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**GEOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF DISPOSSESSION
- AN ANALYSIS OF A DISCIPLINARY PEDIGREE**

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GEOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF DISPOSSESSION – AN ANALYSIS OF A DISCIPLINARY PEDIGREE

There are at least two tensions that are relevant when considering geographical studies of the process of dispossession. There is the tension of the relationship between the expansion of capitalism and the conquest and dispossession that that capitalist expansion necessitated, and a further area of sensitivity - the compliant role of geographical studies as servant of that expansion, making conquest and dispossession possible. This is coupled with the fact that these processes of domination were in part responsible for the professionalization of the discipline, hence geography is a benefactor of capitalist expansion, given its clearly stated interest in patterns and processes (Glick 1984). These tensions will be addressed in the primary objective of this paper, which is to conduct an examination of the geographical discourse on dispossession.

The study of 'dispossession' in the disciplinary history of historical geography has a distinguished, but underdeveloped, pedigree. This is seen by conducting, what Foucault (1980) has termed, an 'archaeology' or examination of the discourse - the knowledge and language - of historical geography. Preliminary excavations by Foucault (1980) and Buttimer (1983) revealed the extent to which war *per se*, conflict and military concerns are not strangers to geography. They found that spatial metaphors, terms, and concepts such as 'displacement', 'front', 'region', 'field', and 'province' are equally geographical and strategic, and that a transfer of notions can be observed between geographical and strategic discourses. Indeed, academic geography grew up in the shadow of the military (Foucault 1980), and its language needs to be seen in the context of geography's strategic function.

Before analysing the general phenomenon of dispossession it is necessary to define 'dispossession' and 'invasion'. An invasion, by definition, involves the actions of entering as an enemy, intruding as if to take possession or overrun, and the advent of anything troublesome or harmful. As such it is a dynamic, privative and negative process, informed as much by the intentions and actions of those invading as it is by the consequences or outcomes for the invaded. Dispossession, as a direct outcome of invasion, can be disaggregated into four interrelated processes or dimensions: spatial disorganization, ecological degradation, political alienation and cultural disintegration. I propose to examine geographical studies of only one of these components - spatial disorganization, and assess the peculiar input of key geographers by way of approaches, interpretations and the kinds of information their research has generated.

Dispossession, by definition, is a fundamental disorganization of the space relations of an invaded people. This spatial transformation can be represented by transitive verbs such as expel, exclude, banish, seclude, deprive, dislodge, evict, unhouse, supplant, substitute, expropriate, dislocate, disperse, and displace, which together encapsulate the actions (processes) and outcomes (patterns) that underlie dispossession. Because invasion directly threatens the traditional production processes of indigenous peoples, the loss of unrestricted access to the land and its resources implies a loss of control of the environment and the procurement of foodstuffs is rendered more difficult; seasonal occupation and distribution patterns collapse; depopulation occurs through indigenous resistance and its crushing, and clans collapse and remnants gather together - often forced to reside in areas least attractive to both conflicting land users. This spatial component of dispossession, which I have called 'spatial disorganization', corresponds to Brunhes' (1920) notion of 'devastation', Whittlesey's (1929) 'sequent occupation', and Urlich's (1972) 'disruption'.

When geographers have addressed this dimension, they have often attempted to describe and theorize spatial disorganization. Friedrich Ratzel's formulations on the contest for area between cultures in *Politische Geographie* (1897) was the first notable attempt at a geographical interpretation of invasion and spatial expansion. His interest in spatial disorganization began in 1874 when he visited North America and began to formulate general concepts on the geographic patterns resulting from contact between different cultures. He theorized that political entities, such as states and tribes, have distinct and natural living spaces (*lebensraum*). Because these entities contract certain ecological bonds with the soil which enable them to subsist, and eventually expand to their natural limits as spatial organisms, Ratzel considered it was possible

to characterize all cultures as possessing either ground-gaining or ground-losing qualities. The historical struggle for space is seen in the meeting zones of cultures where there is a contest for dominance, and a balance is established and new boundaries are formed by either conquest, absorption, trade or superior adaptability.

