

On the History and Geography of Historical Geography

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I Introduction

"All geography is historical geography": thus proclaimed L.I. Rodwell Jones exactly seventy years ago in his inaugural address as Professor of Geography at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Jones not only argued the necessity for an historical perspective in all geographical enquiry (given that people - environment relationships are changing, not constant) but also asserted that in historical geography "lies the greatest field for research and the most cultural part of the subject [of geography]" (Jones 1925: 250 and 255). Twenty years later, in surveying the horizon of geography, Derwent Whittlesey argued that although geography is fundamentally concerned with human occupation of the earth, with place and space,".....no statement

of geography is complete unless it takes cognisance of the factor of time. In this sense, all geography is historical geography" (Whittlesey 1945: 33). Soon afterwards, H. Clifford Darby asked whether a line could be drawn between geography and history, and replied: "The answer is 'no', for the process of becoming is one process. All geography is historical geography, either actual or potential" (Darby 1953: 6) - because "the present is but the past of some future" (Darby 1962: 127).

Geography always has been, and must continue to be, an historically grounded enterprise. Both contemporary and historical geographers are engaged in a common discourse on the problem of geographical change. The logical necessity for links between contemporary and historical geography is a fundamental thread which runs continuously throughout the history of geography. To argue for an underlying continuity in the relations between contemporary human geography and historical geography is not also to argue that the concerns of both have been static through time and are uniform over space. On the contrary, the focus of each has changed from time to time and varied from place to place. I want in this paper to consider some of the differences observable in the practice of historical geography both historically and geographically, and at the same time to emphasise the basic similarities identifiable within that diversity. While the practice of historical

geography does - like that of geography itself - need to be situated, to be understood within its particular context, it is also possible to recognise its essential characteristics. The history and geography of historical geography has been characterised by both general and specific patterns and processes, and not only by what David Livingstone has called "situated messiness" (Livingstone 1992: 28-30).

II The history of historical geography

"Historical geography" was a term once used as a synonym for the history of geographical thought, but it is not now normally employed in that sense. In the eighteenth, nineteenth and early - twentieth centuries it was commonly used to embrace geographies of the Holy Land and of classical civilizations; the history of exploration and discovery, and of mapping the earth; and the history of changes in political and administrative boundaries, and of colonialism and imperialism (Butlin 1993: 1-23). The practice of historical geography was thus fragmented, it was neither a coherent intellectual discipline nor even a distinct sub-discipline within geography. But the birth and infancy of modern Western historical geography as the geographical study of the past can be traced to the 1920s and 1930s, and by the mid-1960s it had matured into a distinctive discipline concerned not only with reconstructing past geographies but also studying geographical changes.

A significant definition of the discipline was provided by H. C. Darby in 1962 in a major statement which integrated old and new views by identifying four main approaches to historical geography: (1) geographies of the past - "horizontal" cross - sec-

tions of the geography of an area at some past time; (2) changing landscapes - "vertical" themes of landscape transformation, such as the clearing of woodlands and the draining of marshes; (3) the past in the present - historical explanations of the present - day geography of a place; and (4) geographical history - investigation of the influence of geographical conditions (environmental and locational) upon the course of history. Historical geography within this mould came to be characterised as an approach in which the data were historical but in which the problems and methods were geographical: it emphasised mapping historical sources in order to demonstrate regional differences in past times and changing landscapes during past periods. The method was demonstrated *par excellence* in Darby's work on the Domesday geographies and on the draining of the Fens (Darby 1940 and 1952-1977).

From the early - 1970s the "Darbian tradition" of an historical geography grounded in source-based empiricism and methodological pragmatism came increasingly and importantly to be interrogated in the light of developments in contemporary human geography and in the social sciences in general. An initial willingness by some historical geographers to participate in attempts to "explain" the world through general theories of spatial organization was soon replaced by a wider rejection, or at best limited acceptance, of positivist spatial science when applied to historical studies, and then by a deliberate endeavour to explore other approaches to historico-geographical enquiry, involving encounters with historical materialism and humanistic idealism. Significantly, historical geographers have been in the forefront of the attack on positivist spatial science while at

the same time deploying social theory in geography and arguing the case for the geographical imagination in social science. With a renewed recognition both of the need for an historical perspective within contemporary human geography and for a geographical perspective within history (and the social sciences), historical geography is making a vital contribution both to its parent and to cognate disciplines (Baker 1985; Butlin 1993, 44-72; Earle 1992; Gregory 1991 and 1994; Harris 1991; Pacione 1987; Philo 1994; Pred 1990).

Historical geography as essentially the study of past (largely human) geographies shares the diversity of geography as the study of the present. It embraces not only geography's traditional, "central" concerns with regions, places and areas but also the modern, "peripheral" concerns of the ecological, locational and landscape schools of geography. All of these varieties of historical geography (themselves reflecting varieties of geography) share one feature in common with each other (but not with contemporary geography): their geographical interest is focused upon some time or period in the past rather than in the present, for therein lies the essence of historical geography, even though its practice has varied historically and continues to differ geographically.

