SECOND EDITION

WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER

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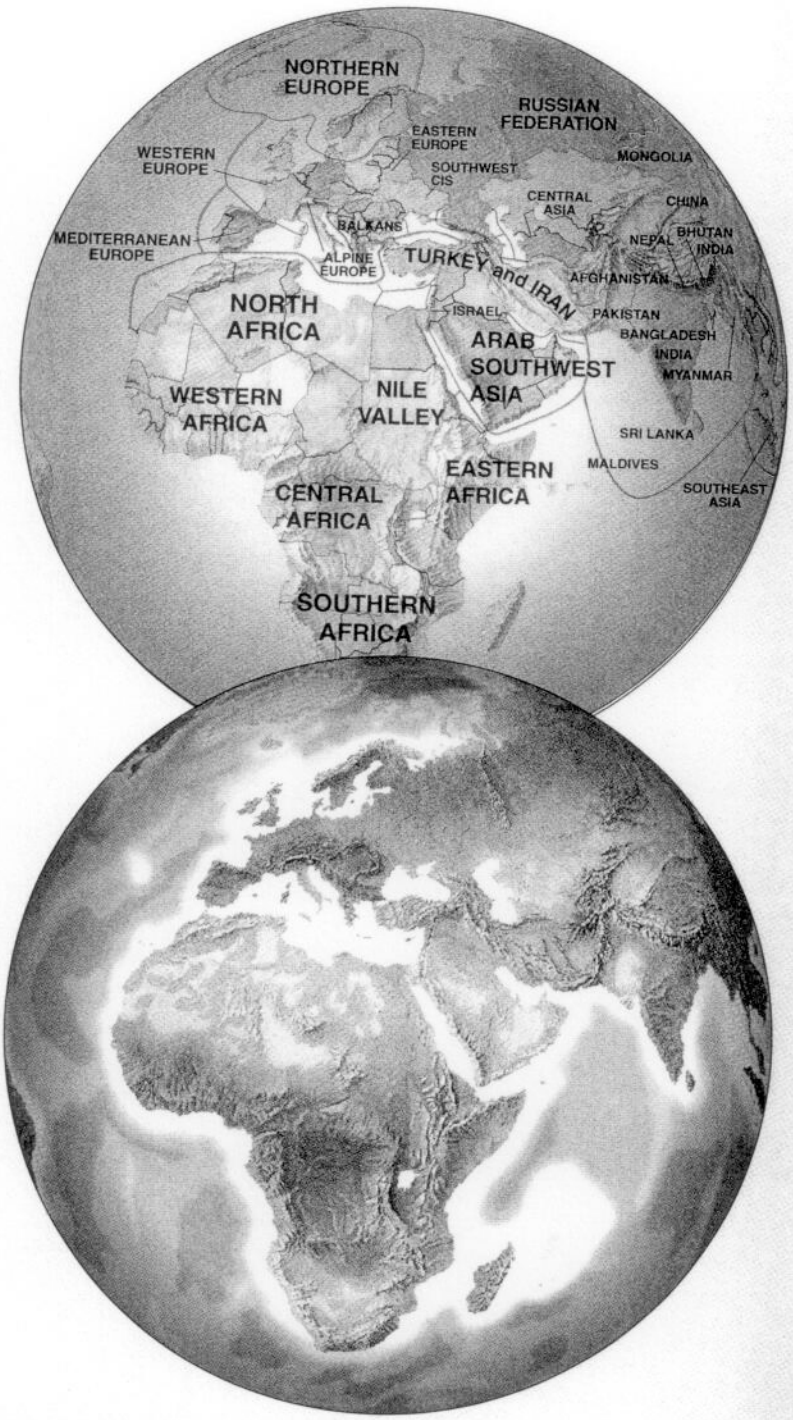
BASICS OF WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Chapter 2



THIS CHAPTER IS ABOUT:

- How geographers study regions
- The fundamental importance of place and location
- Basics of population geography: people matter
- Basics of political geography: countries and governments
- Basics of economic geography: wealth, poverty, and development
- Basics of cultural geography: lifestyle differences
- Basics of physical geography: environmental variations
- Factors that decide how many people Earth can support
- How landscapes provide a summary of regional geographies

FIGURE 2.1 Worlds of geographic study. The globes compare aspects of human (country boundaries) and physical geography.

WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INQUIRY

Geographers attempt to understand the formation of a place's characteristics and location through studying the interactions of a wide variety of factors. Such factors include those identified in Chapter 1 as major aspects of a new global order—political, economic, and cultural processes and the workings of the natural environment. This chapter introduces a range of geographic concepts that are important in regional analysis (Figure 2.1) and describes the sources of data that inform them—many of which are accessible from daily or annual updates through the World Wide Web. A selection of data for each country is included in Reference Section tables.

In investigating a particular topic, geographers first define their goals, then collect relevant information, analyze it in various ways, and attempt to explain the result. This process often provides deeper understandings that can be applied in communal planning or individual decision making. Geographers increasingly go beyond this point, and many get involved in the subject of their studies in such areas as housing markets or conditions in poor countries. In this book, we use the results of many geographic studies. Training as a geographer leads to a variety of potential careers and job opportunities, as set out in the Reference Section (Jobs for Geographers, page 581).

Information Sources

Geographers collect their information about places and about human characteristics and actions from a variety of sources. They use the results of censuses that are published by each country at varying time intervals. The most useful censuses come mainly from the richer countries that have sophisticated data-collecting systems. In many poorer countries, the censuses are not so frequent, regular, or accurate, and some countries publish little of the information they collect. International agencies—such as the United Nations and the World Bank—and the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C., collect data published by individual countries and point out the levels of accuracy and acceptability of the information. Such international sources are often more convenient than collecting data from each country.

Geographers use maps and satellite images produced by government mapping agencies around the world. Maps are a specifically geographic way of presenting information, since they show locations of places and the spatial relationships between them. Other sources of information used by geographers include written reports, such as those from other geographers, the United Nations, World Bank, governments, independent think tanks, and a range of current news items. Such varied sources of data and maps are combined into geographic information systems (GIS) that are used increasingly by business and government agencies.

Geographers also collect information by carrying out fieldwork. This involves visits to the places being studied to make observations of landscapes and to interview people about the ways by which they make a living or how their culture affects the geography of the region or country. Such observations may be compared to the statistical record. Overall, geographers use a rich variety of source materials.

WEBSITES: Introduction

A good introduction to using the World Wide Web is found on the Public Broadcasting System site at http://www.pbs.org. Under the heading "Select a PBS Online Web site," choose "Understanding and Using the Internet." Try this site and check out one of its special current presentations. There are thousands of websites, and it is easy to become confused and discouraged in using them. Throughout the text, we suggest a few long-term sites that are worth exploring and visiting frequently.

Using Information

Once the information is gathered, geographers use cartographic, graphical, and statistical techniques to analyze it. They may make their own maps or produce overlays on published maps; they may use a range of visual diagrammatic means such as graphs; and they may compare their data with other data and assess the significance of their findings through a range of statistical means. Geographic analysis is usually carried out with reference to a specific objective. For instance, regional geographers seek answers to such questions as: What is unique about this region? What links this region to others in its country? How is this region changing? Why is this region richer or poorer than others? Answering such questions helps us to understand the inequalities in the world, the influences on each region, and the changes that are continually taking place.

Understanding Other People and Places

Trying to understand how people living in other countries think and feel about their own region and country and its place in the wider world can be carried out through such means as field experience or by becoming involved in a specific issue affecting people in a region. Geographers take up emotive issues and get involved in politics at local or national level, studying how processes act in society from the inside. Appropriate techniques of observation and reporting make it possible to express and collate individual impressions. For example, when I carried out a study of the impact of U.S. federal government programs in Appalachia in the early 1980s, I not only mapped and analyzed statistical data at the county level, but also interviewed officials of the local development districts concerning their work and their views of its impacts. This provided a partial, but new, aspect to studies of the region (see Bradshaw, 1992).

This Chapter

The rest of this chapter introduces ideas in the major areas of geographic analysis that contribute to regional studies. Major concepts in each area of study are reviewed so that reference may be made to them in the later study of each major region.

- It is important to be able to locate places with respect to the rest of the world and to understand how geographers represent information on maps and use sources of information gathered by aerial and satellite means.
- The basics of population geography include factors influencing the distribution of people and the processes contributing to changes in population (demography).
- The basics of political geography include the ways in which countries and international groupings function.
- The basics of economic geography include a consideration of different sectors of production and levels of development within the global economic system.
- The basics of cultural geography include studies of religious affiliation, languages, and some social factors such as race, class, and gender.
- The basics of physical geography include a consideration of the distribution of climatic environments, ecosystems, and soils, and the formation and location of surface features such as continents and mountain systems. Human actions not only influence the functioning of processes in the natural environment but also define aspects of natural environments as resources or hazards, depending on human interactions with them.
- Finally, there are two sections that bring together aspects of the above list. First, there is the question as to how many people Earth can support, relating population growth to natural resources, political, economic, and cultural conditions. Second, there is the idea of landscape as a summary of geographic character in a region.

