The Region: Introduction; Names are given to parts of the earth's surface in a number of ways. Such names may have wide acceptance but rarely define the limits of an area with any precision. A more rigorous areal classification is the administrative division which most countries possess. Such an areal classification is an essential pre-requisite for effective government, for without it taxes cannot be raised, mail delivered, nor any of the everyday matters of organized living be pursued. It was dissatisfaction with this form of areal classification which led in the eighteenth century to the rise of the idea of the region. But no regional system devised by geographers has ever had such widespread acceptance that administrative and political classifications have received. Indeed, confusion has arisen in geography because of the use of the same name for different areas in different regional systems.

Whereas the exact meaning naming of parts of the earth's surface is important, classification is the basis of a more important form of geographical nomenclature. In geography, similar features of the earth's surface which occur repeatedly require appropriate names or terms. Again, everyday language provides much of this terminology, for example, mountains, plains, and valleys. But if the understanding of the earth's surface is to advance, a more precise terminology is needed, and a necessary preliminary is a widely accepted areal classification of these features. Much of the terminology used in geography is, in fact, derived from allied systematic sciences. But within the subject, areal classification has produced a terminology all its own, like the genetic classification of land-forms of W.M. Davis.
Classification into areas or regions in geography serves the purpose of permitting inductive generalizations to be made about the objects studied. Many generalizations in geography arise from the comparison of two different regional systems. Thus, for example, if in any one country, an areal classification on the basis of soil type is compared with a classification according to land-use, then a number of generalizations about the relationships between the two may be inferred.

It is generally agreed by logicians that there can be many valid classifications of a given universe of individuals. The property chosen as the differentiating characteristic depends primarily upon the purpose of the classifications. Some logicians, however, make the distinction between natural and artificial classifications. But so much confusion has arisen from the use of the term 'natural classification' that classifications are termed instead as general-purpose and special-purpose.

In the history of ideas about regions in geography, systems of geographical regions were an attempt to embrace the totality of an area within a single classification. They were thus natural classifications in the technical sense. Further, they also tried to explain regional variations in the totality of things seen on the earth's surface. It was assumed that the physical environment and human activity co-varied spatially because human activity was controlled primarily by the physical environment.
Analysis of the Concept: Region: It is rather difficult to define a 'Region' as it would depend largely on the object, context, criteria. The term, Region, has various connotations according to the context in which it is used and the purport of the scientist. Sociologists, economists, geographers, politicians, administrators, and a host of others, are concerned with the term, 'Region', but it does not convey the same meaning to each of these groups.

A region is a human creation for the purpose of analysis, synthesis, and planning. The extent and character of a region will depend upon the purpose or purposes for which it is created, and the number of possible regions is infinite.

The term, region, is of comparatively recent origin and has not yet acquired any accepted precise definition. Within recent years, the term has been widely and loosely applied among industrialists and administrators, generally for some major division of the country devised for organizational purposes, as, for example, dividing a country into a number of 'subdivisions' for statistical purposes, or into a number of 'standard regions' as a basis for the nation-wide activities by government ministries. To a large extent, such subdivisions or regions are used as a matter of convenience having some practical purpose.

A region is not of any size. It ranges from localities no larger than a little valley or a small trading area to large realms. Small regions may be combined into larger ones or large ones broken down into smaller ones.
Obviously, the degree of generalisation will differ according to the scale of the investigation.

In geography, region is the focus: region not only in terms of bones but also in terms of flesh and blood... region as the home of mankind. However, it is important to recognise the fact that a region as used in geography does not actually exist but is a mental construct. Accordingly, this concept, region, in its broadest connotation, is any homogeneous area in which accordant areal relations produce some form of cohesion, where the criteria are significant and meaningful, and where the boundaries can be systematically drawn.

The interpretation of man's adjustment has its core in the area with a distinctive type of environment to which the name 'region' is applied and though geography has vague peripheral fields, yet its goal is the region, the crown and peak of its work. The region, which is the central theme, crystallises the synthesis of human and physical elements. The distinctive sphere of geography is the region, the recent product of its development; and as geography is the mother science, she must draw upon kindred sciences and 'weave the derived facts into the network of its regional framework'.

The world has been divided into many kinds of regions depending upon the regionalist and his objective. If he be a physiographer, he will obviously think in terms of physiographic regions; if a climatologist, in terms of climatic regions; if a pedologist, in terms of soil regions, ad infinitum.
While these studies are of inestimable value and are used freely in the field of geography, they cannot be considered geographic. The objective of the region in geography is to describe and interpret the cultural landscape.

Regions in geography may be grouped under three heads—political, natural, and geographic. Political regions were first used because they could be handled with the greatest facility, statistics of all kinds being based on political divisions. But since such boundary lines are strictly imaginary and mostly artificial, they have proved to be a 'geographical' abomination. Hence the political unit is little used in modern regional geography.