Paul Vidal de la Blache went beyond Ratzel in the examination of a society's morphology and developed the notion of *genre de vie* - the critical key in his agenda for geography - which in part was to analyze cultural landscapes and to capture the 'personality' and individuality of particular regions. Vidal understood a *genre de vie* (literally life-style or style of living) to be a unified, functionally organized pattern of living which characterized certain livelihood groups. The Vidalian notion designated a certain economic, social, spiritual and psychological identity imprinted in the landscape that echoed the integration of place, livelihood, and social organization in a group's daily life (Buttimer 1971). As such a society's *genre de vie* is the geographical expression of its way of life, of its type of economy, its mode of production. At the root of both the concepts of 'mode of production' and *genre de vie* is the explication of the material grounding of practical life (Gregory 1981). The contact of two *genres de vie* or the interaction of two modes of production would be expected to produce certain landscape indices. The fruitfulness of the Vidalian tradition for a geography of dispossession is addressed in greater detail in a later section.

Dispossession became a central theme in historical geography in the work of Carl Sauer. In an examination of geographical research, Sauer (1925) argued that historical geography was concerned with the series of changes wrought in cultural landscapes, and therefore historical-geographical research involved the reconstruction of past cultural landscapes. Of special concern was the catalytic relation of civilized society to area and the effects of the replacement of cultures. Sauer believed that from this difficult and relatively untouched field could be gained a full realization of the development of the present cultural landscape.

In a later paper, Sauer (1930) addressed issues of the methodology of a historical geography of culture contact in greater detail. He argued that it was necessary to know occupied areas in their condition at the time of occupation, for only through such a reconstruction would it be possible to get the necessary datum line to measure the amount and character of transformation induced by culture. He suggested that a programme of inquiry into the manner of colonization and 'the replacement of settlements' or dispossession would need to reconstruct many specific early cultural landscapes, and would need to be based on an understanding of the community's demographic history, the origin of the settlers and the resources attracting them to the site, and how they laid out their fields and habitations - in short, Sauer argued, the geographer would need to know how the settlers changed the country they found!

Sauer's emphasis on cultural landscape, and his insistence that historical geography was well placed in that field because it was that branch of geography which was concerned to reconstruct past landscapes, became celebrated features of the Berkeley School of Geography. A student of Sauer's, Derwent Whittlesey, embraced the concept of reconstruction of past cultural landscapes in an essay entitled *Sequent Occupance* (1929). Whittlesey coined the phrase 'sequent occupance' to refer to the progression of cultures and cultural impresses on the landscape. Every culture, it is argued, has its own mode of occupance or its own mode of gaining a living from an area. 'Cultural impress' is a synonym for that part of the meaning of occupance which refers to the results of occupying an area (James 1934). As James (1934) has pointed out, in most parts of the world the first inhabitants to transform the fundement (the landscape before human activity) have been replaced by other groups with different cultures. So the forms of the later cultures are superimposed on the landscapes bequeathed by the earlier occupance. Whittlesey (1929) argued that the view of geography as a succession of stages of occupance establishes the genetics of each stage in terms of its predecessor. These sequences were initiated by such things as shifts in political boundaries, revolutions, movements of population, and the introduction of new technology (Whittlesey 1929).

This is not the place for a detailed critique of the sequent occupance approach which has been adequately appraised elsewhere (Mikesell 1976; Merrens 1965; Prince 1969), but some mention must be made of the value of 'cross-sectional reconstruction' for an analysis of dispossession. Merrens (1965) has argued that Whittlesey's approach adopts a generalized view of temporal change and areal variation, and consequently

under-estimates place-to-place variation existing in any one period, while minimizing changes during that era. Furthermore, in North America the time between the arrival of the European settlers and the end of the eighteenth century appears as a single and relatively homogenous stage, occurring between the Indian occupation and the era of industrialization, and is thus an oversimplification of the colonial period. Prince (1969) believes subsequent occupation studies failed to provide coherent accounts of processes because they do not explicitly acknowledge that human landscapes are shaped by complex processes of cultural transference, intermixture, absorption and replacement. If Prince is right, it should not be surprising to find that few new insights were gained into early American history: certainly it offers little of substance for the geography of dispossession.

Andrew Clark, another graduate from the Berkeley School of Geography, became the dominant figure in American historical geography for more than twenty years from the early 1950s. Meinig (1978a) has described Clark's (1949) work on New Zealand as the first detailed application of Berkeley's genetic approach to the study of European overseas colonization of middle latitude 'new lands' during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Clark (1949) described his study as a report on a revolutionary change in the character of a region, and hoped that it might be exemplary of the themes of historical geography. He claimed the study was a pioneering venture in terms of the nature of the material studied and the methods of research and analysis employed. Colonization was viewed as a process of transformation of the land, and special attention was given to the ensuing ecological problems. Yet it is disappointing that Clark (1949) stressed that the impact of colonization on the indigenous population was a peripheral issue. Clark employed the 'vertical themes' perspective to trace the origin, entry and spread of various elements such as people, plants and animals.

