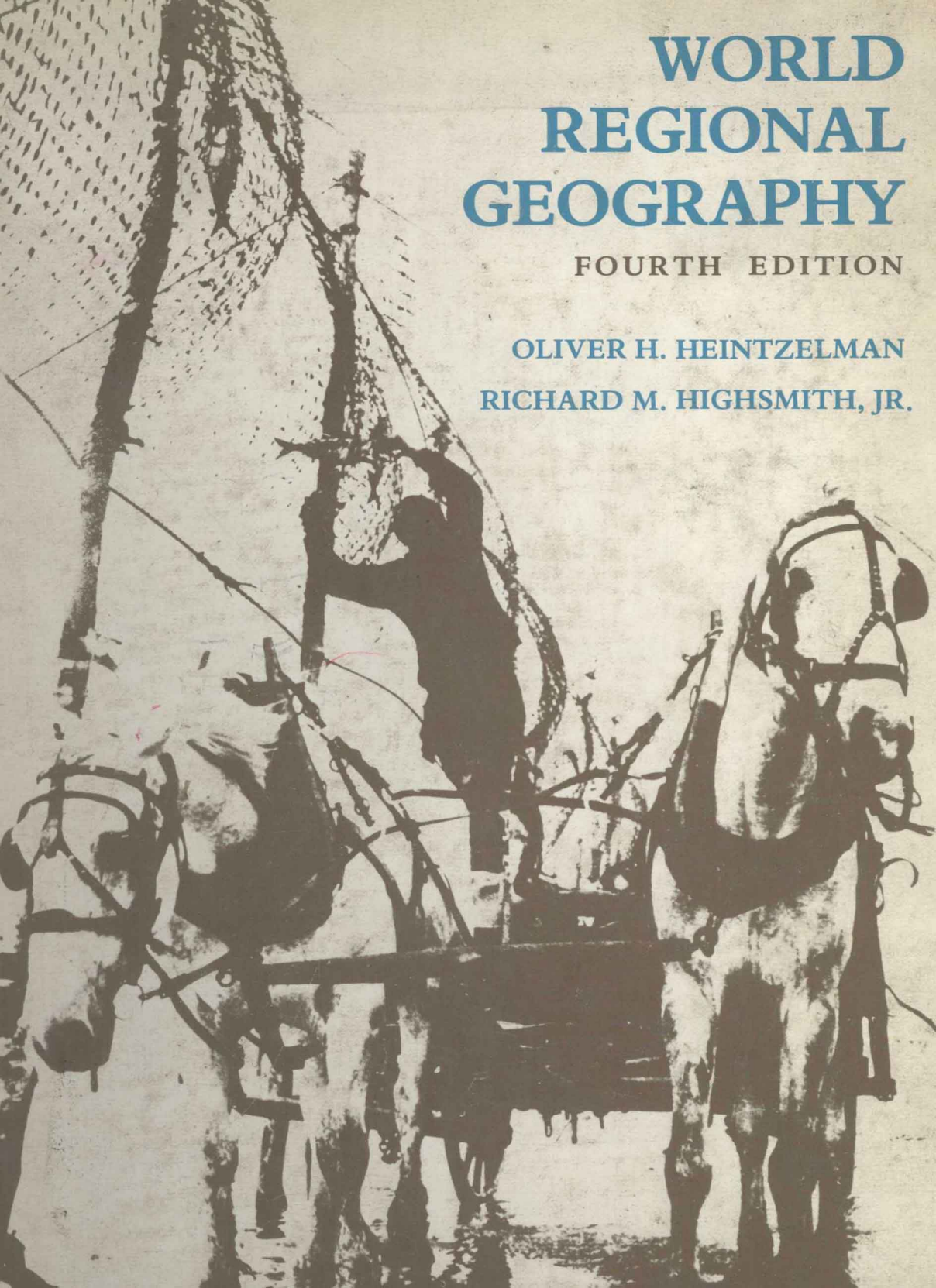


WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

FOURTH EDITION

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RICHARD M. HIGHSMITH, JR.



fourth edition

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WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

*To **J. Granville Jensen**, friend and colleague,
this book is sincerely dedicated*

PREFACE

During the two decades that have elapsed since the first edition of this book was formulated, geography has advanced significantly as a major field of study leading to professional careers, and as a supporting field of study for liberal education. The increased number of geographers, working at college and university posts, and in business, industry, and government positions, has permitted considerable scholarly attention to be turned to the explication of the conceptual structure and overriding problems of the discipline, to clarification and codification of its dominant approaches and themes, and to improvement of its methodology. Concomitantly, changes have occurred in the preparation of entering college students. As a result of exposure to mass communication media, travel experience, and improving geography instruction in public schools, students have greater awareness of the world. They are also more familiar with the formulation and analysis of problems and with the methods of science.