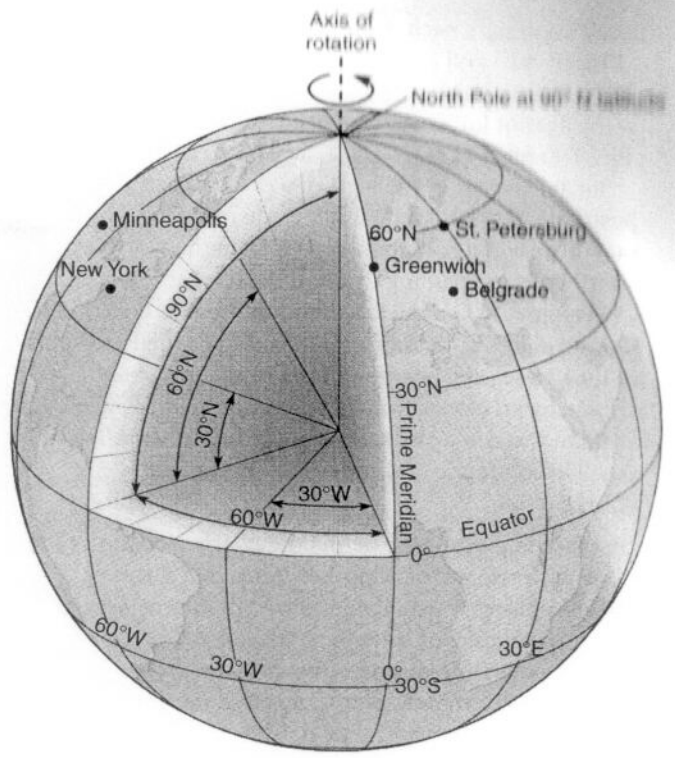


FIGURE 2.2 Location: latitude and longitude. The coordinate system used for locating places on Earth's surface, and the network of parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude. Give the latitude and longitude of each place marked on the globe.

SENSE OF PLACE: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Location of Places

When you buy a house or set up a commercial facility, realtors emphasize the importance of location. Basic geographic concepts include location and the related characteristics of direction, distance, and scale.

- **Location** is the precise place on Earth's surface where someone lives or an event occurs. Latitude and longitude form the framework of the international reference system that pinpoints a place's absolute location (Figure 2.2). **Latitude** describes how far north or south of the equator a place is, measured in degrees. The equator is at 0° of latitude. The North Pole is at 90° N and the South Pole at 90° S. A circle joining places of the same latitude at Earth's surface is called a **parallel of latitude**. The distance covered by one degree of latitude is approximately 110 km (69 mi.) on Earth's surface. To pinpoint locations

more accurately, each degree is divided into 60 minutes (written: 42′) and each minute into 60 seconds (written: 26″). The precise location of Meades Ranch, Kansas—the control point for a survey of the United States—is 39°13′26.686″ N.

Each place on Earth is given a precise east-west position by its longitude. **Longitude** measures position east or west of a half circle drawn from the North to the South Pole and passing through the former Royal Observatory at Greenwich, London, England. Such lines joining places of the same longitude are called **meridians of longitude.** The position of the prime meridian (0°) was chosen by an international conference in 1884, when London was the world's most powerful decision-making city. The longitude of Meades Ranch, Kansas, is 98°32′30.506″ W.

- **Distance** and **direction** define the relative location of one place with reference to another. Although distance between places is usually measured in kilometers or miles, travel time or travel cost may be of greater significance. Time-distance and cost-distance are often substituted for measured distance in geographic studies. The increasing cost and time of distance between places gives rise to the idea of the **friction of distance,** since there is likely to be less interaction between people across the distances where costs are higher or journey time is longer. Geographers give directions by the points of the compass.
- **Scale** defines whether one is studying a smaller or a larger area. Horizontal ground distance is related to map distance by a scale, usually quoted as a fraction (e.g., 1/10,000) or ratio (e.g., 1:10,000) in which 1 unit on the map represents 10,000 of the same units on the ground. For example, on a map with a scale of 1:10,000, 1 cm represents 10,000 cm, or 100 m, on the ground.

  Map scales vary with the size of the area to be mapped and the purpose of the map. *Small-scale maps* usually show areas at ratios of 1:250,000 or smaller (e.g., 1:1 million). They provide a small amount of detail about extensive areas (Figure 2.3). The world maps used in this text (see, e.g., Figure 1.2 or 2.10) are examples of small-scale maps in which the scale along the equator is approximately 1:120 million. *Large-scale maps,* usually with ratios less than 1:10,000 and greater than 1:250,000 (e.g. 1:50,000), contain more details, as in town maps. Not everything can be drawn to scale on maps, so roads, rivers, buildings, and other features are replaced by symbols.

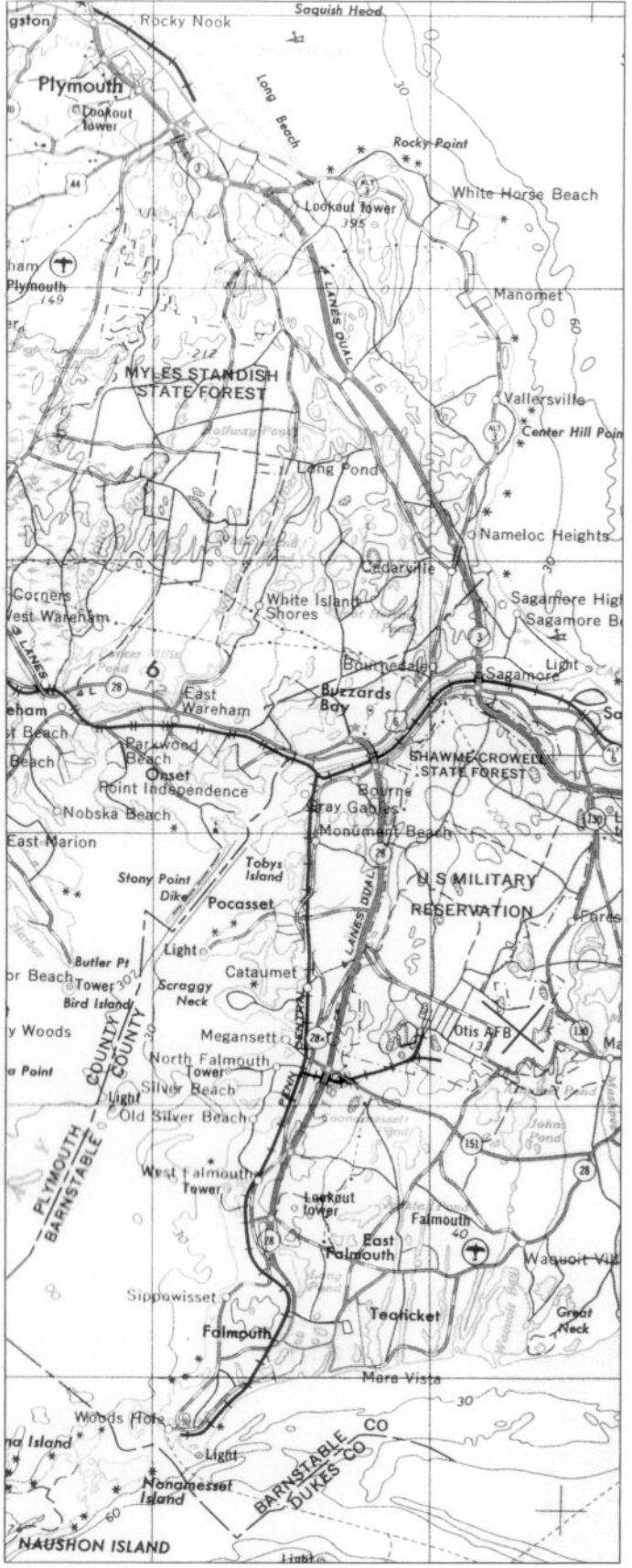


FIGURE 2.3 Topographic map: location, distance, direction, and scale. A 1:250,000 map of part of eastern Massachusetts. What other information does the map provide? In what direction does Route 3 travel on leaving Plymouth toward Sagamore, Cape Cod?