In his study of the Acadians, Clark (1966) referred to Griffith Taylor's interest in the ways in which individual groups of people coped with the opportunities and limitations of newly occupied regions. Clark emphasized that the great European migrations to the middle latitude lands overseas provided many examples in which the existence of certain communities was sufficiently long to have left an indelible stamp on their adopted territories. His justification for studying the Acadians was that it was the fate of small groups of people in small areas to be overlooked, and even forgotten, because the passion for historical and geographical generalization attached them for convenience to larger groups or regions. Although this referred to Europeans, it is my contention that the sentiment certainly applies to small groups of dispossessed indigenous people.

In his Acadian study Clark listed the ingredients that contributed to the basic human geography of 'colonization areas' - these were the natural characteristics, the antecedent cultural occupation and its effects, the nature of the invading culture, and the regional and worldwide contexts of the political, commercial, and strategic relationships of the region (Meinig 1978a). One final point of interest from *Acadia* was a refusal to compare 'colonization areas' on the grounds that, in the historical geography of the overseas expansion of Europe, there were scores or even hundreds of local and regional studies to be made and all too few had been completed. Consequently, broad generalizations would be premature.

In terms of geography's discourse on dispossession, Donald Meinig has made the greatest contribution. In an essay that appeared at the end of the 1960s, Meinig (1969) sought to present a simple framework, a broad and essentially global view, of the areal patterns of European western imperialism. Recognizing that the geographical study of imperialism can take two forms - a focus upon areal changes within a rigid temporal sequence or a focus upon the areal patterns themselves, studying them as frameworks within which the processes of history take place - Meinig's (1969) chief emphasis was with the latter: the areal forms or 'geographical morphologies' apparent within a general sequence of imperial expansions. Working from an understanding of imperialism that embraced Price's (1957) distinction of 'sojourner' and 'settler' colonialism, it is Meinig's consideration of settler colonialism that is relevant to this study. Noting essential differences between European colonizations within Europe itself and Europe's non-contiguous, trans-oceanic colonizations, he argued that the latter were encroachments upon relatively primitive, semi-nomadic peoples, thinly and loosely spread upon the land, different in culture, intractable to European control but

highly susceptible to European diseases. The result of these trans-oceanic colonizations was very largely a replacement of the old through annihilation, drastic diminution or expulsion.

Meinig (1969) agreed that in such new world situations when the indigenous population was thus removed, the colonizations were only momentarily imperial in the sense of the extension of political control over alien peoples. However, he argued that it was appropriate to consider these intercontinental settler migrations as a special type of imperial system because they were always obviously imperial in their initial stages - and for as long as the non-European indigenous population remained a significant part of local life, they ineluctably evolved to some degree into a new kind of imperial relationship that was reflected in the political tensions between a parent country and its overseas colonies. The geographical character of a typical unit of this kind of imperial system, Meinig (1969) argued, consisted of - a segment of coast upon which a European people had become firmly rooted and from which the indigenous population had been eliminated; an inland frontier where the replacement of the one population by the other was still in process; a deeper zone, as yet beyond the reach of settlers but disrupted by an influx of the displaced indigenous people from the coastal area; and a remote interior unexplored but claimed in the provisions of a generous charter.

According to Meinig (1969) the frontier - as a line, a region, and a process - was the most distinctive geographical feature: dynamic and uncontrolled, continually changing the positions and proportion of these identified zones. Once the frontier had advanced into new environments and out of close communication with the older settled zone, a geopolitical tension between frontier and seaboard mirrored in miniature that between overseas colony and mother country. In his conclusion he emphasized the significance of a morphological analysis to the patterns of culture contact and change. The patterns of spread and the power of the impact of exotic diseases, plants, animals, religion, technology, social, political and other influences are to be understood, not merely on the basis of the intrinsic characters of the cultures in contact, but also, by a close inspection of the geography of that contact - by particular spatial patterns, considered along with the scale of setting and proportionate relationships of the peoples involved. Meinig hoped that his essay would be suggestive of the rich promise the 'burgeoning field of imperialism holds for the geographer and what an important perspective the field of geography holds for the student of imperialism'.

