

Macroregional Systems Theory

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Macroregional Systems Theory

- Has been developed over the past 40 years by anthropologist and sinologist G. William Skinner
- Originated with studies of historical China, extended to historical Japan and France and to contemporary China
- Many-faceted and complex, we can only provide a crude sketch of some key ideas

A Few Key Points

- Human behavior of all kinds is conditioned by *position in space*
- Human activity creates strong spatial structures reflecting the combined influence of physiographic and human factors
- Developed originally for *traditional agrarian civilizations*, but many useful ideas for other contexts

Macroregions

- May be defined as the hinterlands of a large city, the *central metropolis* of the region
- In traditional agrarian civilizations, tend to coincide with large scale *drainage basins*
- Exhibit a *core-periphery* structure on which is superimposed
- A spatial pattern of lower level nodes and surrounding regions reflecting the central place hierarchy

The Bottom Line

- Analysis of population data in space *cannot* be based on the units of the administrative hierarchy, rather, we must
- Use available data to *define* a suitable spatial units that reflect social reality and
- Carry out analysis in terms of this defined spatial structure; not in terms of administrative units

Regionalization of China in 1990

- The most extensive work along these lines has been done for China, most recently for contemporary China using 1990 census data and other sources
- China is divided, not into 30 provinces, but into 10 **macroregions** and non-agrarian China
- Each macroregion has a **core-periphery structure** and a **city system structure**

Contemporary Spatial Structure in China: Four Maps

- The macroregions of China in relation to provincial and county boundaries
- Core-periphery structure of the Upper Yangzi macroregion
- Upper Yangzi regional city systems
- Regional city systems in agrarian China

Questions?
Comments?
Discussion?