As a result of these developments, college geography, even in survey courses, can be taught at a higher level of sophistication than was possible when the first edition of

this book appeared. Thus, to the original purpose of presenting a regional survey of the earth as the home of man, the third edition added another major purpose: that of central questions, conceptual approaches, and methods. These are analyzed in chapters 1, 2, and 3 which focus upon the elements of the man-earth system (the natural environment and human culture) in terms of geographic interests—the intersects of place, space, and time. Chapter 4 discusses regionalization and sets the stage for the fourteen regional chapters, which were brought formally into the new conceptual orientation in the fourth edition. The regional chapters, employing this conceptual background, systematically analyze the earth as the human habitat: its physical character, human modification, organization, and use. The revisions for the fourth edition have primarily been directed toward clearer expression of concepts, updating of subject matter, and improvement of pictures.

The authors are indebted to many individuals: users who offered suggestions; unknown (to us) critics who reviewed our manuscript; our colleagues at Oregon State

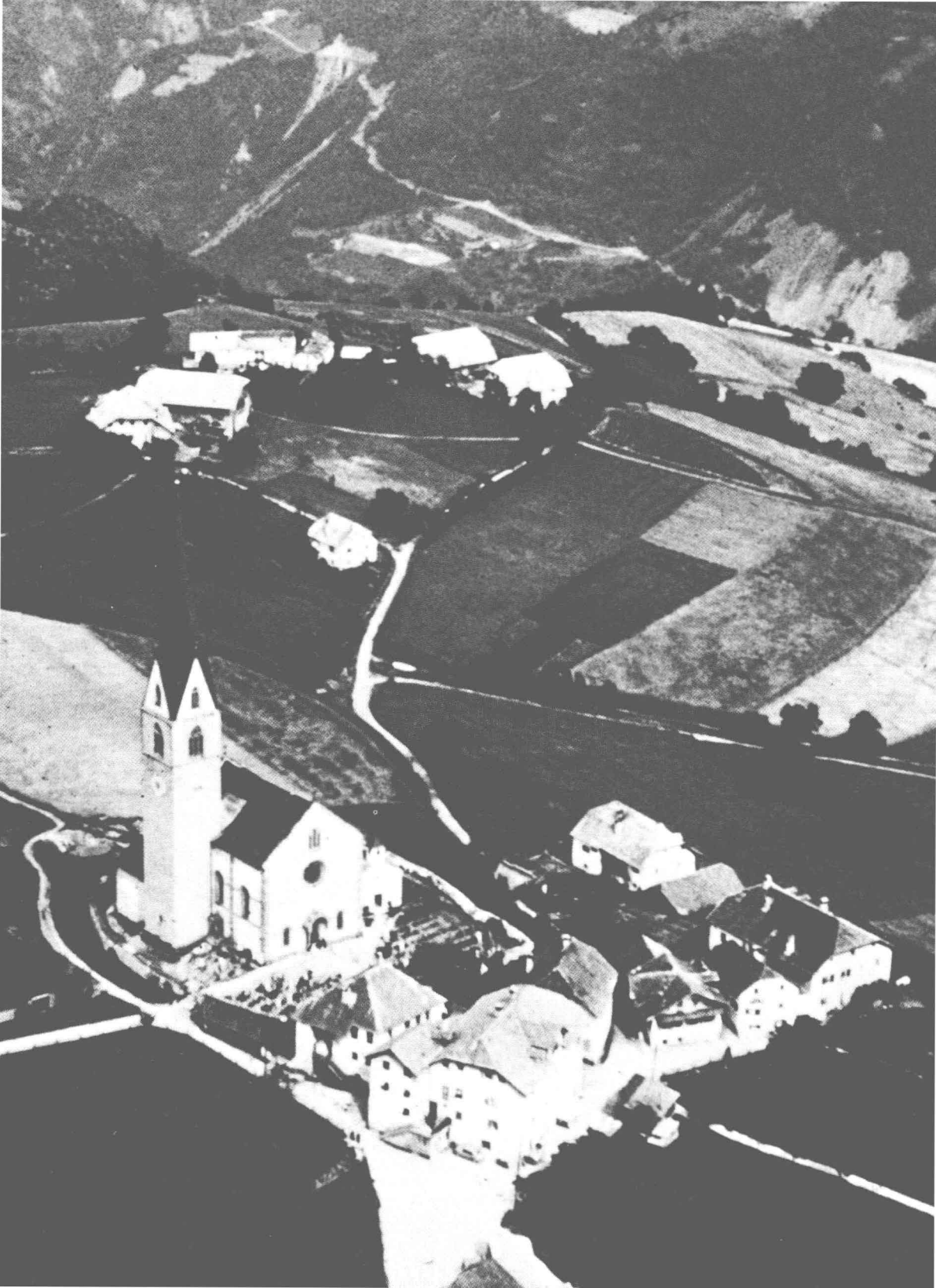
University who offered numerous useful suggestions; and many who have contributed to the literature of geography. Finally, how-

ever, we take full responsibility for interpretations herein presented.

Oliver H. Heintzelman

Richard M. Highsmith, Jr.