In another significant contribution, Meinig (1976) takes James Vance's mercantile model - illustrating how expanding interactions linked the central-place system of post-medieval Europe with a new emerging *entrepot* mercantile spatial system in America - and enlarges it to provide similar models of more comprehensive geographies. This permits generalizations about the spatial regularities of commercial functions and population movements, information flows, diffusion of culture change and the structure of intercultural conflicts. His starting premise is that, from the standpoint of human geography, the old world's 'discovery' of the 'New World' initiated a sudden and harsh encounter between one Old World and another Old World which transformed both and integrated them into a single New World. The geography on each side of the Atlantic was changed: radically in America with widespread disruption of old patterns and the imposition of new ones; more subtly in Europe with different movements of people, goods, capital and information.

Working again with Vance's mercantile model, Meinig (1978b) suggested that some of Vance's 'points of attachments' became nuclei of discrete colonization areas. As such, each nucleus could be analyzed as a spatial system, as a cultural landscape, and finally as a social geography. Meinig argued that the geopolitical 'colony' - a territorial jurisdiction - could not serve as the fundamental geographical entity because spatial systems, landscapes, and social geographies were not necessarily concordant within their bounds.

He suggests that these initial points of attachment or outposts mark the beginnings of a pattern of penetration of indigenous societies, attaching them to the European system through strands of commerce and paths of agents, and initiating an intense phase of culture change. Some of these indigenous societies remained client states on the frontier for some time, others negotiated a withdrawal westward, but eventually all felt the relentless power of the expansion of European peoples. For a long time the most

common practice was not the classic one of imperial conquest and subsequent exploitation of a captured people and its territory, but a more extreme one of expulsion. This extreme practice sent waves of geopolitical and social disruption radiating out ahead of the margins of actual control and colonization. In time most survivors of displaced societies became encapsulated on reservations.

Outlining the important geographical processes that are a part of the classic model of imperialism - (1) geopolitical reorganization of the land, (2) economic change, and (3) demographic and social change which includes displacing and subordinating the indigenous population - Meinig (1978b) argued that the result is the creation of a new human geography - not out of the simple extension of the patterns of the expanding society as in the frontier model of F.J. Turner, the historian, but from a complex composite of those of invader and invaded.

Later, Meinig (1982:2) argued that a geographic analysis of imperial expansion translates the question 'What has happened?' to mean: 'how have areas been changed?' as the result of the encroachment of one people upon the territory of another. Such an analysis needs to identify the essential geographic features of imperialism as a set of processes and patterns. He went on to identify five common categorizations of different aspects of human life - political, social, cultural, economic, and psychological - and constructed a framework within which to define a distinctly geographic approach to the study of imperialism. Within each of these categorizations, Meinig identified specific geographical manifestations.

1. The exercise of ultimate political authority by the invader over the invaded. Geographically this process manifests a spatial system of networks and circulations that binds the two areas, that of the conquered and that of the conqueror, together.
2. The exercise of an unequal political relationship imposes an inequality in social relationships so as to create a new social stratification. Geographically this process produces a new social geography that may result from killings, expulsion, relocations, colonizations, recruitment of labour, and voluntary movement.
3. Sustained contact between the two peoples will result in culture change in both. Geographically measurable in such diagnostic features as language, dress, intermarriage, and shift from traditional to new activities and modes of behaviour.
4. The imperial power will seek to extract wealth from the conquered territory, creating new economic relationships. Geographically this process will manifest itself in the locations of facilities and resources seized, new activities initiated and the creation of circuits of economic interaction (formal/informal sector relationship).
5. The imperial need to seek the allegiance of the conquered people to continue domination, and minimize expense and dissent, will require a psychological focus. Geographically this will involve the management of the landscape in such a way that imperial presence is made quite visible: in other words, to invest the visible scene with a symbolic imperial content.

