



College of Social Science and Humanities
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

Geography of Ethiopia and The Horn

Freshman Course

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October, 2019

Geography of Ethiopia and The Horn



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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

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- ▶ This chapter deals with the *meaning, scope, themes* and *approaches* of Geography.
- ▶ In addition, it discusses the *location, shape,* and *size* of *Ethiopia* and *the Horn*.
- ▶ *It also introduces the tenets* of *basic map reading skills*.
- ▶ Hence, this introductory part of the text paves the way for an understanding of the geographic issues presented in the succeeding chapters.

Objectives

At the end of this chapter, the learners will be able to:

- ❖ Comprehend the meaning and scope of Geography.
- ❖ Explain the themes of Geography. www.ayeleby.org
- ❖ Explicate the implications of location, shape and size of Ethiopia and the Horn on the physical environment, socioeconomic and political aspects.
- ❖ Acquire basic skills of map reading.

Activity 1.1 1.

- 1. Define Geography.*
- 2. Could you mention the major themes of Geography?*
- 3. Do you know where the Horn of Africa is located? What are the member states of the Horn of Africa?*
- 4. Distinguish between www.ayeleby.org astronomical and relative locations?*

1.1. Geography: Definition, Scope and Themes

1.1.1. Meaning of Geography

- ▶ It is difficult to forward a *definition acceptable to all geographers at all times* and *places* because of the *dynamic nature of the discipline* and the *changes in its scope* and *method of study*. However, the following may be accepted as a working definition.

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- ▶ Geography is the *scientific study of the Earth* that *describes* and *analyses spatial* and *temporal variations* of *physical, biological* and *human phenomena*, and their *interrelationships* and *dynamism over the surface* of the *Earth*.

1.1.2. The Scope, Approaches and Themes of Geography

- ▶ Geography has now acquired the status of science that explains the arrangements of various natural and cultural features on the *Earth surface*.
- ▶ Geography is a www.ayeleby.org *holistic* and *interdisciplinary field* of *study* contributing to the *understanding of the changing spatial structures* from the *past* to the *future*.

- ▶ Thus, the scope of Geography is the surface of the Earth, which is the very thin zone that is the interface of the atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere, which provides the habitable zone in which humans are able to live.
- ▶ Geography can be approached by considering two continuums: a *human-physical continuum* and a *topical-regional continuum*.
- ▶ The topical (systematic) fields of Geography view particular categories of physical or human phenomena as distributed over the Earth while *regional geography* is concerned with the *associations within regions of all or some of the elements and their interrelationships*.

- ❖ Geography has *five basic themes* namely *location*, *place*, *human-environment interaction*, *movement*, and *region*.

Location

- ❖ Location is defined as a *particular place* or *position*.
- ❖ Most studies of geography begin with the mention of this theme of geography.
- ▶ Location can be of two types: *absolute location* and *relative location*. In the former case, the location of a place is *defined by its latitude and longitude* or *its exact address*. Eg. *3°N - 15°N latitudes and 33°E - 48°E longitudes*

Place

- ❖ Place refers to the physical and human aspects of a location.
- ❖ This theme of geography is associated with toponym (the name of a place), site (the description of the features of the place), and situation (the environmental conditions of the place).
- ❖ Each place in the world has its unique characteristics expressed in terms of landforms, hydrology, biogeography, pedology, characteristics and size of its human population, and the distinct human cultures.
- ❖ The concept of “place” aids geographers to compare and contrast two places on Earth.

Human-Environment Interaction

- ▶ *Humans* have always been on *ceaseless interaction* with *their natural environment*.
- ▶ *No other species* that has lived on our planet has a *profound effect* on the environment *as humans*.
- ▶ Humans have adapted to the environment in ways that have allowed them to dominate all other species on Earth.

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- ▶ Thus, *human-environment interaction* involves three distinct aspects: dependency, adaptation, and modification.
- ▶ *Dependency* refers to the ways in which humans are dependent on nature for a living.
- ▶ *Modification* allowed humans to “*conquer*” the world for their comfortable living.
- ▶ *Adaptation* relates to how *humans modify themselves, their lifestyles and their behavior* to live in a new environment with new challenges.

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“... the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted...” Genesis 2:8-10

Movement

- ❑ Movement entails to the *translocation of human beings, their goods, and their ideas from one end of the planet to another.*
- ❑ The *physical movement of people* allowed the *human race to inhabit all the continents and islands* of the *world*.
- ❑ Another aspect of movement is the *transport of goods from one place on the Earth to another.*
- ❑ The third dimension of movement is the *flow of ideas that allows the unification of the human civilization and promotes its growth and prosperity.*

Region

- ▶ A region is a geographic area having distinctive characteristics that distinguishes itself from adjacent unit(s) of space.
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- ▶ It could be a formal region that is characterized by homogeneity in terms of a certain phenomenon (soil, temperature, rainfall, or other cultural elements like *language, religion, and economy*).
- ▶ It can also be a functional or nodal region characterized by functional interrelationships in a spatial system defined by the linkages binding particular phenomena.