Source: U.S. Geological Survey

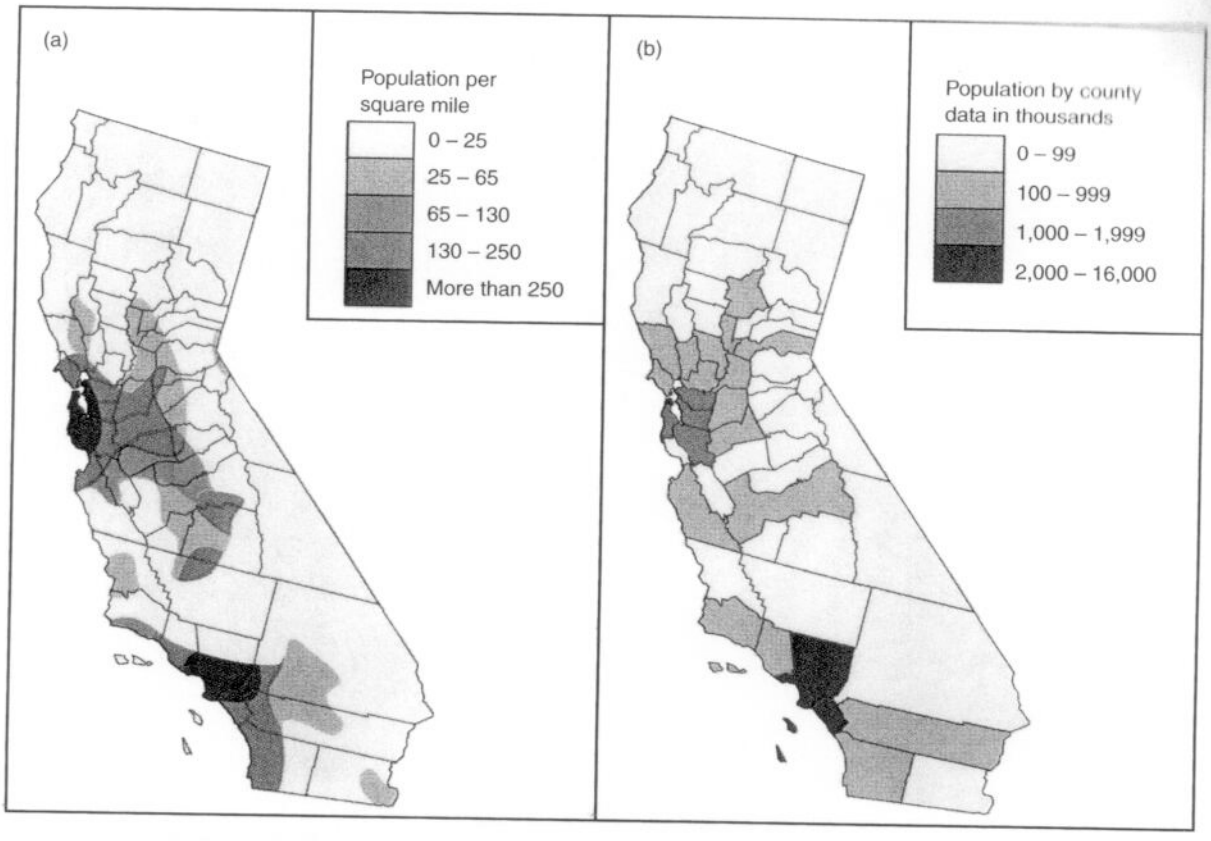


FIGURE 2.4 (A) AND (B) Thematic maps. What does each tell us about California? (a) Isoline map, where lines join places of equal population density. (b) Choropleth map, where the population totals for each county are grouped and the county areas shaded by category.

Maps

Geographers often use maps to present information about location, direction, distance, and other characteristics of areas. **Maps** are relatively small pieces of paper that represent much larger areas of Earth's surface. Representing Earth's sphere on flat paper is a problem that troubled cartographers for generations. They projected the framework of parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude onto flat paper in various ways. Some of the solutions, known as map projections, are described in the Reference Section (Map Projections, page 582).

Location maps present information about where places are, the distances between them, and the directions from one to another. Thematic maps present information about such features as population totals, densities, or distributions. Thematic maps often use **isolines**, which join together points having the same value. For instance, contours join places of the same height above sea level and are used to show the relief (rise and fall) of a landscape. Isolines are also used to show such information as equal distances, costs of travel from a place, or population densities (Figure 2.4a, see Figure 2.10). *Choropleth maps* (Figure 2.4b) are used where units of area such as counties or countries are shaded. The values for the total number of areas are grouped in class intervals and a shade assigned to each group. *Dot maps* and *graduated circle maps* also show distributions of people or product output (Figure 2.4c,d). In dot maps, each dot has a specific value (e.g., 5,000 people), while graduated circles are drawn in proportion to the total population of a given area.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Modern maps are important sources of information, but ancient maps were also greatly valued as summaries of the available knowledge about the world. Even before locational systems and accurately surveyed details were considered essential features of maps, they were widely used.

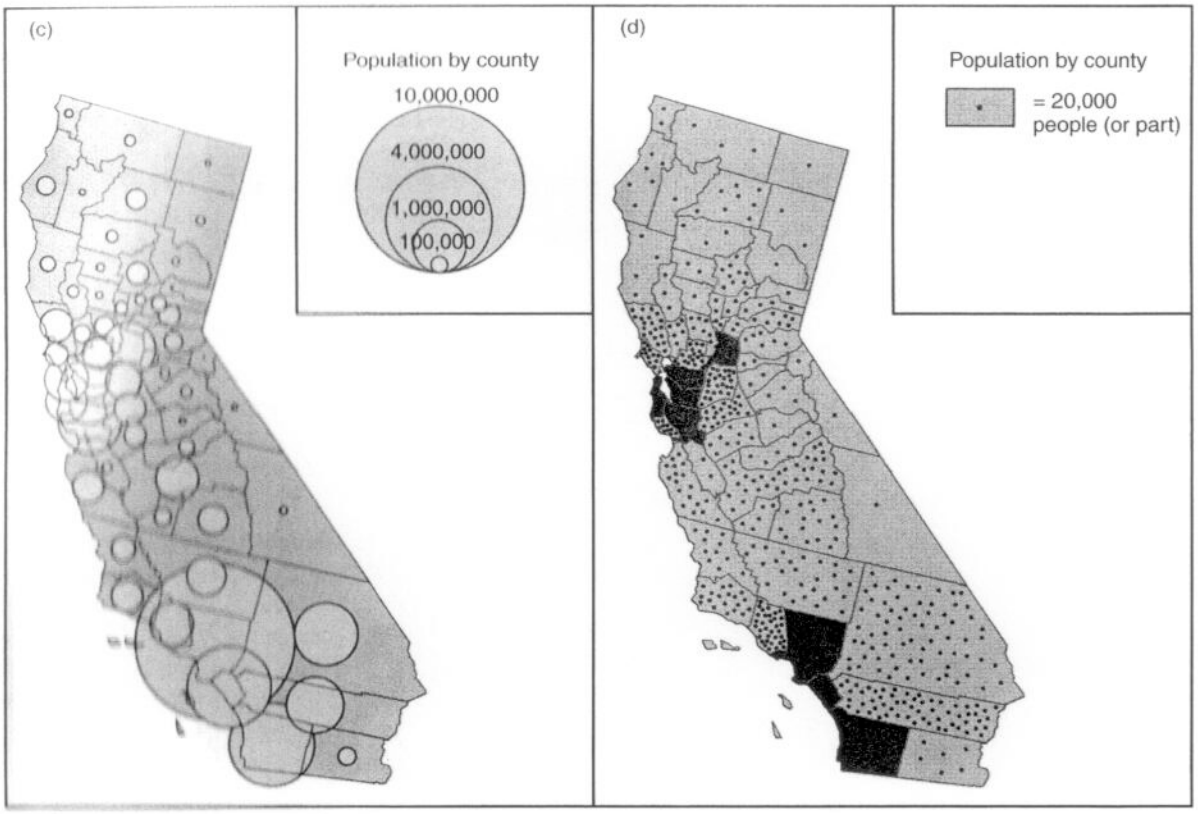


FIGURE 2.4 (C) AND (D) Thematic maps. What does each tell us about California? (c) Graduated circles, where the area of a circle represents the total population of a county. (d) Dot map, in which each dot is equal to the same number of people.

The *Mappa Mundi* ("World Map") produced in England in A.D. 1289 (Figure 2.5) has north at the left, coastal boundaries that are scarcely identifiable, and details of mythological creatures and Biblical places, as well as names of the major European cities. It was regarded as one of the most important information systems available to scholars at the time.

Components of a GIS

Today geographers often use the power of computers to combine maps and the statistical analysis of data that is tied to geographic locations, producing **geographic information systems** (GIS). The results are often displayed as maps and associated statistical values. A series of overlay maps, such as those shown in Figure 2.6, can be extracted individually or in combinations. If geographers wish, for example, to identify neighborhoods in a city in the United States that are experiencing the economic and social upgrading process known as gentrification (see Chapter 9), they might use a base map that shows census tracts—the smallest division for which the U.S. Bureau of Census reports a wide range of data. They will then produce maps and graphs showing the distribution of higher-income groups, tracts where income increased markedly between censuses, and those where there is a predominance of single professional people or couples without children. Such analyses make it possible to identify localities for detailed