Meinig (1982) suggested that individual geographers could choose to select any one of these five manifestations and work on the comparative analysis of different imperial examples, or attempt to synthesize them all for a particular imperial case. The first route would lead toward the development of a basic set of terms, concepts, and axioms: toward a basic grammar of the geography of imperialism, the second toward an orderly regional geography of imperialism, and the interpretation of consequence and significance of particular cases. Meinig concluded with an explicit attempt to address what is implied by an historical geography of imperialism. He believes there are two kinds of study that result from different interpretations of the basic geographical question: 'how have areas changed as a result of imperialism?' If this question is understood to mean 'how do areas under imperial control differ from what they were like before they were brought under such control?', then research would lead directly to the comparative cross section approach, the study of the same area at different times. This brand of historical geography would examine the degree of concordance between the superimposed alien pattern and that of the indigenous pattern, and assess the consequences. It might lead toward what could be called a geographical morphology

of imperialism, a sequential approach that represents the study of imperialism in terms of changing geographies.

However, if the question is understood to mean 'how have areas been changed as a result of imperialism?' then the study of imperialism would be seen as the identification of a set of processes, each with significant geographical results. This kind of historical geography would focus upon strategies of imperial conquest and control. Such a study would give special attention to movements and diffusion stemming from the interaction of the two peoples, as well as the resistances and responses of the invaded peoples to imperial programs. To this extent the historical geography of imperialism would be a geographical study of change. Meinig (1982) believes that both these approaches are inherent in the most venerable conceptions of geography. They are equally valid, complementary, interdependent and, ideally, if combined would provide a more complete description of change.

When considering spatial disorganization several eminent geographers have referred to Australia. Ratzel, for example, devoted a number of chapters in *The History of Mankind* (1896) to the Australian Aborigines. He noted that, since European invasion, the Aboriginal population had decreased annually, and he regarded this 'one of the darkest spots in modern history'. He outlined the harm European immigration brought to the Aborigines and commented that 'when the Australian [Aborigines] ventured to resent, by force of arms, infringement of their valued rights of property, they were abused for being quarrelsome'. With thoughtless stupidity, according to Ratzel (1896), England had made Australia a penal colony and recognized no right on the part of the indigenous people to their own land. Brunhes (1920) in his discussion of human devastation was another who made reference to areas such as Australia that have shown themselves to be favourable to European settlement, and where the extermination of indigenous races had made rapid progress. Before concluding this overview of geography's discourse on dispossession it is necessary to examine the contribution made by Australian historical geography.

Australia's formal geographical discourse on dispossession began with Griffith Taylor, who seemed convinced that in Australia racial struggles had not greatly complicated settlement for there had never been an Aboriginal problem of any importance (Taylor 1927). Dispossession was, however, taken up by Price (1939, 1944, 1950, 1957, 1963). Price's interest in white colonization was best shown in *White Settlers in the Tropics* (1939). This was followed by an attempt to apply the method of comparative history to the administration of indigenous peoples by English speaking whites in Pacific countries (1944). Price (1944) suggested there were remarkable similarities in the history of indigenous-white contact in all the regions examined. He identified three phases of management of indigenous peoples: in the first phase, white invasions produced 'moving frontiers' that were very often beyond the adequate control of either the 'Home' or colonial governments, and tragic atrocities often resulted. Generally, Europeans seized indigenous lands (usually without compensation), drove tribes into hostile 'native' territories, destroyed indigenous resources, introduced decimating diseases and alcohol and used firearms to slaughter the indigenes. The second phase was characterized by the establishment of philanthropic and religious organization, informed by humanitarianism. The final phase was the bringing of reservations under some kind of 'scientific' control.

Price continued his comparative methodology in his next work, *White Settlers and Native Peoples* (1950). In the introduction he tendered a caution on the dangers of comparative work, and suggested that generalization ought to be postponed until many more local and tribal studies of culture contact had been undertaken, particularly given the fact that contact frequently occurred at different historical periods, in different geographical environments, and amongst peoples with different cultural potentialities. In his focus on Australia, Price (1950) argued that Australia afforded a particularly clear picture of British policy on indigenous peoples. He also mentioned the fact that the record of destruction in Australia was worse than United States and New Zealand experiences, and was critical of the historical neglect of white/Aboriginal relations. Price (1950) discussed the importance of land in Aboriginal society and considered the ways in which European robbery of that land affected the Aborigines and the possible responses open to them. In fact, he used the specific term 'dispossession' (Price 1950:117).

