

EARLY INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES ON D. W. MEINIG: A FORMER STUDENT'S FOND MEMORIES*

BRUCE BIGELOW

ABSTRACT. As an undergraduate and graduate student in the 1940s and a young professor at the University of Utah in the 1950s, D. W. Meinig was influenced by a number of scholars. They included six historians, three geographers, two anthropologists, and two philosophers. I identify the influence of the thirteen scholars on Meinig's major achievements: the culture area model, geography as an art, the historical imperative for geography, cultures and civilizations, and geopolitics and imperialism. *Keywords:* antimodernism, challenge and response, heartland, landscape, neotechnic.

As an undergraduate at Syracuse University in the early 1960s from a family whose parents had not graduated from college, I stumbled around in my first two years trying out a number of majors: journalism, psychology, and history education. Only because I had to take a course called "Cultural Geography" for a high school history education major did I discover geography. I had been excited about maps as early as first grade, but I never imagined that one could study geography in college. So it was with considerable curiosity that I attended my first geography lecture presented by a Donald Meinig in the fall of 1963. Compared with the instructors I had already studied with, this lecturer was in a league by himself. He had a dignified, even regal, presence, and without notes he spoke eloquently in front of large, beautifully designed German maps, constantly weaving geography and history together by sweeping his arms over the maps like a symphony conductor. Within a year I chucked my education major and took as many courses from Meinig as I could as a history major with a geography minor, and later I went on to graduate school in geography. It was the best decision of my life, and it was based on considerable luck because, frankly, many instructors across the campus were not compelling, nor did they have interests that absolutely suited mine, as Meinig's did.

I was not surprised to discover soon after my first lecture that Meinig was among the leading practitioners of historical geography in North America, if not the world. His publications came to include an impressive number of influential articles and nine books, culminating with his four-volume historical geography of the United States, *The Shaping of America* (1986, 1993, 1998, 2004). What original concepts emerge from Meinig's work that place him among the vanguard of his profession?

One idea is his culture area model, including the elements of cradle, core, domain and sphere. A second idea is his demonstration that geography should be an

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✪ DR. BIGELOW is a professor of geography at Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana 46208.