WEBSITES: Maps and GIS

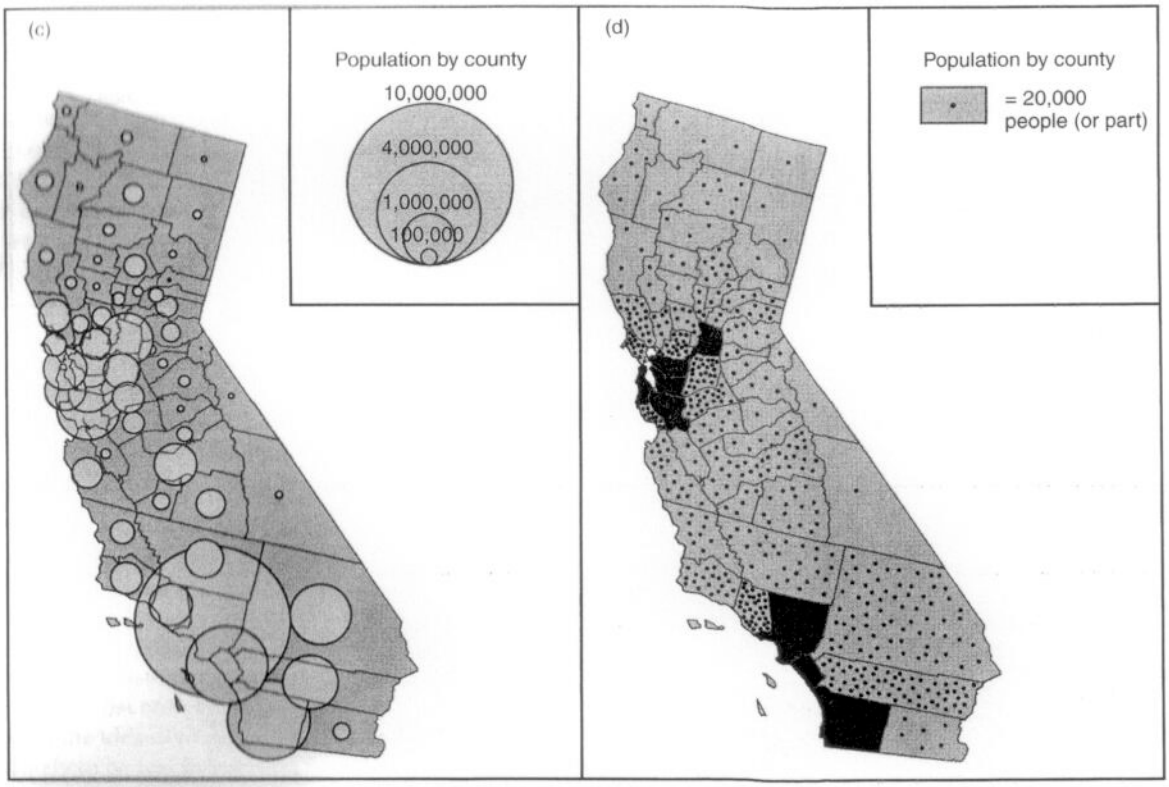
http://www.usgs.gov/research/gis/title.html

http://www.esri.com/library/gis/abtgis/what_gis.html

Both these sites contain "What Is GIS?" features, including examples of the use of this technology. Follow through one of them to find out more about GIS. The U.S. Geological Survey produces topographic maps for the United States and has a site on place-names. It also has a site devoted to LANDSAT images. ESRI Corporation is the main producer of mapping software.

http://earth.jsc.nasa.gov

This site provides a selection of space shuttle views that can be downloaded, together with short descriptions of each view. You can select by topic and area, leading to thumbnail views of those that meet selection criteria. Try accessing a view for your home region.



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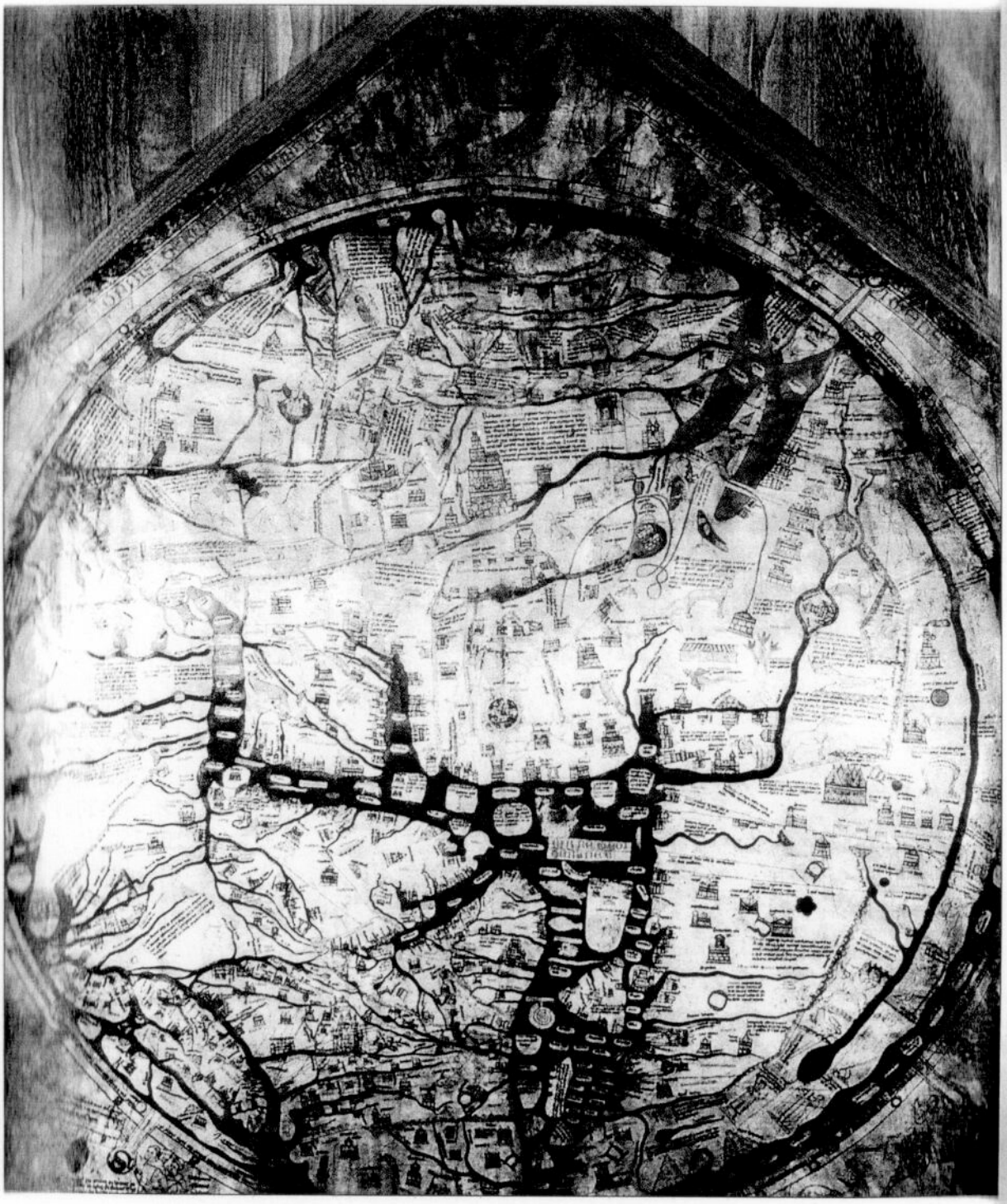


FIGURE 2.5 An ancient GIS: Mappa Mundi. This map, on exhibition in Hereford Cathedral, England, is the only surviving complete world map of that time. Drawn in A.D. 1289, it includes Europe, Africa, and Asia, summarizing information about the known world (no Americas). It puts north on the left, and its religious origin is shown by having Jerusalem at the center and paradise at the top. The dark area in the lower center is the Mediterranean Sea; the British Isles are at the bottom left; and the Red Sea (top right) is colored red. This map began a process that led to today's political and business maps and to the military electronic maps of today.

Reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trustees

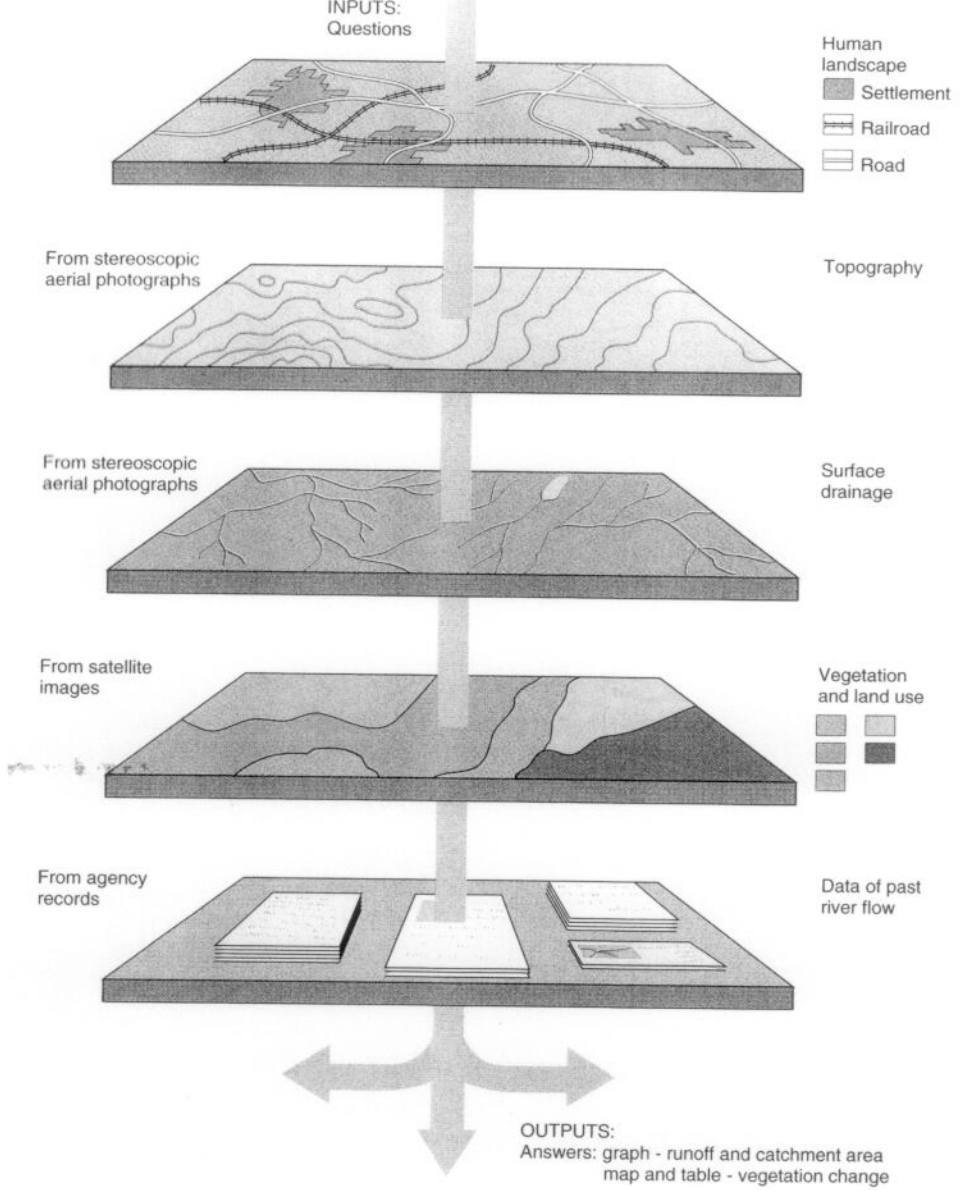


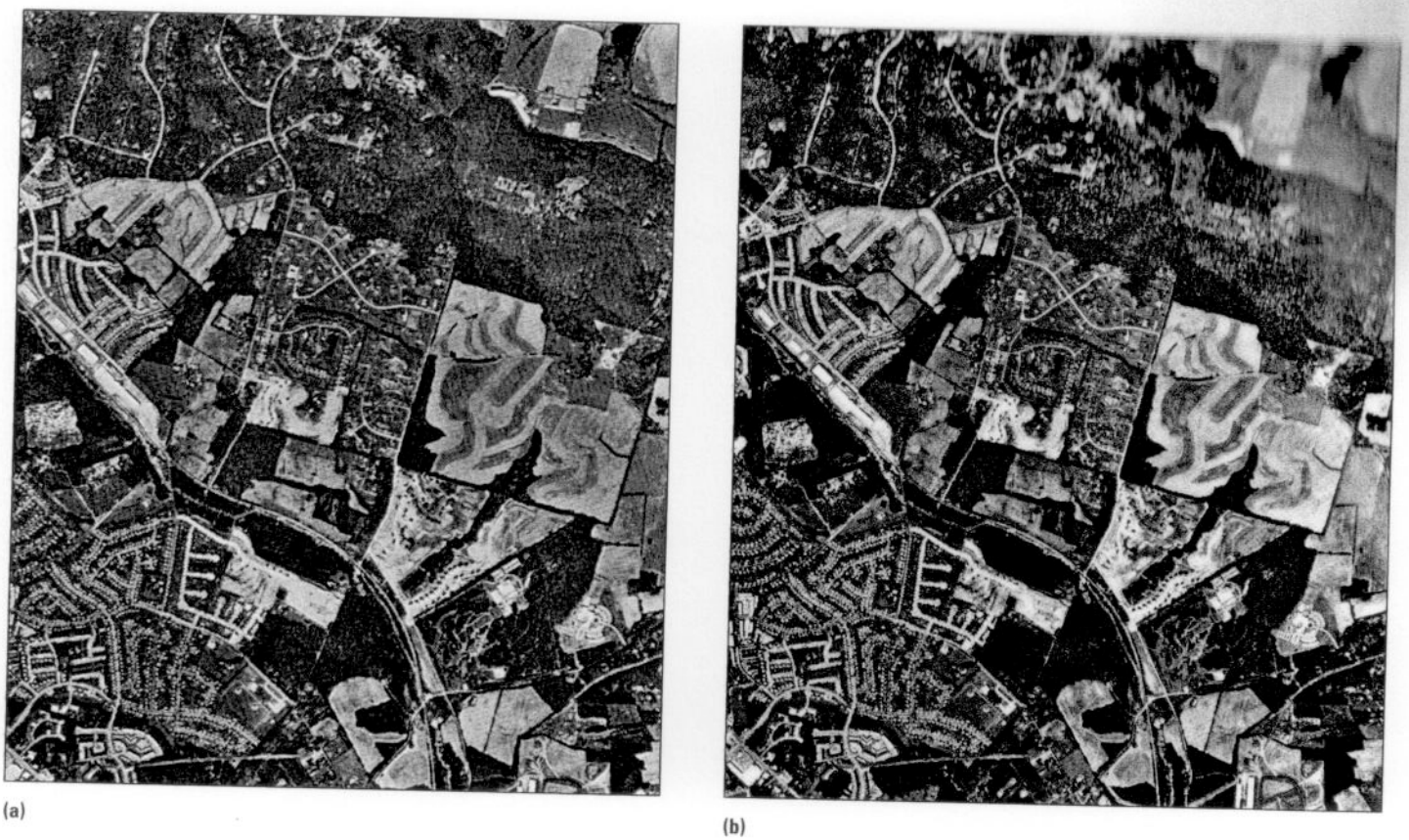
FIGURE 2.6 Geographic information system. The layers of information in this example could be used to monitor a river system that feeds a reservoir. Outputs from the system might include graphs of seasonal stream flow divided by drainage basin area and dominant vegetation cover type, and maps of changing land use.

fieldwork. The census tracts are too large and the data is not sufficiently detailed, however, to enable geographers to identify gentrifying areas without linked field-based inquiries.

Aerial and Satellite Views of Earth

Remote sensing—a set of techniques that uses aerial photographs or satellite images to gather information about the land uses of Earth's surface—is increasingly part of a geographer's analytic tools. Aerial photographs and satellite images often figure in geographic information systems. They provide a cost-efficient means of surveying an area, and government agencies depend on them to make maps.

Most remote sensing systems use cameras and scanners that record the amount of solar energy reflected toward them from Earth's surface. Artificially generated radiation is also used in radar systems. Different objects can be identified because they reflect the energy in distinctive ways. Human eyes detect only a small part of the sun's radiation, termed visible light, but remote sensing systems are sensitive to a



(a)

(b)

FIGURE 2.7 Aerial photographs. (a) Black and white photographs distinguish among different light reflectances of ground surface land uses. (b) False color adds information sensed by infrared radiation (red colors), assisting in the interpretation of a variety of land uses, such as crops or grass in fields and buildings in urban areas.

(a) & (b) NASA

wider range of radiated waves. They provide a view of Earth's surface that enables scientists to make maps and detect the nature of surface features from different crops to mineral deposits.

Aerial photographs can be black and white or color and record visible and infrared reflected energy (Figure 2.7). True color photographs record the landscape in the colors seen by the pilot. False-color photographs drop some of the visible spectrum and replace it with infrared. In such false-color photographs, healthy vegetation shows up as bright red. Aerial photographs are often taken with a 60 percent overlap between adjacent photos. Such overlapping photographs can be placed beneath an arrangement of mirrors called a stereoscope to recreate the three-dimensional landscape seen from the plane. Measurements of height from the 3D view make it possible to plot contours from such photographs. Space shuttle astronauts take photographs of Earth with handheld cameras (Figure 2.8).

Satellite images are from electronic scanners on board satellites in fixed orbits around Earth. Images of a whole hemisphere are obtained from satellites positioned some 36,000 km (22,500 mi.) above the equator. Their orbital speed matches Earth's rotation, making the satellite appear stationary (a geostationary orbit). Images from such satellites are of small scale and are used mostly for weather observations. Satellites at lower altitudes of 900 km (550 mi.) above the surface do not keep up with Earth's rotation, and their orbits cross the poles every 12 hours. Such satellite images show more detail and are particularly useful in monitoring surface land uses.

A major problem affecting the wider use of satellite images is the barrier formed by clouds. Much of Earth's surface is obscured, especially in the more humid parts of the world where most people live. Systems using radar technology penetrate cloud cover, giving clear views of the surface during day or night. Radar systems do not depend on the sun's illumination but send out and collect their own radiation at wavelengths that "see through" clouds.

A close look at a satellite image shows it is composed of a grid of small squares, or pixels ("picture elements"). The ground area represented by a pixel determines the amount of detail on the image. The best pixel size achieved in civilian systems is 10 m by 10 m from the French SPOT sensor. The digital nature of the data used to construct each image means that computers can store, analyze, and develop such images, making them an integral part of geographic information systems.