Price's (1957) next contribution dealt with moving frontiers and changing landscapes in the Pacific. He argued that 'moving frontiers' and 'changing landscapes' were useful terms by which to understand the western invasion of the Pacific and its bordering continents. Price's moving frontiers considered not only people, but also disease, plants, animals and cultural factors such as ideology, technology and science. In his final work of any relevance to this thesis, Price (1963) argued that the originality of the analysis of the geography of colonization lay in its concentration on the geographical aspects of colonial contact between colonizers and indigenous peoples. He defined colonization from a demographic viewpoint and devoted some space to outlining the characteristics of settler colonization and its ensuing geography of invasion - which he saw as the initial occupation of coastal areas followed by moving frontiers after exploration. This frontier advance replaced indigenous vegetation and changed the landscape.

Powell's (1978) most significant contribution is found in his study of the 'native lands' question where he considered the spatial expression of certain major types of societal conflict. He argued that the confrontation of cultures must be seen as a major component in the geographical transformation of New World territories and suggested that the geography of dispossession took different forms that may be represented at a variety of scales, from individuals and families to the fates of tribes and regional groups of tribes. The patterns reproduced display same tangible spatial aspects of the passing of a culture. According to Powell (1978) a detailed interpretation of dispossession would require a discussion of many variables - including the degrees of indigenous resistance, the direction of the expansion of pioneer farming, the local intensities of change, and the associated modifications in the evaluation of indigenous lands.

A number of geographers have argued that a geography of dispossession is a central motif of historical geography. Part of the problem in Australia is the disappointingly miniscule number of active historical geographers, most of who have been fully occupied with other issues. Other geographers in Australia have focussed on the contemporary Aboriginal socio-political situation (for example, Drakakis-Smith (1981, 1984a,b), Gale (1966, 1977a,b), Gale & Wundersitz (1983), and Young (1981)). The question of where a historical geography of dispossession fits within historical geography merits further attention! Analysis of this question should demonstrate that the study of dispossession can be justified as a valid exercise in historical geography, with wider application to the subject as a whole. Evaluation of the importance of the geography of dispossession obviously depends on an assessment of the role of historical geography which, in turn, depends on how the scope of the sub-discipline is defined. It is not difficult to find writers who state that dispossession is a concern of historical geography, and by considering their statements it should be possible to construct an apologia for the study of dispossession (Sauer 1925, 1930; Price 1950, 1963; Johnson 1964; Smith 1965; Harris 1967; Meinig 1963, 1969, 1982; Henderson 1978). Justification may reside in the intrinsic nature of the dispossession issue and/or the extrinsic methodology employed by researchers. Meinig (1982), for example, considers that the geographical study of dispossession utilises the two major approaches of historical geography: 'changing geographies', and the 'geographical study of change'. As has been shown, he argues that both approaches are inherent in traditional and highly regarded conceptions of geography and furthermore that they are equally valid, complementary, and interdependent - and, ideally, if combined would provide a more complete description of dispossession (Meinig 1982). Analysis of these methodologies should confirm the value of reconstructing the geography of dispossession of a given people.

The most detailed discussion of the conception of historical geography as 'changing geographies' is found in the work of Carl Sauer. In Sauer's (1925) statement on the methodology of geography, which he defined as a chorological science, he summarized the objective of geography as 'the establishment of a critical system that embraced the phenomenology of landscape'. Elsewhere, Sauer (1941) argued that the whole task of human geography was nothing less than the comparative study of areally localized cultures, or 'culture areas' each with its own particular historical and geographical expression which is the accumulation of practical experience. He understood a landscape to be the accumulation of two place facts - facts of physical 'site' and facts of cultural expression (Sauer 1925). Sauer's (1925) analysis of the importance of cultural landscapes within the research horizon of historical geography highlighted the replacement of cultures as a special concern. With the introduction of an alien culture, there may be a succession of cultural landscapes as a new landscape is superimposed on the remnants of an older one. Given that landscape change is of

interest to geography then it follows that dispossession, as a possible outcome of that change, is equally of interest (Broek 1940; Sauer 1941). Sauer noted that one of the fundamental questions in all social study is the rise and fall of a culture. He was emphatic that the contest for area between cultures is a legitimate theme in historical geography.

Sauer (1930) considered that an historical geography of a colonial frontier was concerned with reconstructing the physical character of the region before intrusion and the character of the frontier economy, as well as with determining the successions of land tenure and land use. Sauer was insistent that unless geographers proceeded by historical reconstruction, they would be unable to treat the localization of activities because they would not know the functioning of culture or the process of group living. Landscape reconstruction required gaining a knowledge of the functioning of the given culture as a whole, controlling the contemporary evidences, which may be of various kinds, and becoming familiar with the terrain which the given culture occupied (Sauer 1941). Such historical regional reconstructions, Sauer pointed out, were in the best and oldest geographical tradition.