III The geography of historical geography

(1) *Historical geography in Britain and North America*

Historical geography has flourished in Britain and North America during the last thirty or so years, and its healthy condition has been reflected in the growth of organiza-

tions and of serial publications. The Historical Geography Research Group (originally established as the Agrarian Landscape Research Group) of the Institute of British Geographers has been in existence in effect since the late-1960s and today has approaching 200 members. The Historical Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers is of more recent origin but it now has almost 600 members. In addition to organising conferences, these Groups promote publications: the *Historical Geography Research Series* of the HGRG and the *Working Papers in Historical Geography* of the HGSG. In 1971 *The Historical Geography Newsletter* (subsequently changed simply to *Historical Geography*) was launched in North America and in 1975 the *Journal of Historical Geography* was founded jointly in Britain and North America. The latter is now well-established as a major geographical journal in the English-speaking world and has an even wider international distribution. In addition, in 1970 there began to appear a series of monographs in historical geography, published originally by David & Charles Ltd, then by William Dawson Ltd, and since 1982 by Cambridge University Press as *Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography*. These *Studies* - of which twenty-two have so far been published - explicitly encourage exploration of the philosophies, methodologies and techniques of historical geography and publish the results of new research within all branches of the subject; they endeavour to secure the marriage of traditional scholarship with innovative approaches to problems and sources, aiming thereby to provide a focus for the discipline and to contribute towards its development.¹ Another series of books on the historical geography of North

America, edited by Andrew H. Clark, was published by Oxford University Press during the 1970s, with each of the seven volumes grounded to some degree within Clark's conception of regional geographical change.²

Within British and North American historical geography during the last twenty or so years, there has emerged an unrelenting criticism of all orthodoxies and conventional wisdoms, as well as an unremitting awareness of discourses in cognate disciplines. This reflexive critique of historical geography has resulted in a plethora of reviews of progress in the discipline and much of the strength of historical geography in Britain and North America today derives from this lack of complacency about its development (Dennis 1991; Green 1991; Earle 1992; Butlin 1993; Conzen 1993; Wynn 1993; Baker 1994). That strength is to be seen in the production of works of synthesis as well as works of analysis, and not only of empirically-grounded but also of theoretically-informed studies.

Text-books and atlases

There are today many more, and more productive, labourers in the field of historical geography and its harvest is much more bountiful than earlier pioneers could ever have dreamed. More syntheses, more text-books, are being written and more historical atlases are being produced than previously but it is also the case that the increased pace of research now requires such works to be revised more frequently in order to take due account of new ideas and new research findings. When H. C. Darby's edited collection of essays, *An Historical Geography of England before A. D. 1800*, was published in 1936 it stood as a classic text for more than a generation, in fact until 1973 with the appearance

of *A New Historical Geography of England*, again under Darby's editorial control and organised as a series of "horizontal" cross-sections of the geography of England at key dates in the past (1086, 1334, 1600, 1800, 1850 and 1900) linked "vertically" by chapters monitoring changes during the intervening periods. The volume, pace and character of research required a much more rapid updating of R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin's *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*, first published in 1978 and then again only twelve years later in a very substantially revised second edition which fully reflected the broadening range of topics, methodologies, sources and ideologies employed by today's historical geographers freed from the shackles of earlier orthodoxies. Perhaps the most remarkable synthesis to have been published in historical geography during the last ten years or so is the explicitly Marxist account by M. Dunford and D. Perrons (1983) of the changing structure of the British space economy from the time of the Domesday Book until the end of the Second World War. A more orthodox but also in some ways more systematically comprehensive text has recently been provided by R. Lawton and C. G. Pooley (1992) in their historical geography of Britain from 1740 to 1950. More ambitiously, R. A. Dodgshon (1987) employed theoretical concepts from related disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, in his wide-ranging study of social evolution and spatial order in Europe during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. By contrast, N. J. G. Pounds (1973; 1979; 1985; 1990) has produced a solidly empirical series of studies of the historical geography of Europe between 450 B. C. and 1914 A. D.

For North America, the production of

text-books in historical geography has only recently been making the kind of progress witnessed in Britain for two decades. R. H. Brown's classic study of the historical geography of the United States, published in 1948, was only supplemented, not replaced, in 1979 by the publication of a set of readings, edited by D. Ward, a useful venture but also a sign that even then the time was not yet ripe for a comprehensive study. For Canada, a similar set of readings was published in 1990, although there had already been published in 1974 a set of essays on its geography in the period before Confederation in 1867 (Harris and Warkentin 1974). There have also appeared some works dealing with the continent as a whole. A massively ambitious, multi-volume, scholarly study of the historical geography of North America since 1492 has been initiated by D. Meinig: the first volume, covering the period through until 1800, appeared in 1986 and the second volume, taking the story through to 1867, was published in 1993. Braudelian in its audacity, Meinig's study of what he calls 'the shaping of America' is a very distinctive and provocative, conceptually-enriched but empirically-grounded study, the product of a controlled but lively historico-geographical imagination. Recently, two multi-authored collections of essays have added significantly to the literature on the historical geography of North America and especially of the marking of the making of the American landscape (Mitchell and Groves 1987; Conzen 1990).

Given the close connection in historical geography between the cross-sectional method and the mapping of historical sources, it not surprising that some of its output has been in the form of historical atlases. A classic was the *Atlas of the Histori-*

cal Geography of the United States (Paullin 1932), intended to illustrate the "essential facts of geography and history that condition and explain the development of the United States". Two other more recent, major works in this genre have been *The New Cambridge Modern History Atlas*, edited by H. C. Darby and H. Fullard and published in 1970, and the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, in three volumes, covering respectively the period up to 1800, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century (Harris and Matthews 1987; Gentilcore 1994; Kerr and Holdsworth 1990). In addition to these regional atlases, some thematic historical atlases have also been produced, including such different works as an atlas of industrialising Britain between 1780 and 1914 (Langton and Morris 1986) and an atlas of the Tithe files of mid-nineteenth century England and Wales (Kain 1986).

Not surprisingly, most British and North American historical geographers work on the historical geographies of their own countries and some of the especially significant books resulting from those endeavours have already been noted. But a minority of researchers have worked on other areas and some equally notable studies have been produced on, for example, the historical geography of France, Scandinavia, Russia, the Middle East and West Indies (Clout 1977; Bater and French 1983; Wagstaff 1985; Watts 1987).