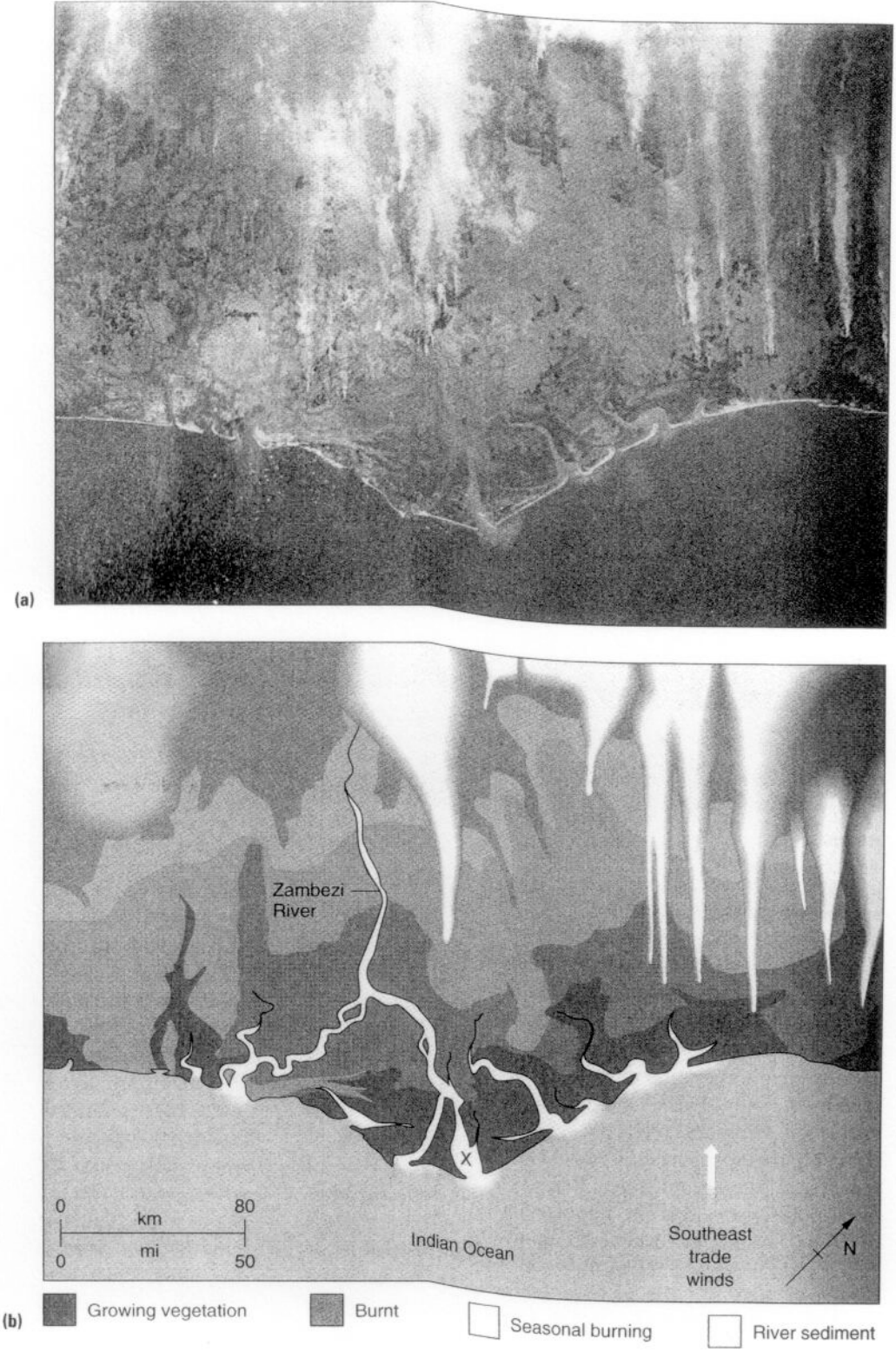


FIGURE 2.8 Space shuttle photo: the coast of Mozambique, Southern Africa. (a) The false-color reds are from the infrared radiation of growing vegetation, picking out wetlands near the coast. Red colors are absent from areas of seasonal burning. The smoke from burning areas shows the constancy of the trade winds blowing from the Indian Ocean. The map (b) provides details and scale. Space shuttle photos feature in each regional chapter of this text.

(a) Nasa, Michael Helfert

Distributions, Density, and Diffusion

Maps like those in Figure 2.4 show **distributions** of events and phenomena, such as where earthquakes occur or where computers are made. Distributions have patterns that may be regular (in lines or clusters) or random. Distributions also show **densities**—the frequency of a phenomenon in a unit of land area. For instance, population density (see Figure 2.10) is measured in numbers of people per square kilometer (or mile).

RECAP 2A: Sense of Place

Basic geographic concepts include location (defined by latitude and longitude), direction (points of the compass), distance (actual in kilometers, time, cost), distribution, density, and diffusion.

Maps are basic tools of geographers for representing details of places and their relationships to each other. Geographic information systems merge a range of geographic data including maps, statistics, and aerial or satellite images.

2A.1 When would it be best to use thematic maps with isolines, choropleths, proportional symbols, or dots? Find other examples of these maps.

Key Terms:

location
latitude
parallel of latitude
longitude
meridian of longitude
distance
direction
friction of distance
scale
distribution
density
diffusion
map
isoline
geographic information system (GIS)
remote sensing

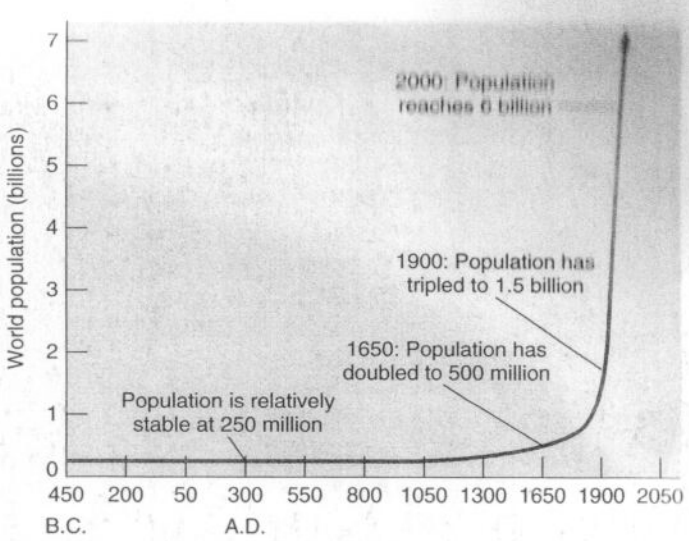


FIGURE 2.9 World population growth. For most of the human occupation of Earth, population growth was slow compared to the last 300 years. The population took 1,300 years to double from 250 to 500 million, then doubled again in 200 years. In the 1900s, world population quadrupled.

Distributions and densities change as people, ideas, or items that people use move from place to place. This process is known as **diffusion**. When people move in large numbers, they diffuse from older to new areas and relocate there. For instance, the rural black population of the southern United States diffused into local cities and then northward to major cities such as Washington, D.C., New York, and Chicago. Large numbers of African Americans moved in these directions between 1920 and 1960 (see Figure 9.30). Since then, the diffusion of African Americans has slowed and partly reversed its direction. From the 1940s to the 1980s, both black and white Americans diffused from the Northeast toward the West Coast.

Diffusion is not only characteristic of people movements. New technologies, fashions in clothes, or music diffuse by expansion, a process aided by easier communications. Diseases spread by contagion in person-to-person contacts. Barriers such as international borders and language differences hamper diffusion, although both are proving less resistant to change as transportation, communications, and political agreements reduce their significance.

WORLD POPULATION GEOGRAPHY: PEOPLE MATTER

In mid-1998, there were estimated to be over 5.9 billion people living in the world. Projections suggest that by 2010 the total will be 6.9 billion, rising to 8 billion by 2025. After thousands of years in which world population rose steadily to around 0.25 billion 2,000 years ago and 0.5 billion in A.D. 1650, it increased rapidly from the start of the industrial revolution in the 1700s (Figure 2.9). In 1900, the world population reached 1.9 billion and then multiplied four times during the following century. Questions asked by regional geographers include: How is the world population distributed? How do the processes of population change distinguish among regions? And, how many people can Earth support—as a whole and in each region? The last of these will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Population Distribution

The world's highest densities of population occur in Europe, Southern Asia, Eastern Asia, and the eastern United States (Figure 2.10). Population densities in other world regions are low, with peaks in limited, mainly coastal areas around industrial port cities. Large expanses of the world's lands have very low population densities, often linked to economies based on low-productivity farming or to the more difficult natural environments of desert, ice sheet, high mountain, and areas with very long winters.

The number of people in a region and their density—or people per square kilometer—depend on the natural resources available, the historic use of those resources, and the type of economy and technology that is dominant. For example, the traditional world hinterland way of life still adopted by many Native American tribes in the Amazon basin of South America and by peoples in the cold northern lands of North America and Eurasia always supported low densities of population. Higher densities resulted from settled and more intensive agriculture, particularly in the rice lands of Eastern Asia. Both here and in the richer countries of western Europe and Anglo America, high-density rural populations dependent on farming were thinned in the 1900s by the mechanization of agriculture and migration to growing