Clark (1954, 1960), Ackerman (1958), and Prince (1967) have elaborated the methodology of the conception of historical geography as the study of geographical change. Ackerman argued that the constantly changing content of earth space is a basic characteristic of geography's subject matter: 'At any given time the distributional resultant of the physical, biotic and cultural processes which continually are at work is different from that of the immediate past'. He believed that any fundamental understanding of distribution must probe the character of the processes that produce the change (Ackerman 1958). On the assumption that cultural processes are major forces altering the 'earth-space content', he argued that these processes must accordingly occupy a significant place in fundamental geographical research. His rationale is that these processes, including dispossession, are major research problems for geography because of the accelerated spread of forced cultural changes in the last one hundred and fifty years.

Prince (1967) provides the best justification for the study of geographical change, when he argues that to understand the present, geographers must study the past to gain a knowledge of the 'agents of change' responsible for the present. In practice he noted that those working in this area often employed a vertical themes approach to recount the histories of different elements in the changing geography of an area. The geographical study of change aims to find out how things came to be where they are, or were at a particular time, and therefore employs a 'genetic' approach to study the work of agents generating change, development and movement (Prince 1969). On this latter point Baker (1969) has argued that the utility of historical geography resides with the expertise it brings to problems of the present through its genetic interpretation of geographical conditions and its understanding of the processes of change. In this view, historical geography as the study of the past in the present proceeds from the known to the unknown, using a regressive or dialectic method that seeks to demonstrate how a historical situation arose from its preceding situation (Smith 1965). Darby (1962) believes that historical geography is committed to answering the question: 'why does this landscape look as it does?' Baker (1969) argues that the central interest of historical geography is the ultimate reality of what actually happened in the past and that historical geographers will not be satisfied until they can say 'this is what took place'.

SUMMARY

This paper has reviewed the historical-geographical literature relating to the reconstruction of indigenous spatial organization and dispossession. An archaeology of the discourse of geography emphasized geography's contribution to the European conquest of indigenous peoples and their dispossession. Despite this compliant role, geography also had a clearly stated interest in the patterns and processes of European imperialism. Indeed, it should come as no surprise that geographers who began the discourse on dispossession included some of the leading figures in the subject's formative years. This examination has revealed that there have been many geographers who have added their voices to the continuing discussion. More often than not, however, the contributions have been little more than statements that are suggestive of what ought to be done. Too much of this amounts to paying lip-service to dispossession when the theme

does not occupy any more than a peripheral place in research programmes. At times, contributions have been made but these have been somewhat secondary to the researcher's primary objective. The most influential exception is the work of Donald Meinig, which has made a good case for an historical geography of dispossession.

This brief overview has shown that historical-geographical reconstructions of dispossession within given regions are basic to the practice of historical geography, because they address intrinsically significant issues in the compilation of the books of the bond between society and nature and between human groups, and because they make a fundamental contribution to geographical knowledge through their concern with landscape change. Dispossession has been defined as an interrelated set of processes involving spatial disorganization, ecological degradation, cultural disintegration, and political alienation. In effect, dispossession leads to the creation of a radically new human geography. Meinig (1982) believes any attempt at producing a geography of dispossession is motivated by this question: how have places changed as a result of colonialism? Two potential meanings are involved here: how have the colonized areas changed; and by what means have they changed? They lead to differing conceptions of historical geography - one of 'changing geographies' and the other of 'geographical study of change'. Following Meinig, it is suggested that these conceptions be combined. The first task then is to determine how regions have changed as a consequence of colonization. Obviously, to appreciate the new geography it is necessary to reconstruct conditions at the time of occupation. According to Sauer (1930) such a reconstruction will provide the necessary datum to measure the amount and character of the subsequent transformation. The initial task is therefore to discover the geographical expression of the modes or ways of life of given indigenous groups. This explication of the grounding of material life is similar to discovering the Vidalian *genre de vie* and cultural landscape of certain regions by capturing their 'personality' or individuality. To reconstruct the historical-geographical expression or the characteristic impress of a given culture, and to discover the expression of a given mode or way of life, necessarily involves discovering the organized pattern of living and the underlying relationship between the spatial pattern and the social process.

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