Thematic studies

Historical studies of peoples' relationships with their physical environments, of the impacts of 'cultures' upon 'natural' ecologies, constitute another important component of the practice of historical geography in Britain and North America. Such studies themselves take a variety of forms: some are

concerned with tracing historically the interactions between peoples and their physical environments which provide the material resources for sustaining both life and characteristic lifestyles in particular places, in effect the creation and evolution of distinctive *pays* and regions³; others are concerned with reconstructing historical geographies, with questions about peoples' perceptions (and misperceptions) of their physical environments, with peoples' reactions to their physical environments⁴; while other studies endeavour to monitor the impacts of peoples upon their physical environments, with questions of environmental management (and mismanagement) in particular places at specific times and during specific periods in the historic (and pre-historic) past.⁵ Within historical geography there is also a long-established and distinguished school of location and diffusion studies, concerned especially with the spread of phenomena over space and through time. For long associated with the work of C. Sauer and the Berkeley school of cultural geography in North America, diffusion studies have themselves changed under the impact of the work of T. Hägerstrand, the Swedish geographer, so that they now themselves assume a variety of forms, ranging from informal, qualitative studies of the spread of the domestication of plants and animals to formal, quantitative studies of the spread of agricultural innovations and of diseases.⁶ Similarly, the landscape school with historical geography is represented by contrasting approaches: some studies remain within focussed upon reconstructing the transformation of landscapes by human (principally economic) activity,⁷ to produce histories of changing landscapes, while another set of studies focus upon the

symbolic design and representation of landscapes, upon decoding their meanings and iconographies.⁸

Empirically-grounded, theoretically-informed historical geography

The mapping and interpretation of historical sources is one of historical geography's basic characteristics and significant, empirical studies firmly grounded in such sources as unpublished taxation assessments and manuscript census returns continue to be produced.⁹ During the last twenty or so years, however, studies in historical geography have increasingly become theoretically-informed. Even problems which have for decades attracted the attention of historical geographers, such as the origins and evolution of field systems and rural settlement patterns and the processes and forms of industrialization and urban settlements, have come to be examined increasingly not only in the light of new evidence but also in the light of new theories.¹⁰ More striking, however, is the marriage between empirical and theoretical approaches in the studies by D. Harvey on the historical geography of capitalism (Harvey 1982, 1985 and 1989). Although the degree to which Harvey has managed successfully to marry the two approaches has been debated,¹¹ there can be no questioning the fact that the role of theory, and especially of social theory, has come increasingly to be appreciated by more and more British and North American historical geographers and to be incorporated explicitly into their research and writing.

In a series of important papers published in the late-1970s and early-1980s, D. Gregory critically examined the concepts structuralism and of "action" and "struc-

ture" in historical geography (Gregory 1978, 1981a and 1981b) and in doing so set off a train of enquiry which has led historical geographers to consider and critically to apply to their work the ideas of, for example, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann (Harris 1991). In particular, historical geographers have come to employ Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration in an attempt to reconcile Marxist structuralism with a humanistic concern for individual human agency. Examples of a structurationist approach in historical geography include studies by Gregory (1984) of regional transformation and class struggle in the early industrial revolution in England, by Baker (1984b, 1986a and 1986b) of agricultural syndicates and other fraternal associations in rural France during the nineteenth century, and by Pred (1984a and 1984b) in his studies of mercantile urban development in the eastern United States and of rural settlement in Sweden which aim to integrate the experiences and everyday activity patterns of individual actors such as merchants and farmers with their structural contexts.¹² Pred's work also exemplifies the extent to which researchers are now incorporating concepts from Hägerstrand's time-geography into their historical geographies (Pred 1977 and 1981; Carlstein, Parkes and Thrift 1978). Others are now drawing heavily upon Foucault's ideas on the geography of power, discipline and punishment (Driver 1992; Philo 1992): such is the case with Driver's studies of the nineteenth-century British workhouse system and with C. Philo's work on the historical geography of mental illness and the location and organisation of asylums (Driver 1985 and 1990; Philo 1987). Still others endeavouring to refine geographical perspectives upon

history and social change, in a reassertion of the spatiality of history and a revival of historical geography as geographical history (Soja 1989; Earle 1992 and forthcoming; Philo 1994).

As work by British and North American historical geographers has become more theoretically-informed (while remaining empirically-grounded), so it has come increasingly to contribute to inter-disciplinary debates such as those concerned with the concepts of locality, of proto-industrialization, of regional transformation, and of colonisation.¹³ In addition, one should note the book-length considerations of the nature of historical geography: J. B. Mitchell's (1954) pioneer work, *Historical Geography*, included an introductory chapter on the scope of historical geography and a concluding chapter on the place of historical geography in the general field of geographical synthesis; William Norton's (1984) *Historical Analysis in Geography* provided a review of developments in historical geography, focusing upon historical geography as a study of the evolution of spatial forms; Robin Butlin's (1993) *Historical Geography* both presents a history of the field as practised in the Western world since the early-eighteenth century and reviews work on selected themes, such as historical geography of physical environments, of landscapes, of rural transformations, and of urbanisation and industrialization; and, most recently, Serge Courville's (1995) *Introduction à la Géographie Historique* reviews the definitions and debates, and the sources and practices, of historical geography.

The very positive experience of historical geography in Britain and North America has, generally speaking, been shared through-

out the English - speaking world: very similar debates and discussions, problems and productions, are to be seen for example in work by historical geographers in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and also in the work by historical geographers in Israel, even though in each of those areas the specific emphasis of their work reflects the particular character of the areas themselves, of their unique histories and geographies (Crush 1986; Powell 1988; Kark 1989). But that experience has not been universal, as the French case will show.

