

**Subject: Geography CBCS (HONS)**

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**Semester: VI**

**CC: 13T**

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Paper - C13T

## Contributions of Richthofen, Hettner and Ratzel

Ferdinand von Richthofen was one of the forerunners of 'New Geography' in Germany which began at the end of Franco-Prussian War, and the unification of Germany. He carried out extensive survey in the Alps, and then on the geological studies in the Carpathians. He studied the occurrence of gold and volcanic rocks in Hungary. He is credited to have discovered the major resources of China between 1877 and 1912. Richthofen's 'Führer für Forschungsreisende' (1886), as a guide to scientific explorers, was a morphology of the earth's surface feature. It was a masterpiece in the field of physical geography. He attempted to distinguish between the 'general geography' and 'special geography'. General geography is analytical and it studies earth-bound phenomena on a four-fold base - the forms; the material; forces and causes of change; and movement. According to him, "Special geography. Every area on the earth, no matter how large or small, whether a continent, a small island, or a naturally bounded inland area, an artificially bounded state, a mountain, a river basin or a sea, is examined as a grouping of smaller unit areas, as well as in the perceptible appearances, among which are included the works of human culture" which is the subject-matter

## of Special Geography

Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) - Later parts of the 19th Century was dominated by Ratzel in the scene of German geography. He provided the guidelines of systematic geography. He was the greatest single contributor to the development of the geography of man. He suggests the geography of man in terms of individuals and races - anthropological geography. He was much influenced by two of Darwin's major themes: "struggle and natural selection," and "association and organisation" and his major works thus demonstrated that cultural as well as natural phenomena could be subjected to systematic studies. Ratzel in the U.S in 1874-75 started studying the economy, society, and habitat of other nationals and tribes. On the basis of this field study he started to formulate some general concepts regarding the geographic patterns resulting from contact between aggressive and expanding human groups and the retreating groups. He published his book entitled "Anthropogeographie" in 1882 which is a study of systematic human geography. His modified volume of the same book in 1891 was an attempt to revive the Kantian concept of the chorological science which "studies things that are mutually coordinated; not subordinated in space"

Ratzel is also called the "founder" of political geography. In 1897, he published his work on political geography. He discussed that state as an organism attached to the land, a piece of humanity and a piece of earth. He attempted to show that a state, like some simple organisms, must either grow or die and can never stand still. Every state is a piece of humanity and a portion of the earth. Out of this develops the concept of living space (Lebensraum). His concept of geography is based on two approaches — the measurement of the consistent interrelation of environment and man, and the measurement of the interrelation of human phenomena over the earth that are areally coincident.

Alfred Hettner — Alfred Hettner was a student of Richthofen and Ratzel. He was essentially a physical and regional geographer. His book "Europe" was published in 1907. According to him, geography is a chorological science or it is the study of regions. He was concerned mainly with the interplay between man and nature, an evaluation of spatial (Raum) relation. He elaborated the importance of distribution of phenomena and stressed the significance of regional geography. He claimed that geography is an idiographic (regional) rather than monothetic (general). Hettner made a distinction between "systematic geography" which

seeks to formulate empirical generalisations or laws, and the study of the unique in "regional geography," whereby generalisations are tested so that subsequent theories may be improved.

### Reference Books:—

- 1.) Evolution of Geographical Thought — Majid Hussain
- 2.) Fundamentals of Geographical Thought — Sudepta Adhikari