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PART ONE

THE STUDY OF THE MAN-EARTH SYSTEM

A major service geography offers to general education is the development of a perspective that leads to understanding the earth as the home of man. Many other disciplines deal in global terms with either aspects of man and culture or aspects of the physical-biotic world. Geography alone, however, views both man and the earth, and makes its unique contribution by synthesizing otherwise unrelated knowledge for the distinctive purpose of providing and understanding of the man-earth system.

Geography is, therefore, concerned with two great sets of variables, those stemming from man and his culture and those stemming from the earth and nature. Before we turn attention to an examination of the earth as the home of man within the framework of regions, it will be of value to establish more clearly the point of view and methods of geography and to obtain an insight into the major elements of the man-earth system. These features will occupy our attention through the first four chapters.

GEOGRAPHY, ITS SCOPE AND METHOD

Man is a creature of insatiable curiosity. His inquisitiveness has led him to ask questions and seek answers about himself, his neighbors, the earth on which he lives, the composition of the matter surrounding him, other terrestrial life forms, and the sun and other elements of the cosmos. Throughout time he has systematized his learning into branches with core interests and methods of study. These are commonly called academic disciplines and are grouped into broad order categories of the arts, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences, and earth sciences. With the advance of education and technology, learning at the academic level has been particularized into an increasing number of subdisciplines, cross-disciplines, and professional fields. Such a development is not surprising in view of the advancement of knowledge, the need for even more knowledge, and the growing requirements for scientific and technical services. Today most of our larger universities offer graduate work in more than one hundred different fields.

Because of the interrelationships existing among the components of physical reality and human experience, an absolutely defini-

tive classification of learning into disciplines is impossible. Nevertheless, it is upon the basis of elements of disunity in the universal that the highly specialized academic fields have been developed. Geography, along with history and anthropology, stands in contrast to this narrowing of focus. All three are broad-based and contain some features of commonality with a number of other disciplines.

In its major mission of providing an understanding of the earth as the home of man, geography draws substance from the realities of unity in the associations of man and his earth habitat. Thus the nature of the total scope of geographical inquiry is such that as an academic discipline it does not fit clearly into one of the standard groups. Although many American geographers consider themselves primarily social scientists because their interests are anthropocentric, most recognize and respect the ties with the earth sciences and biology. In fact, some wish to class themselves in these categories. Moreover, a substantial number stress their common grounds with the humanities. In a sense, geography forms a "bridge" between the disciplines concerned with man and those con-

cerned with the earth. More important than classification as such, however, is the basic fact that geography does stand the test of discipline identification: It focuses upon an overriding problem, it has an organizing concept, and it has methods of study.

It has been stated in a kind of verbal shorthand that the overriding problem, or transcendent issue, of geography "is that of a full understanding of the vast system on the earth's surface comprising man and the natural environment" and that the organizing concept is the "spatial distribution and spatial relations" of the man-earth system and subsystems.¹ In this context, the term "system" is taken to mean "a functional entity composed of interacting, interdependent parts,"² and the term "spatial" denotes surficial area including the atmospheric envelope. Thus geography "derives its substance from man's sense of place (or particular area of the earth's surface) and from curiosity about the surface (including man and his works) and the atmospheric envelope of this planet."³

In commenting on the core problem of geography and its values, the authors cited in footnote 1 say: "The three great parameters for any scientific problem, albeit in varying dimensions and attributes, are time, space, and composition of matter. For the problem it treats, that of the man-environment system, geography is concerned primarily with space in time. It seeks to explain

how the subsystems of the physical environment are organized on the earth's surface and how man distributes himself over the earth in his space relation to physical features and to other men. Space and space relations indeed impose one of the great mediators of the characteristics of any part of the system at any point on the earth's surface, and as the only one traditionally concerned with system interrelations within the space of the earth's surface, geography has a significant place in satisfying man's scientific curiosity."

The same statement also points out the following: "Geographers believe that correlations of spatial distributions, considered both statically and dynamically, may be the most ready keys to understanding existing or developing life systems, social systems, or environmental changes." They further believe that geography has significantly contributed in the past to the foundations of knowledge necessary for an understanding of the subsystems of the man-environment system. "Progress was gradual, however, because geographers were few, rigorous methods for analyzing multivariate problems and systems concepts were developed only recently, and few branches of science were committed to study of the man-environment system."⁴

In recent years geography has profited from the growing interest of other sciences in systems theory and study techniques as well as from concerted efforts along these lines by the increasing number of practicing geographers. The results in improved methodology and improved communication have been generally rewarding, and the future of geography appears brighter than ever. The growth in world population and the attendant demands for more food, raw material, and living space, as well as for improvements in all kinds of linkages between peoples, will continue to require a greater

¹ See "The Science of Geography," *Publication 1277* (Washington, D.C.: 1965), National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, especially pp. 1-11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ See also Jan O. M. Broek, *Geography, Its Scope and Spirit* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1965), pp. 5-6. This reference considers geography among the social sciences. This treatise and the reference cited in footnote 1 together present a good insight into the nature and interests of modern geography.

⁴ "The Science of Geography," p. 9.