(2) *Historical geography in France*

The French school of geography, more than any other, has been imbued with history but, paradoxically, one consequence of the particularly close links in France between history and geography has been that historical geography has never been viewed there as a separate branch of geography (Planhol 1972). Planhol has argued that in France all geography has, for a long time, been more or less historical and that historical geography as such has not existed separately there. In the classical regional monographs, historical interpretation was closely bonded with geographical analysis. Planhol's assessment of historical geography in France was severe: "It must, regretfully, be said that French historical geography today seems to be in large measure a residual discipline. It has not established a set of principles. Its progress depends on isolated individuals following their own initiatives. Historical geography has, it is true, produced some notable studies. It still produces them. But one would have expected more in view of the particularly propitious environment in which historical geography in France developed" (Planhol

1972: 31).

Planhol was writing more than twenty years ago: since then there has been - at least as observed from across the Channel - some thing of a renaissance, of a re-appraisal which has not only prevented historical geography in France from becoming completely a residual discipline but has given it new life and form. That transformation owes much to both the warning and the inspiration provided by Planhol. Explicitly aware of both, Boyer (1978) examined the condition of historical geography in France and diagnosed that it needed to be more directly connected both to the practice and progress of historical geography in Britain and North America. The last twenty or so years have seen a growing self-consciousness and confidence among French historical geographers and one foreign observer has stated that there is "abundant evidence of the vitality of our French colleagues and the diversity and rigour of their approaches to understanding the evolution of the cultural landscape" (Clout 1983).

Nonetheless, Planhol's doubts about the standing of historical geography in France which he expressed more than twenty years ago have become incorporated into "standard" discussions and definitions of the discipline.¹⁴ Historical geography in France was considered by Planhol to be "paradoxically both everywhere and nowhere" but he identified a special role for Roger Dion: "As indicated in the slant he has given to his writings and in the title ('Historical Geography of France') which he has given to his chair at the Collège de France, Roger Dion is the only French geographer who has systematically embraced historical geography and placed an historical perspective at the centre of all his work" (Planhol 1972: 40). Planhol

regretted that Dion, because of the marginal position of the Collège de France in relation to the University of Paris, had not influenced young French geographers to the extent that his rich work deserved. Now, some twenty years later and more than ten years after his death, Dion's substantial legacy is coming increasingly to be appreciated by a new generation of historical geographers: historical geography is no longer in France the "secret" activity which it was in Dion's time (Pitte 1990: 19). A recent appraisal of historical geography in France concluded that it is on the move, that it has become a distinctive discipline (Peltre 1992); a recent French definition of "historical geography" is that it aims to provide "un traitement géographique de situations du passé", asserting that it should do so employing the analytical methods of modern geography (Brunet 1992). The French Comité National de Géographie established a Commission de Géographie Historique in 1976 which has effectively served to network researchers who until then tended to operate in isolation from each other. It has organised a series of international conferences on historical geography, many of them addressing questions relating to the production and consumption of food and drink.

While an interest in territorial boundaries and frontiers is evident in Roger Dion's writings, notably in his classic *Les frontières de la France* (1947), his perspective on historical geography was much broader, embracing geographies of the past and changing landscapes. Dion inaugurated his chair of historical geography at the Collège de France in December 1948; his lecture, published in the following year under the title "La géographie humaine rétrospective", argued that a

present-day cultural landscape must be interpreted as a reflection of its history and that "la géographie humaine de la France est nécessairement une géographie historique" (Dion 1949; reprinted in Dion 1990: 23-46). Similarly, almost ten years later, Dion argued in a general essay that historical geography was in essence retrospective human geography and that it was geography rather than history because its concern was primarily to explain the geography of the present: "Mais, et c'est en quoi la géographie historique ainsi est vraiment géographie, elle ne s'intéresse à l'activité des hommes d'autrefois que dans la mesure où les effets en sont sinon matériellement perceptibles dans la géographie humaine actuelle de notre pays, du moins indispensables à l'intelligence de celle-ci.... son objet est d'expliquer les choses en retraçant leur genèse" (Dion 1957). These two methodological statements by Dion gave historical geography in France a logical but limited realm - that of providing an historical understanding of the present - and in practice even Dion wandered further afield: his own research and teaching developed an unambiguous interest in geographical problems in the past for their own sake rather than for their illumination of the present (Baker 1984: 14). The distinction between historical geography *sensu stricto*, focusing upon a past geography, and retrospective human geography, incorporating an historical perspective upon the geography of the present, is still not appreciated by some French practitioners (Flatrès 1994), and the relative weakness of historical geography in France must be related in part to that confusion, which is only gradually being clarified (Pitte 1994).

Historical geography in France has, nonetheless, been practised in diverse ways,

for example, as a study of the operation of the geographical factor in history, as the study of changing boundaries and frontiers, and as the study of changing landscapes and regions. But only recently have book-length studies of the historical geography of France been published. It was perhaps a sign of the relative strengths of historical geography in France and in Britain in the 1970s that a collection of essays treating some significant themes in the historical geography of France from the prehistoric to the modern period was edited in England and contributed to mainly by British authors (Clout 1977). Historical geography as landscape history was the premise underpinning Jean-Robert Pitte's (1983) two-volume study of the history of the French landscape from prehistory to the present while Xavier de Planhol's (1988) historical geography of France adopts a variety of perspectives: historical geography as the operation of the geographical factor in history, as the reconstruction of past geographies, as the study of geographical change, and as the study of changing landscapes. This magnificent synthesis embraces not only geography's traditional, "central" concern with regions, places and areas but also the modern "peripheral" concerns of the ecological, locational and landscape schools of geography. While dedicating his book to Roger Dion, while recognising his intellectual inheritance especially from Paul Vidal de la Blache and Auguste Lognon, while thanking his colleague Paul Claval for contributing a chapter on the contemporary period, Xavier de Planhol has produced his own remarkable, distinctive synthesis of the geography of France from the Neolithic to now. Planhol's achievement thoroughly refutes the pessimistic views about historical geography in France which

he himself expressed just over twenty years ago.