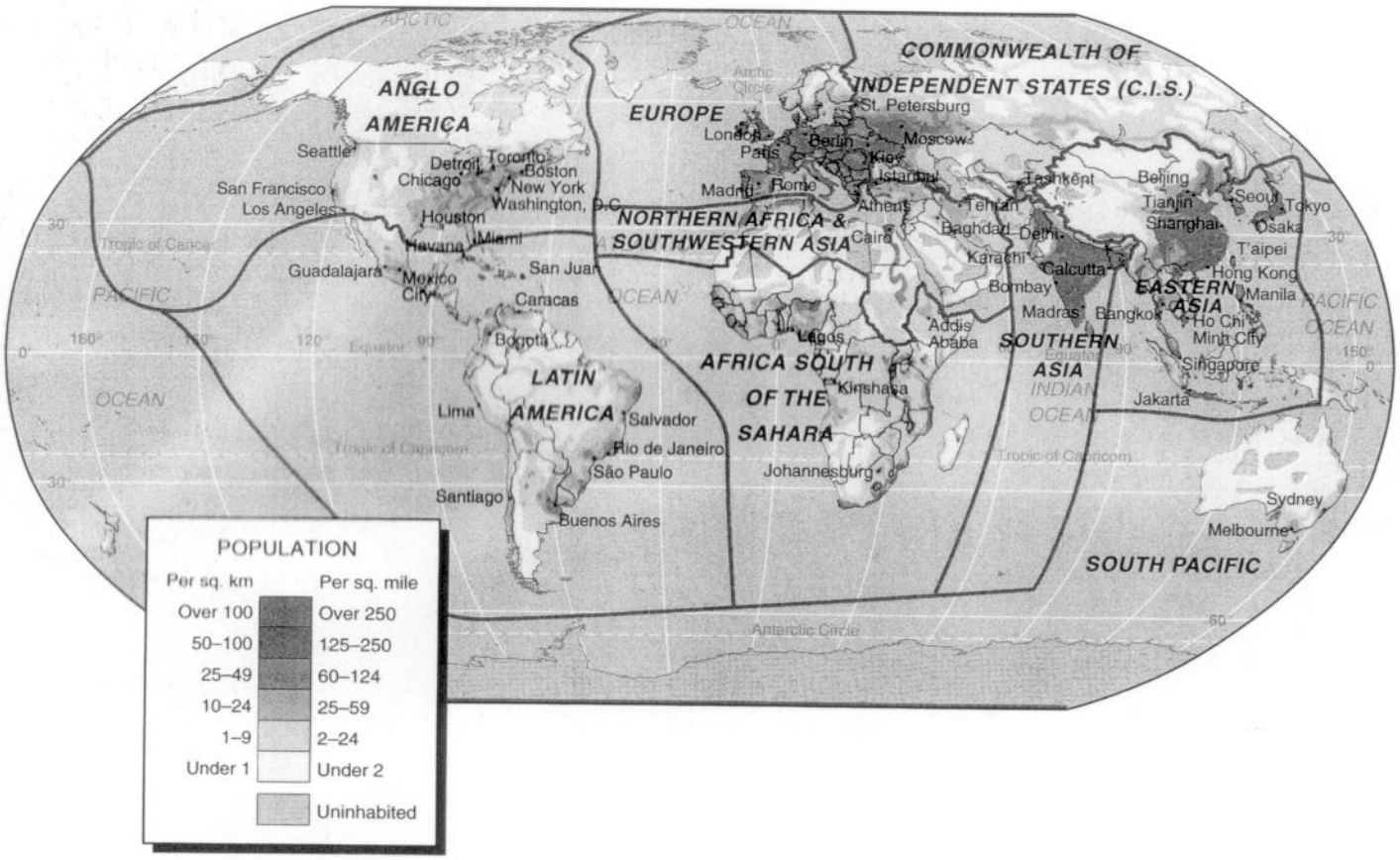


FIGURE 2.10 World population distribution. Which major regions have the highest and lowest densities of population? As you read through this chapter, look for evidence that might explain the differences.

urban-industrial areas. Most current population growth occurs in large metropolitan areas.

Demography

Demography is the study of human populations in terms of their numbers, density, growth or decline, and their movements from place to place. Changes in the population of a region are determined by whether births exceed deaths, immigration exceeds emigration, and the overall balance between natural change and migration change.

- Trends in the **birth rate** (births per 1,000 inhabitants in a year) are often related to the **total fertility rate** (average number of births per woman in her lifetime) to work out the likely future rate of births. Total fertility rates of 6 to 7 are typical of many poorer countries, while richer countries have rates of 2 or below.
- The **death rate** (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants in a year) is often broken down into age groups. **Infant mortality** (deaths per 1,000 live births in the first year of life) and child mortality (deaths per 1,000 live births in the first five years of life) are examples. Infant mortality rates are below 10 in richer countries but still above 100 in many poor countries, including Haiti and several in Africa and Asia.
- The combination of birth rates and death rates defines the **natural population change**—the rate of increase or decrease of the total population. The composition of a country's population is often shown in an age-sex diagram, also termed "population pyramid" (Figure 2.11), the shape of which provides strong indications about the population's recent history and potential future.
- **Migration** is the long-term movement of people in and out of a place. If immigration to a country or region exceeds emigration, numbers of people there increase. Immigration is a major cause of population increase in the United States at the present time, since natural increase is slow. The U.S. population grew by 2.6 million between July 1989 and July 1990; of that gain, 1.5 million (58%) were legal immigrants (i.e., this total does not include refugees or illegal aliens, who added more). The United States does not report emigration but assumes a net annual loss of around 0.2 million. Net immigration was thus at least half of U.S. population growth.

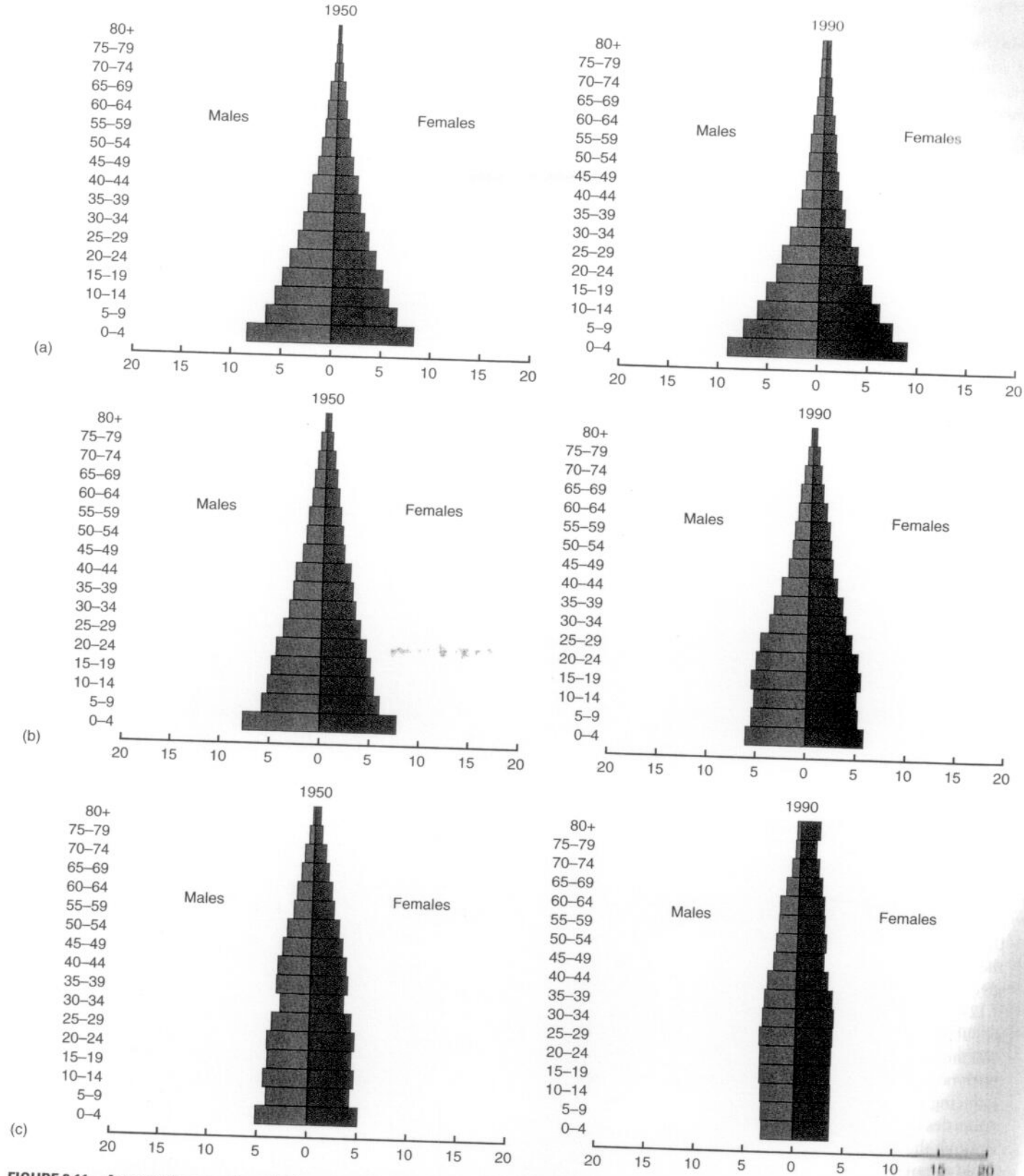


FIGURE 2.11 Age-sex diagrams (population pyramids). The numbers of people in a country are divided into five-year age groups, male and female, up to 80 years; those over 80 are included in a single group for each sex. This gives the sequence of bars. Each age group is represented as a percentage of the whole, making the diagrams comparable over time and from country to country. The shape of the diagrams indicates important characteristics of the population. The three examples here show: (a) countries with high birth rates in both 1950 and 1990 have two pyramid-shaped graphs; (b) countries that reduced birth rates from 1950 to 1990 have one pyramid and one evenly distributed graph; (c) countries that had low birth and death rates in both 1950 and 1990 have two evenly distributed graphs.