The traditional division into political units or regions was replaced by the division into 'natural' regions, which were next employed as a working unit. A natural region was one characterized by a high degree of physical unity throughout and delimited by natural boundaries, frequently mountains. This was a logical step since the pioneer geographers had been originally geologists. Practically all early geographers surveys covered areas that were essentially geological units, it being assumed that because a region was a physical or natural unit, it must needs be a geographic unit. This, of course, was a false premise, for many natural regions are not geographic regions at all. The importance of land forms as a regionalizing factor was undeniably exaggerated.

Though the term, region, has been traditionally used and remains widely current, as meaning an uninterrupted area possessing some kind
of homogeneity in its core, it lacks clearly defined limits. Its unifying traits may or may not be explicitly stated. More often than not, the term refers to an area smaller than a sub-continent, but too large and varied to be readily identified as uniform throughout.

For many years, geographers have been trying to shape and sharpen the technical meaning of the term 'region' into an instrument more powerful than the non-technical usage provides. No other word exists to convey the idea embodied in the procedure of regional study, and a word to express the regional concept is found in all the principal languages. In recent years, the word is employed to mean an area of any size throughout which accordant areal relationship between phenomena exists. The area is singled out by applying specific criteria to earth-space, and it is homogeneous in terms of the criteria by which it is defined. But a region is more than homogeneous; it possesses also a quality of cohesion that is derived from the accordant relationship of associated features. The observation and measurement of the phenomena brought to the fore, by specific criteria, from the diversified background, and the search for accordant areal relationships among these phenomena, constitute the regional method or the procedure for discovering order in earth-space. The order is expressed in the form of regional patterns made up of specifically defined characteristics and distributed within clearly outlined borders. The term, area, is almost universally used to mean a geometric portion of earth-space, with no implication of homogeneity or cohesion.
The region is a device for selecting and studying areal groupings of the complex phenomena found on the earth. Any segment or portion of the earth surface is a region if it is homogeneous in terms of such an areal grouping. Its homogeneity is determined by criteria formulated for the purpose of sorting from the whole range of earth phenomena the items required to express or illuminate a particular grouping, areally cohesive. So, a region is not an object either self-determined or nature-given. It is, as we already know, an intellectual concept, an entity for the purposes of thought, created by the selection of certain features that are relevant to a great variety of purposes, and by the disregard of all features that are considered to be irrelevant. The face of the earth with its complex associations of phenomena could theoretically yield an infinite variety of regional patterns, each brought forth by the application of different criteria.

There are many different categories of regions, pertaining to nearly every aspect of the physical, biotic and societal environments, defined in terms of relevant to a great variety of purposes. Regions range, relatively simple delineations of single features, as we have already seen, to highly complex areas embracing the entire content of the human occupancy of earth-space. Regions also differ according to the nature of their internal cohesion and structure.

In considering the classes of regions, it is useful to think of them as ranged in three basic types: (a) those defined in terms of single features; (b) those defined in terms of multiple features, and (c) those
defined in terms which approach the totality of the human occupation of area. These types may be outlined as under:

1. Single feature regions: here an individual phenomenon that is examined is delineated in relation to other phenomena in the search for accordant relationships. Such regions must not be thought of as 'unit areas' in the sense that they are not further divisible; for within the limits set by the criteria, they include a certain amount of variation or range of character. Slope features are best examples of single feature regions. Regions or areas of the earth's surface possessing certain unity of physical or human conditions or both may be drawn up to show the distribution of single physical characteristics, such as, climate, structure, or vegetation, or these may be combined to form natural regions. For example, mountain regions are unified by their topography; Arctic regions by their climate; agricultural regions, by the type of crop; and industrial regions by the type of industry. All these are single feature regions.

2. Multiple feature regions: These are differentiated on the basis of combinations or associations of features. Sometimes they may be formed through matching single-feature regions; or else they may be sufficiently distinctive and cohesive to be observed and mapped directly in the field. Multiple feature regions fall into three sub-types:

(a) Associations of intimately connected features which are highly cohesive because they have been produced by one kind of process. Examples are climates defined as an interplay of temperature and moisture, soil
types defined in terms of slope, properties of soil, and drainage, or

types of agricultural land use which are defined by the mode of handling

a particular association of crops and livestock.

(b) Associations of features less intimately connected than those of the

preceding sub-type because they have been produced by different kinds of

processes, as for example, an economic region defined in terms of re­

source base together with its associated use. Regions of this type are

widely employed in geographic study.

(c) Associations of features only very loosely connected. The best example

under this category is the traditional natural region, theoretically

defined in terms of climate, terrain, soil, vegetation, animal life, water

and minerals. In recent years, the natural region has its counterpart in

what is termed as the total cultural region, presumably compounded of

economic, social, and political distributions, and which, till now, has

not been effectively defined.

3. Totality of human occupance of area: This major type of region is

differentiated in terms of the entire content of human occupance of area.

Such a region is an association of inter-related natural and societal features

chosen from a still more complex totality because they are believed to be

relevant to geographic study. To find a term without burden of other connota­

tions, and to avoid misunderstanding arising from words now in use, it has

been proposed to adopt for this type of region differentiated as to human

occupance of area, the term of 'compage'.