De Planhol was instrumental in organising in 1957 at the University of Nancy the first of what was to become a series of international and interdisciplinary symposia on the history of the European rural landscape. The published papers of those symposia provide a window on the practice of historical geography not only in France but in many European countries.

(3) Historical geography elsewhere in Europe

The 1957 symposium on *Géographie et histoire agraires* laid the foundation for what was to become the informally constituted Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape. In sum, there have been sixteen such Conferences, bringing together scholars from many disciplines, mainly historical geographers but also archaeologists, historians and planners, and from many countries, mainly France, West Germany and the United Kingdom but also from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, East Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia.¹⁵ Meetings of this Permanent Conference have created and reinforced contact-networks among European historical geographers. In particular, these meetings contributed significantly to an important tradition of research into the historical geography of rural settlement in Europe. Most papers presented to the Conferences focused upon changing cultural landscapes in Europe during periods in the historic (and, to some extent, the pre-historic) past. Their emphasis has been upon the cultural morphology of landscapes, upon the origins and transformations of distinctive

landscape forms and of the personalities of places as expressed in regional assemblages of landscape structures. Such work was dominantly empirical, thoroughly grounded in appropriate archival and field evidence, and essentially rooted in particular places and periods.

The Permanent Conference focused attention on, and permitted an international and interdisciplinary exchange of ideas about, the origins and transformations of field boundaries, field forms and field patterns, of settlement plans, settlement structures and settlement patterns, and of specific rural land uses. They have also thrown considerable light upon some of the principal processes at work in changing the rural landscapes of Europe: in general, clearing the woodlands, draining the marshlands, reclaiming the heathlands, proto-industrialization and urbanization; more specifically, colonisation and land allocation, the origins and transformations of field and settlement systems, enclosures and agrarian reforms. While most of the papers presented at the meetings treated particular places, some essayed regional comparisons and some offered broad generalisations. Some, but remarkably few, studies were concerned with the symbolic significance, with the cultural meanings, of rural landscapes and some, but remarkably few, employed or developed theoretical concepts in their interpretations of European landscapes (Baker 1988).

While the meetings of the Permanent European Conferences for the Study of the Rural Landscape serve very usefully to bring together scholars with a common interest in the historical rural geography of Europe, they have also demonstrated different approaches by scholars from different countries. The

Germanic tradition of morphogenetic analysis (Jäger 1972 and 1973) seems to underpin much of the work presented at these meetings, but other approaches and emphases have also been apparent. Swedish historical geographers, for example, have made much more use than most others of models of the evolution of rural settlements and field systems, and they have also focused more than most upon prehistorical rather than historical settlement patterns and processes (Baker 1988: 11 - 12).

Meetings of the Permanent European Conference were attended mainly by historical geographers from capitalist countries: a very different kind of historical geography was being practised in socialist countries in Europe, although barriers of language and of ideology meant that there was little knowledge or appreciation of its output. In the former Czechoslovakia, for example, historical geography had a number of distinctive characteristics: first, its practice was directly linked to a political project, the development of an advanced socialist society; secondly, it was essentially historical economic geography; thirdly, all historical geography in Czechoslovakia was Marxist historical geography.

For reasons related both to ideology and language, therefore, work by historical geographers in Czechoslovakia was not as well-known in the English-speaking, capitalist world as it deserved to be. Traditional European concerns with medieval colonisation and routeways, as well as with deserted villages, were being actively pursued along with newer interests in urban development and industrial and other changes in Czechoslovakia since 1945. Publication in 1965 of the *Atlas of Czechoslovak History* and from 1968 of the journal *Historická Geografie* have been

major building blocks in the construction of a new historical geography of Czechoslovakia (Baker 1986).

(4) Historical geography elsewhere in the world ?

The brief visit which I made to Czechoslovakia in 1985 confirmed the assumption which lay behind a collection of essays which I edited more than twenty years ago, reviewing progress in historical geography in a number of countries and continents: that the researching, teaching and writing of historical geography can only benefit from a greater awareness of the ways in which it is theorised and practised in different places throughout the world (Baker 1972).

It is clearly impossible for one person to be completely familiar with the world-wide practice of historical geography, but that is not to deny the value of an attempt to grasp the nature of such a universal historical geography and to do so by involving other colleagues who are well-positioned to enter into the enterprise. For example, as editor of the *Journal of Historical Geography*, I have recently published an invited account of the practice of historical geography in China (Weimin Que 1995) which emphasises the important role which it assigns to historical atlases, to environmental history and to historical regional geography. His paper also serves to highlight two general works: Hou Ren-Zhi's (1979) *Theory and Practice in Historical Geography*, a collection of essays which monitored the history of historical geography in China, demonstrating that an earlier concern with changing political boundaries and place-names was replaced, after the establishment of the People's Republic, with an emphasis on applied historical geography,

in relation to both physical and human environments; and Zhang Butian's (1993) *An Introduction to Historical Geography*, which provides not only an account of the changing character of historical geography in China (demonstrating that it has become both more systematically comprehensive and more explicitly responsive to developments in the field elsewhere in the world) but also an exploration of the epistemology of historical geography. Similarly, I want to learn more about the practice of historical geography in Japan - at present my knowledge of it is based upon the review by Kentaro Kobayashi and Akihiro Kinda (1988).

IV The globalization of historical geography ?

While there have been many changes through time and differences over space in the practice of historical geography, there are also some fundamental continuities and similarities which constitute the core of the discipline. The ideas of the founding fathers of historical geography rightly serve as useful frameworks for thinking about the subject today. But it is also indicative of the vitality of historical geography that new questions are being addressed by today's historical geographers with the imagination needed to understand geographical structures and geographical transformations from the perspectives of their own period and their own places.