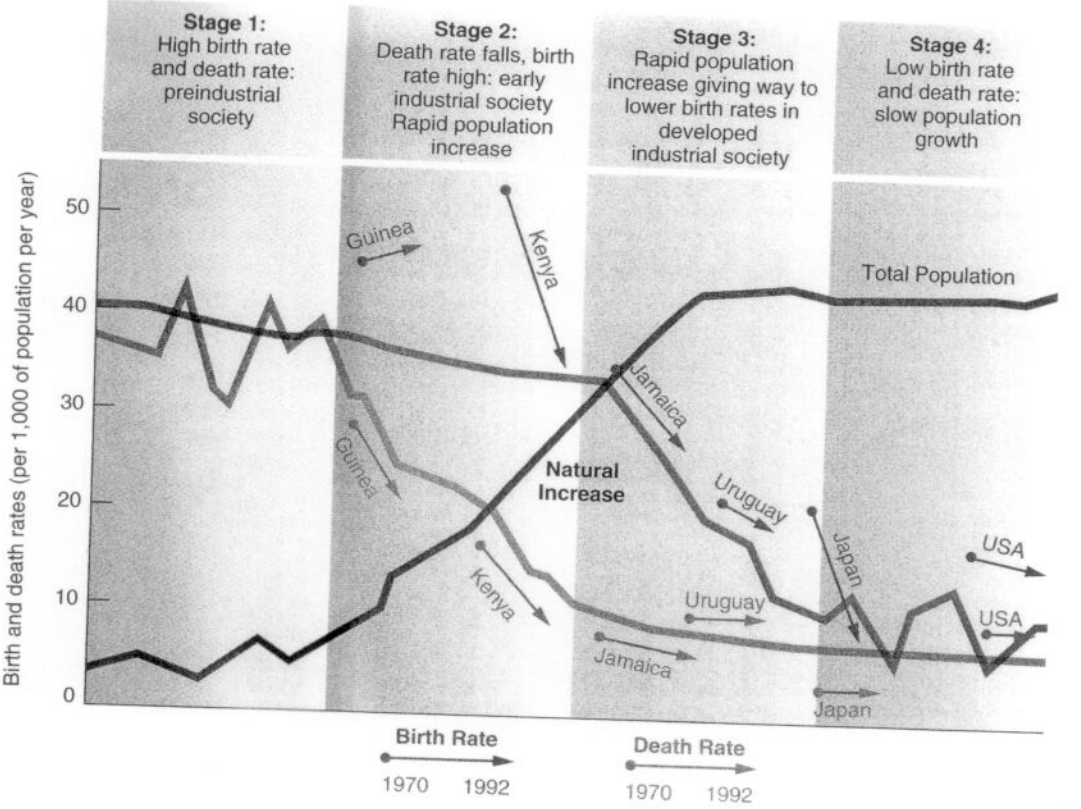


FIGURE 2.12 Demographic transition. Population change is plotted, from high birth and death rates (Stage 1) to low birth and death rates (Stage 4). All countries were in Stage 1 until the 1800s, when Western countries began to move toward Stage 4. Today many countries are in Stages 2 and 3, in which population increases rapidly as death rates fall, but birth rates remain high. Each stage is linked to a phase of economic growth. Similar diagrams are drawn for each world region in this text. Notice where countries depart from this general progression. It has been suggested that there should be a Stage 5, in which birth rates and death rates are both low, but the death rate is greater than the birth rate and the population declines.

- When natural and migration changes are combined, an overall population *increase* of 1 percent per year means that the population will double in 70 years; one of 2 percent means it will double in 35 years; and one of 3 percent means it will double in 23 years. It is common for richer countries to have low rates of overall population increase, below 0.5 percent, while poorer countries have rates of increase around 2 to 3 percent. Rapid increases of population make it difficult for countries to plan for providing jobs or housing, especially if the rate of population growth exceeds the rate of economic growth.
- As countries progress economically, they generally pass through a process of **demographic transition**, in which the high birth and death rates typical of poorer countries give way over time to low birth and death rates (Figure 2.12). At both ends of the sequence, there is slow population growth. In the second stage, medical science and improved food supplies reduce death rates but keep birth rates high. In the third stage, birth rates fall, reducing the rate of population growth. The core countries of western Europe and Anglo America passed through the sequence in the 1800s and early 1900s. The rapid population increases during the middle phases of demographic transition place stresses on the resources available to feed the extra mouths. Although rates of population increase in the world are slowing at present, doubt remains as to whether some countries will emerge from the middle stage of demographic transition, how long emergence will take, and whether this process applies to all countries. At the same time, countries in the former Soviet Union and some European countries have declining populations as death rates exceed birth rates (see Chapters 7 and 8).

WEBSITES: Population Change

http://www.popnet.org

This site gives access to a wide range of population information sources and is organized by the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C. The opening page lists some alternative approaches to the information—through listings of other websites of the world's countries supplying up-to-date data. The main headings are: "Organizational Sources" (by country), "Selected Topics" (demographic statistics, economics, education, environment, gender, policy, reproductive health), "Clickable World Map" (major regions), and "Keyword Search." One valuable facility provides the ability to devise and print out population pyramids (age-sex graphs) for each country for several years, including future projections. Try this: enter the site homepage, then choose "Organizational Sources—Government Organizations—U.S. Census Bureau International Programs Center—International Data Base—Population Pyramids." Then you can choose a country, years, and size of graph, and print it out.

http://www.prb.org

This Population Reference Bureau site provides up-to-date information and data on population issues, including its annual world data sheet and text of its monthly bulletin, *Population Today*.

Population Policies

In the late 1990s, variations in directions and rates of population change are major world issues causing differences in regional geography and highlighting potential future crises for regions. The main consensus of the 1994 International Conference on World Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, was that population growth should be contained. Although opinions differed about how many people the world and its resources can support, it was agreed that the present rates of growth of over 2 percent per year in many countries are too high.

In the 1950s, governments first identified population growth as a major issue facing the world. Initially, contraceptive techniques were thought to be the key to controlling population growth, so they were made widely available in poorer countries. Then the demographic transition process suggested that reduced birth rates accompany economic growth, so policies in the 1960s and 1970s were based on the "development is the best contraceptive" slogan. In some countries, however, large families continue to be seen as necessary for survival or as a means of gaining status within the culture. By contrast, parts of India and Kenya had major falls in fertility rates with little or no economic growth. The demographic transition process may reflect the experience of western Europe and Anglo America in the 1800s. By A.D. 2000, it is not yet fulfilled beyond the middle stage in much of the rest of the world.

Many factors are important in achieving population stabilization, including education and the improvement of women's status—both points that were emphasized at the 1994 world population conference. A greater role for women in deciding on the numbers of children they will have is still resisted strongly in some countries because of ingrained cultural beliefs.

The causes of population growth (or decline) are complex and closely related to cultural expectations. In considering overall planning policies, countries need to relate their population growth rate to what can be sustained by available resources of food and other basic needs. Some countries are experiencing a surprising level of success in population control. For example, Bangladesh, a very poor and overpopulated country in which women have a very low status, is experiencing rapid falls in birth rates. Its family planning policies provide families with access to a variety of choices that they had not previously considered.

WORLD POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: COUNTRIES AND GOVERNMENTS

Political geography is the study of how governments influence the human geography of the world and its regions. Self-governing countries are the basic political units: within its borders, a government has political control, or sovereignty, over the country's inhabitants. The world is divided into around 200 self-governing countries, each of which is recognized by other countries. Country governments have powers to promote and protect their peoples in world affairs, provide public services, and encourage economic and social development internally. They often have systems of regional and local government that carry out some of the governmental responsibilities at different geographic levels. Country governments may also join with other country governments in mutual trading or defense agreements. In world regional geography, countries provide the main units of study.

Nations and Nationalism

A country as defined above is not always the same as a nation. A nation is an "imagined community" having common cultural features, usually linked to a specific area of land. The cultural features may be language, religion, or other characteristic with a historic background. In the country known as the United Kingdom, for example, the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish consider themselves distinctive nations and often enter separate teams in world sporting events. The notion of "tribe" is close to that of "nation" (see Chapter 3), but many African countries contain several tribes, while their modern boundaries, imposed by colonizers, often cut across tribal territories. When countries contain more than one nation, scope exists for political tensions to arise.

Nationalism—the desire to combine cultural and territorial features—became basic to the formation of countries in Europe from around A.D. 1800. It gained significance as the rise of capitalism turned allegiances away from overriding feudal principles or ecclesiastical loyalties. The increased levels of communication made possible through printed books and newspapers, the telegraph, telecommunications, radio, and television bolstered nationalism. From the 1800s, universal education supported nationalist themes through selective views of history that glorified the national experience. European nations, such as Germany, emerged as countries in the 1800s, when a group of smaller states united under the linguistic banner. In the 1900s, Germany used the idea of uniting separated German-speaking minorities in other countries as an excuse for talk of national supremacy. This twice led to world wars, when Germany discovered limits to the expansionism its neighboring countries would tolerate.

Governments

Governments range from those elected democratically to those dominated by dictators. Some countries have a unitary governmental structure, administering all parts from the center for all aspects of government. Other countries have a federal government structure in which they divide the authority for various activities between a central government and partitions called states or provinces. In the United States, for example, the federal government has responsibility for