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### **A critical summery and review of Historical Geography**

Historical geography, as Mike Heffernan argues is primarily concerned with the “geographies of the past and with the influence of the past in shaping the geographies of the present (p.1).” This focus has been approached through a number of theoretical frameworks. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the term “historical geography” was used to reconstruct past biblical landscapes as well as those of the Greeks and Romans. This work did little to create a lasting impression on future geographers. Landscape scholars such as Darby and his research of geomorphologic processes of the physical landscape as well as Sauer’s work of interpretation of cultural impacts on the environment provided a great deal of influence toward building the current foundation of the sub-discipline.

The quantitative revolution of the 1960s and 70s promoted a systematic and model driven approach to historic geography that not only marked the past but also attempted to account for present and future geographic conditions. As expected, debate has ensued and the discipline has fractured into distinct camps. Some historical geographers advocated for quantitative research and pushed into demographic, epidemiologic and historical GIS work. Other’s also self described historical geographers began critiquing the positivist spatial approach, began to incorporate ideas from, the social sciences and in turn started developing mixed methodologies that reflected the critical change in academic thought.

Currently historical geography flows along three identifiable veins. Past imperialism and colonialism have been identified as key elements in landscape and social change. Resource extraction of colonial possessions has led to the study of environmental consequences. Lastly, historical geographers have continued to focus on geography itself as an agent in agricultural, industrial and urban changes.

As Dr. Hornbeck discusses, it is safe to argue historical geography deals primary with the world as it was and attempting to create a clearer picture. However, the sub-discipline finds relevance in contemporary studies as well. Geography is never static, social and physical process continues to shape the landscape. It is therefore fair to argue that research has to begin from a specific point in time. This argument is flexible because it directly leads to question of “how far back does history start?” A critical acknowledgement of question this would greatly contribute toward building a sound methodological framework and developing a meaningful contribution not only to historical geographic but to the greater discipline.