One of the features of the practice of historical geography today is the multiplication of contacts among historical geographers throughout the world and, as a consequence, the increasing globalization of the practice of historical geography. Many of those contacts are informal; but others are

formalised in journals, research groups and conferences.

The vitality of historical geography throughout the world can be remotely sensed in the growing number of international journals devoted to it. The first to be established was *Historical Geography*, published in 1959 by the Association of Historical Geographers of Japan. Today there are others: *Historická Geografie* (published in Czechoslovakia since 1968); *Historical Geography* (published in the United States of America from 1971, initially the *Historical Geography Newsletter*); the *Journal of Historical Geography* (published jointly in Britain and North America, founded in 1975); *China's Historical Geography* (established in 1981); and the Dutch *Historisch - Geographisch Tijdschrift* (founded in 1983).

Moreover, the last twenty years or so have seen the birth and growth of local, regional, national and international research groups in historical geography. Not only are there more historical geographers throughout the world than ever before, they are increasingly engaged in dialogue and debate - and not only among themselves, but also with other geographers and with scholars in cognate disciplines. At the international level, the productive impact of the Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape - dating effectively from 1957 - has already been mentioned. That informal Conference - with no formal membership, constitution or organisational structure - has been instrumental in bringing together European historical geographers and in promoting a fruitful exchange of ideas and research findings, and its meetings have resulted in the publication of a large number of edited collections of research papers.

Some socialist historical geographers, notably V. Annenkov, took the initiative at the Moscow meeting of the International Geographical Congress in 1976 to establish formally an international group of historical geographers, as an IGU-approved Working Group on Historical Changes in Spatial Organization, with Professor Tanioka as its first Chairman. During the eight years of its existence, until its demise in 1984 by decision of the Executive Committee of the IGU, the Working Group had organized symposia in Cambridge (UK), Brno (Czechoslovakia), Warsaw and Rome.

With the notable exception of the IGU's Working Group's symposium in Cambridge, the meetings of the Permanent European Conference and, more remarkably, of the Working Group were notable for their failure to attract the interest or participation of North American historical geographers. Their energies were channelled in a different direction. In 1973 the Historical Geography Research Group of the Institute of British Geographers agreed with the Ontario group of historical geographers to organise a British-Canadian symposium. This took place in Kingston, Ontario, in September 1975. A second British-Canadian symposium was held in the United Kingdom in May 1977. Both meetings, but more especially the second, included participants from other countries, so that it was decided that the next symposium, held in California in August 1979, would be organised under the acronym CUKANZUS, reflecting the origins of participants from Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States of America. Further meetings of CUKANZUS, held in Toronto in August 1981 and in Oxford in July 1983, attracted an even broader spectrum of partic-

ipants who agreed that the next meeting should accordingly be called the Sixth International Conference of Historical Geographers. Thus was the history of historical geography not merely made but re-made. That sixth meeting was held in Louisiana in 1986, and subsequently meetings have been held in Israel in 1989, in Vancouver in 1992, and in Singapore and Perth in 1995. This most recent meeting was the most international gathering of historical geographers yet held, with participants from many countries, including Japan. The Tenth International Conference of Historical Geographers will be held in Ireland in 1998.

Formal co-operation among the international fraternity of historical geographers is undoubtedly desirable but it is also difficult to achieve. There is more than sufficient common interest in research philosophies, methodologies and techniques, as well as in some substantive problems (such as agricultural colonisation, regional economic transformation, and the emergence of a world system) for international co-operation to be potentially productive. But the obstacles to be overcome - those of different languages and of conflicting ideologies - are also considerable. While some progress will no doubt be made through formal organizations, national and international, there are good grounds for believing that much progress will also be made through informal groupings of like-minded historical geographers. To the extent that the vitality of historical geography - like that of any academic discipline - depends upon contact and communication, debate and discussion, among its practitioners, the practice of historical geography can be expected to benefit from the growing globalisation of the discipline.

V The moralisation of historical geography ?

There is much personal pleasure to be derived from pursuing research in historical geography: for me, the hours rarely pass more rapidly and more enjoyably than they do spent in record offices, engrossed in files of unpublished documents, engaged in a dialogue with the evidence and contemplating a debate with other historical scholars about interpretations of it, seeking answers and finding questions. It would be easy to become self-indulgent. Some scholars do become so, and even try to find justification for that by claiming that the historian's duty is to study the past for its own sake (by which some really mean for her/his own sake). While trying to understand the past in its own right and on its own terms must indeed be the first duty, there are other responsibilities, not least those of interpreting that past to and in the light of the present, and of making that past not only available to other scholars but also accessible to society generally.

Two points need to be emphasised. The first is that historical geography is indeed an historical study: its focus of interest lies in the geography of some past time or in geographical changes in some past period. As such it shares the intellectual and moral legitimacy of all historical studies and it need not feel obliged to offer, and should not be called upon to provide, any further justification. The second point is that historical geography is fundamentally a geographical study: it asks geographical questions about the past, it offers a geographical perspective upon the past. It makes a distinctive contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the past, doing so quintessentially as geography and

not as history, but as historical geography in its many forms and not exclusively as *g  ohistoire* or geographical history, which - as the study of the influence of physical geographical conditions and/or of locational and spatial relationships upon the course of history - is merely one form of historical geography (Earle 1992; Philo 1994).

