

Compte rendu

Ouvrages recensés :

Crone, G.A. *Background to Geography*. London, Museum Press Limited, 1964, 224 pp., plates, sketch-maps and diagrams

Warntz, William. *Geographers and What They Do*. New York, Franklin Watts, Incorporated, 1964, 149 pp.

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COMPTES RENDUS BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

DEUX OUVRAGES RÉCENTS SUR LA GÉOGRAPHIE ET LES GÉOGRAPHES

CRONE, G. A. **Background to Geography**, London, Museum Press Limited, 1964, 224 pp., plates, sketch-maps and diagrams.

WARNTZ, William. **Geographers and What They Do**. New York, Franklin Watts, Incorporated, 1964, 149 pp.

Mr. Crone, Librarian and Map Curator to the Royal Geographical Society, London, wrote *Background to Geography* « to interest the general reader in the study of geography, and to explain the value of a geographical outlook on the world today. »

The first five chapters tell the story of European travel and exploration from medieval to modern times and point out changes in geographic understanding that accompanied the expanded view of the earth. Chapters 6 to 9 describe the tools of the geographer and discuss his search for general principles in physical and human geography. These principles are then applied to selected topics : Boundaries, Antarctica, the Soviet Union, and Developing Countries in the Tropics. The final chapter suggests the role of geography in the future.

The author states emphatically that this work is not a textbook, and fully admits that it is one man's idea of « what modern geography is about. » The professional geographer readily seconds the latter statement, but also agrees that Mr. Crone offers much that will whet the appetite for further study. Fine photographs and helpful sketch maps and diagrams enhance the value of this very readable book.

A book covering so many aspects of the field is bound to be uneven in treatment. For instance, the author, in the hallowed tradition of the Royal Geographical Society, devotes much space to exploration. He mentions the possibility that British fishermen made a landfall at Newfoundland in 1471, but completely ignores the activity of the Norsemen in the North Atlantic. He is also silent on Spanish exploration beyond Columbus' voyage. The inadequate chapter on developing countries leads the reader to believe that the core of the problem lies in wet tropical lands.

This book concerns the professional geographer not so much in factual content as in the image of the discipline it conveys to the lay audience. On this point Mr. Crone's portrayal leaves much to be desired. It would appear from his sketch that little of importance in the development of methodology had happened after Paul Vidal de la Blache. Particularly regrettable is the confusing and outdated terminology. The author uses the term « geography » to indicate the discipline as well as the biophysical environment ; for instance, administrative districts conforming to river basins are said to be « based on general principles of geography, » and settlement forms are examined in relation to the « local geography. » It should not be understood that Mr. Crone follows the environmentalist line. He repeatedly points out that man is not a slave of « geographical » (read physical) conditions, but his presentation reflects the discourse of the twentieth century instead of the modern viewpoint.

Though the professional geographer may differ with the author on matters of philosophy, he should remember that the book is addressed to another audience. Mr. Crone has done what most geographers fail to do : introduce the general public to « geographical thinking » to use one of the author's favorite expressions. This merit should outweigh the methodological shortcomings of the book.

* * *

If Mr. Crone's book illustrates the difficulty of pleasing both outsider and professional, Dr. Warntz' volume demonstrates how easy it is to puzzle and provoke both groups. His booklet,

Geographers and What They Do, is part of a series about professions. Presumably it serves to provide youths with vocational guidance and, more broadly, to acquaint laymen with the work of geographers.

The first chapter answers adequately the basic question — what geographers do. In the following six chapters Dr. Warntz presents a collection of rambling essays on various topics. Chapter 2, « Geographers — from Ancient Times to the Present, » starts with Isaac Newton and Bernhard Varenius because, as the author points out, they gave academic geography full stature. There follow sketchy remarks on other geographers from Homer to Arnold Guyot.

Chapter 3 deals with « Geography as a Science. » The essence of the discipline is defined as « the study of spatial relations ». Though Dr. Warntz admits the value of regional description and classification, he emphasizes that geography as a predictive science occupies the higher level to which in recent years « geographers have turned their attention. » The fourth chapter illustrates how geographers use their research. « Among the basic ideas developed in unfettered geographical research is one that has been applied importantly to airlift; » Dr. Warntz explains in considerable detail how to determine the optimum flight path. He refers more briefly to C. Warren Thornthwaite's work on evapotranspiration and to that of L. Dudley Stamp on the Land Utilization Survey of Britain.

Chapter 5 is about « Globes and Maps ». The reader learns in great detail why « we make only an extremely small and virtually undetectable mistake by trying to make perfectly spherical globes. » There is also much information on various remarkable globes and globe-makers. After four pages on map projections and none on maps, the chapter concludes with this sentence : « But the development of greatest intellectual excitement is the one in which the properties of map projections that expand, collapse, dislocate, repeat, invert, eliminate, interrupt, or superimpose surfaces are being utilized in the forming and testing of geographical theory. » The reader looks in vain for some elaboration on this intriguing statement.

The next chapter discusses « The Art of Travel. » Inspired by the air navigator Harold Gatty, the author gives some useful hints on observation, but devotes most of this section to helping the traveler find his way by means of moon, sun and stars. Three of the five illustrations in the book demonstrate to the beginning pathfinder this essential art.

After all this, one wonders how the youngster will react when he faces the title of the last chapter : « Should You Become a Geographer ? » For those who insist, Dr. Warntz recommends a broad liberal college education as the best preparation for specialized study of geography at the graduate level.

The Appendix offers a list of U. S. Government offices that employ professional geographers, and a glossary of terms used in the book.

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GÉOLOGIE

BELLAIR, Pierre, et POMEROL, Charles. **Éléments de géologie.** Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1965, 512 pages, 268 figures, 19 tableaux, bibliographie, index des matières, des noms d'auteurs et des noms de lieux.

On assiste depuis vingt ans à une profonde évolution de la géologie traditionnelle tant sur le plan technologique que méthodologique, conséquence d'une connaissance plus grande et plus approfondie des continents. La carte géologique de l'Afrique s'est grandement précisée depuis trente ans. L'Antarctique, malgré sa carapace de glace, nous a livré plusieurs de ses secrets. On a vu également se créer de nouvelles formes d'études : la géologie sous-marine, la sédimentologie, la géochronologie. La pétrographie et la paléontologie ont connu un regain d'intérêt. C'est avec ces nouvelles formes d'études d'une part et les bases de la géologie d'autre part que les auteurs Pierre Bellair, professeur à la Faculté des sciences de Paris, et Charles Pomerol, maître de conférences adjoint à la Faculté des sciences de Paris, ont tenté de familiariser l'étudiant.