Now matter what criteria are invoked in defining them, geographic regions

of all kinds may also be grouped under two heads according to whether they
are uniform or nodal. Uniform regions, such as a climatic region, where there is always a certain range of characteristics permitted by the criteria, and there are irrelevant differences which are disregarded. But within limits set by the criteria, regions of this kind are uniform; and, Nodal regions which are homogeneous with respect to internal structure or organisation. This structure includes a focus, or foci, and a surrounding area tied to the focus by lines of circulation. For example, an area of newspaper circulation is a single-feature nodal region, the trade area of a town a multiple-feature nodal region. Nodal regions of like character may lie adjacent to each other, or one such region may be surrounded by nodal regions of different character, selected by A nodal region may coincide with other nodal regions of different character, selected by the application of different criteria. Internally nodal regions are marked by a diversity of function that goes far beyond the range of minor variation permitted in uniform regions. Circulation, including the movement of peoples and goods, communications, and other aspects of movement, is a primary attribute. Hence the nodal region is bounded by the disappearance or the differential weakening of the tie to its own focus in favour of some other focus. Its boundary lines tend to run at right angles to the lines that tie it together.

Several characteristics pertain to both uniform and nodal regions. Hence every kind of region differentiated will have the following characteristics:

(a) The region is unique, in that it differs in location from all other regions of the same category.
(b) The region enfolds a three-dimensional segment of earth-space.
(c) The region incorporates an association of coherent features.

(d) The present character of the region is partly derived from conditions that existed and events that occurred in past times...historical, archaeological, and geological.

(e) The region is defined by criteria inherent in the category to which it belongs, not by traits that pertain to other categories of regions.

(f) The region occupies a fixed position in a hierarchy of regions of the same category, in which those of each successively higher rank consist of aggregations of regions of the next lower rank.

A perhaps more fundamental distinction between methods of arriving at regions is between the synthetic and analytical approach. A synthetic region is a procedure frequently used in geography since the time of Unstead who coined the term. In contrast, the world has been divided into sub-classes on the basis of a number of principles and these have been called analytical regions. The best example of this latter type is Prof. Herbertson's classification. However, according to Hartshorne, the two methods of arriving at regions are complementary and not mutually exclusive. In other words, the two methods of arriving at regions appear to correspond to the two methods of grouping objects, classification (synthetic regions), and logical division (analytical regions).

At a higher level of abstraction, two types of regions have been traditionally distinguished. They are termed generic and specific. Generic regions are those which fall into types and may therefore be said to be of a generic character, all the representatives of a particular type
resembling each other in certain essential respects, according to the criteria selected, for example, climate, character of vegetation, or human use. Such regions may occur in different parts of the world but location is not the property used in their classification. Specific regions are, however, regions whose characters are determined not only by the intrinsic conditions of the areas in question but by their location and geographic orientation.

According to William Bunge, the entire logic of classification systems have been recently re-discovered in geography. Accordingly, there are generally three types of regions in the subject:

1. The 'region' in the general sense in which the region is given a priori.
2. A homogeneous or uniform region which is defined as an area within which the variations and co-variations of one or more selected characteristics fall within some specified range of variability around a norm, in contrast with areas that fall outside the range. Such a region, unlike that previously described in (1) above, but like the functional region, is a result of the process of regionalization and is not given a priori.
3. A region of 'coherent organization' or a 'functional' region: this region is defined as one in which one or more selected phenomena of movement connect the localities within it into a functionally organized whole.

The present tendency by modern geographers, especially those of the United States of America is to divide a continent or country into human use regions. The unity of such an area depends on uniformity of use. The
elements of the natural environment are the causative factors in
every region, but usually one or more dominate, giving rise to a
corn belt here, a wheat belt there, and a grazing land elsewhere.
But each region blends gradually into its neighbours. Abrupt bound-
ary lines are non-existent in geographical regions.

Certainly, the human use region has innumerable advantages over that
delimited by purely imaginary political lines or even one determined
by geological phenomena. Such a concept is dynamic and is based on a
changing human community with changing relationships to the environ-
ment rather than on static natural boundaries. Probably no large region
is truly unified. Careful scrutiny of any major unit proves this.

In order therefore, to get a more accurate picture of a region, it is
necessary to break it up into sub-regions, districts, localities, and
sites, utilizing surface features, climatic sub-types, dominant crops,
political units, industrial concentrations, population groups, or a
combination of one or more of them as criteria for sub-division. This
process can be continued to place a place where regional study would be
focused upon specific items of occupancy, such as, individual farms,
commercial and residential areas, or industrial establishments. The size
of the regions in any system will depend upon the amount of generaliza-
tion that is desired and the criteria for sub-division will depend upon
the physical or cultural features that are considered pertinent to
the purpose for which the regions are being established. Clear geogra-
phic understandings of continents, countries, and states will be possible
only after careful regional studies of small areas have been made, and pieced together precisely as an artist pieces mosaic: "the picture lies only in the skillful assembly of many units."