While historical geography can legitimately be focused upon the past for its own sake, this is not to argue either that it must only be so or that it has no relation to the study of contemporary human geography. To take the latter case first, there are many contemporary human geographers who view the past as laboratory, as one means of extending the testing of their generalisations or models and so, along with comparative cultural studies, of making them more robust. Similarly, there are many contemporary human geographers for whom the "present" is in practice a thick concept which incorporates not just "today" or even the last few years but decades, perhaps as much a half-century or so. Such contemporary human geographers will encounter, coming in the other direction, historical geographers who bring their own studies through to the present, as part of the well-established tradition (especially but not exclusively practised in France) of historical geography as retrospective human geography which calls upon the past in order to provide explanation and understanding of the present. Moreover, in recent years there have been powerful calls for deeper historical understanding in contemporary human geography, which had been dominated from the 1960s to the 1980s by non-historical, functionalist modes of explanation. The growing plea to "bring history back in" to human geography, Driver has

argued, "implicates arguments which lie at the very heart of contemporary debates within human geography. For this reason, if no other, any division between non-historical human geography, oriented to the present, and an historical geography oriented to the past can no longer be sustained. As human geography is profoundly historical (in more senses than have frequently been acknowledged), thinking historically is no luxury; on the contrary, it is an essential part of doing human geography" (Driver 1988: 504). The relation, then, between historical geography and contemporary human geography lies in the temporal propinquity of the recent past and the immediate present, and more in their common quest for historical understanding. On that broader basis the dialogue includes medievalists as well as modernists and post-modernists (Dodgshon 1987).

Furthermore, and finally, researching and writing - together with the teaching of - historical geography - are themselves inevitably and unavoidably part of the process of the making of history. The practice of historical geography is part of history itself, even if it is done within the confines of academe. But committed historical geographers will also both recognise and accept the twin opportunity and challenge of projecting their studies to a wider audience, of bridging the gap between the profession and the public. If the task is daunting, it can also be immensely worthwhile.

Notes

1. To date, twenty-two volumes have been published by Cambridge University Press in its series of *Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography* and more are in preparation: A. R. H. Baker and M. Billing (eds), *Period and Place: Research Methods in Historical Geography* (1982); D. Turnock, *The Historical Geography of Scotland since 1707* (1982); L. Guelke, *Historical Understanding in Geography: an Idealist Approach* (1982); R. Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century* (1984); A. R. H. Baker and D. Gregory (eds), *Explorations in Historical Geography: Interpretative Essays* (1984); R. J. P. Kain and H. C. Prince, *The Tithe Surveys of England and Wales* (1985); R. Sack, *Human Territoriality: its Theory and History* (1986); D. Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (1987); J. M. Powell, *An Historical Geography of Australia: the Restive Fringe* (1988); D. Denecke and G. Shaw (eds), *Urban Historical Geography: Recent Progress in Britain and Germany* (1988); D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds), *The Iconography of Landscape* (1988); J. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: an Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (1989); D. Ward, *Poverty, Ethnicity and the American City* (1989); M. C. Cleary, *Peasants, Politicians and Producers: the Organisation of Agriculture in France since 1918* (1989); A. D. M. Phillips, *The Underdraining of Farmland in England during the Nineteenth Century* (1989); D. J. Robinson (ed.), *Migration in Colonial Spanish America* (1990); G. Kearns and C. W. J. Withers (eds), *Urbanising Britain: Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (1991); A. R. H. Baker and G. Biger (eds), *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective: Essays on the Meanings of some Places in the Past* (1992); F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse System, 1834 - 1884* (1992); X. de Planhol, *An Historical Geography of France* (1994); F. W. Carter, *Trade and Development in Poland: an Economic Geography of Cracow, from its Origins to 1795* (1994); G. Hoppe and J. Langton, *Peasantry to Capitalism: Western Österg ötland in the Nineteenth Century* (1995).
2. The Oxford series, produced in New York, comprised: D. W. Meinig, *Southwest: Three Peoples in Geographic Change* (1971); D. Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: a Geography of Change in Nineteenth Century America* (1971); R. C. Harris and J. Warkentin, *Canada before Confederation: a Study in Historical Geography* (1974); D. R. McManis, *Colonial New England: a Historical Geography* (1975); J. R. Gibson, *Imperial Russia in Frontier America: The Changing Geography of Supply of Russian America, 1784 - 1867* (1976); H. B. Johnson, *Order upon the Land: The U. S. Rectangular Land Survey and the Upper Mississippi Country* (1976); J. A. Jakle, *Images of the Ohio Valley: a Historical Geography of Travel, 1740 to 1860* (1977).
3. See, for example: N. Stephens and R. E. Glasscock (eds), *Irish geographical Studies in honour of E. Estyn Evans* (Velfast 1970); R. H. Buchanan, E. Jones and D. McCourt (eds), *Man and his Habitat: Essays Presented to Emyr Estyn Evens* (London 1971); E. E. Evans, *The*

- personality of Ireland: habitat, heritage and history* (Cambridge 1973).
4. See, for example: H. R. Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill 1969) and *The Colonial South Carolina Scene: some Contemporary Views* (Columbia 1979); D. Lowenthal and M. Bowden (eds), *Geographies of the mine* (New York 1976).
 5. See, for example: A. S. Goudie, *The Human Impact on the Natural Environment* (Oxford 1990); J. M. Hooke and R. J. Kain, *Historical Change and the Physical Environment: a Guide to Sources and Techniques* (London 1982); M. Williams, *The Americans and their Forests: a Historical Geography* (Cambridge 1989); A. D. M. Phillips, *The underdraining of Farmland in England during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 1989).
 6. See, for example: R. A. Donkin, Spanish Red: an ethnogeographical study of Cochineal and the Opuntia Cactus, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 67 Part 5 (1977) and The Peccary - with observations on the introduction of pigs to the New World, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 75 Part 5 (1985); M. Overton, The diffusion of agricultural innovations in early modern England: turnips and clover in Norfolk and Suffolk 1580 - 1740, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10 (1985) 205 - 22; A. D. Cliff, P. Haggett, J. K. Ord and G. R. Versey, *Spatial Diffusion: an Historical Geography of Epidemics in an Island community* (Cambridge 1981).
 7. See, for example: M. Conzen (ed.), *The Making of the American landscape* (Boston 1990); M. Reed, *Discovering Past Landscapes* (London 1984); D. Cosgrove and G. Petts (eds), *Water, Engineering and the Landscape* (London 1990).
 8. See, for example: D. W. Meinig (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York 1979); D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge 1988); A. R. H. Baker and G. Biger (eds), *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective: Essays on the Meanings of some Places in the Past* (Cambridge 1992).
 9. See, for example: R. E. Glasscock, *The Lay Subsidy of 1334* (British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, London 1975); R. J. P. Kain and H. C. Prince, *The tithe surveys of England and Wales* (Cambridge 1985); H. D. Clout, *Agriculture in France on the Eve of the Railway Age* (London 1980); J. H. Johnson and C. G. Pooley (eds), *The Structure of Nineteenth Century Cities* (London 1982).
 10. See, for example: A. R. H. Baker and R. A. Butlin (eds), *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (Cambridge 1973); R. A. Dodgshon, *The Origin of British Field System: an Interpretation* (London 1980); D. Gregory, *Regional Transformation and Industrial Revolution: a Geography of the West Yorkshire Woollen Industry* (London 1982); R. Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: a Social Geography* (Cambridge 1984); D. Denecke and G. Shaw (eds), *Urban Historical Geography: Recent Progress in Britain and Germany* (Cambridge 1988); D. Ward, *Poverty, Ethnicity and the American City, 1840 - 1925* (New York 1989).
 11. R. J. Dennis, Faith in the city, *Journal of Historical Geography* 13 (1987) 210 - 16; D. Harvey, The representation of urban

- life, *Journal of Historical Geography* 13 (1987) 317 - 21; R. Dennis, By the waters of Babylon, *Journal of Historical Geography* 14 (1988) 307 - 8.
12. D. Gregory, Contours of crisis? Sketch for a geography of class struggle in the early industrialisation revolution in England, in A. R. H. Baker and D. Gregory (eds), *Explorations in Historical Geography: Interpretative Essays* (Cambridge 1984) 68 - 117; A. R. H. Baker, Fraternity in the forest: the creation, control and collapse of woodcutters' unions in Loir-et-Cher 1852 - 1914, *Journal of Historical Geography* 10 (1984) 157 - 73, The infancy of France's first agricultural syndicate: the Syndicat des Agriculteurs de Loir-et-Cher 1881 - 1914, *Agricultural History Review* 34 (1986) 45 - 59, Sound and fury: the significance of musical societies in Loir-et-Cher during the nineteenth century, *Journal of Historical Geography* 12 (1986) 249 - 67, and Fire-fighting fraternities? The *corps de sapeurs-pompiers* in Loir-et-Cher during the nineteenth century, *Journal of Historical Geography* 16 (1990) 121 - 39; A. Pred, Place as historically contingent process: structuration and the time-geography of becoming places, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (1984) 279 - 97, Structuration, biography formation, and knowledge: observations on port growth during the late mercantile period, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2 (1984) 251 - 75, and *Place, Practice and Structure* (Cambridge 1988).
13. See, for example: P. Cooke (ed.), *Localities: a Comparative Analysis of Urban Change* (London 1989); R. A. Butlin, Early industrialisation in Europe: concepts and problems, *The Geographical Journal* 152 (1986) 1 - 8; J. Langton, The industrial revolution and the regional geography of England, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 9 (1984) 145 - 167 and D. Gregory, "A new and differing face in many places": three geographies of industrialisation, in R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin (eds), *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (Second edition, London 1990) 352 - 99; C. Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems* (Stanford, CA 1992); J. M. Blaut, *The colonizer's Model of the World* (New York 1993).
14. For example, in an encyclopaedia of *La Nouvelle Histoire* Jean-Pierre Raison's (1978) article on "géographie historique" emphasised its ambiguous professional and scientific status, given that history must necessarily be geographical and that interdisciplinary dialogue between historians and geographers had been productive, it had also enabled historians as much as geographers to be concerned with the interaction between people and physical environments and with spatial relationships, thereby blurring their individual distinctiveness; moreover, in order to distance themselves from historians, geographers had focused their researches upon the present, considering the past of a place in so far as it was necessary to do so in order to understand its present-day geography. Thus Raison concluded that, with geographical studies firmly anchored in the present, "si des travaux de géographie historique existent, c'est donc, sinon par hasard, du moins parce que, à un certain stade de leur recherche, les géographes sont conduits, sur des domaines précis, à faire le point de leurs découvertes sur une période plus ou moins reculée du

temps" (Raison 1978: 189). Noting that historical geography was much more active in other countries, Raison argued that in France it needed to be more closely connected into debates within both history and geography: unless it did so, it would risk becoming simply a project in nostalgia and antiquarianism. More recently, but similarly, in a *Dictionnaire des Sciences Historiques* Olivier Dumoulin (1986) contrasted the limited practice of historical geography in France with its greater institutionalization and achievements in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic countries and, like Raison, emphasised the considerable extent to which in France geographical questions have been addressed, and geographical techniques employed, by historians.

15. The places and dates of meetings of the Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape have been as follows: France 1957; Sweden 1960; United Kingdom 1964; West Germany 1966; Belgium 1969; Northern Ireland 1971; Italy 1973; Poland 1975; France 1977; Denmark 1979; England 1981; West Germany 1985; Sweden 1987; Netherlands 1989 [France 1992]; Italy 1994. The next meeting is expected to be held in Ireland in 1996.

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(立石友男)