

## Cahiers de géographie du Québec



Lantis, David W. (in collaboration with Steiner, Rodney, and Karinen, Arthur E.). *California : Land of Contrast*. Belmont (Calif.), Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1963. xvii plus 509 pp., maps, photos, appendices, bibliography, index

Wills, Bernt Lloyd. *North Dakota : the Northern Prairie State*. Ann Arbor (Mich.), Edwards Brothers, 1963. xi plus 318 pp., maps, photos, tables, index.

John M. Crowley

Volume 10, numéro 19, 1965

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/020578ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/020578ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (imprimé)

1708-8968 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Crowley, J. M. (1965). Compte rendu de [Lantis, David W. (in collaboration with Steiner, Rodney, and Karinen, Arthur E.). *California : Land of Contrast*. Belmont (Calif.), Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1963. xvii plus 509 pp., maps, photos, appendices, bibliography, index / Wills, Bernt Lloyd. *North Dakota : the Northern Prairie State*. Ann Arbor (Mich.), Edwards Brothers, 1963. xi plus 318 pp., maps, photos, tables, index.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 10(19), 154–159. <https://doi.org/10.7202/020578ar>

Tous droits réservés © Cahiers de géographie du Québec, 1965

Cet document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

Érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

alors qu'il s'agit de l'ancien président du Mexique Ruíz Cortinés. Enfin il situe Buenos Aires (p. 170) au « second rang » dans le classement de la population des villes de l'Amérique latine alors qu'elle en occupe le premier depuis déjà longtemps.

Les trois premières parties de l'ouvrage, qui en compte cinq, restent malgré tout les meilleures et les conclusions énoncées à la fin de chacun des 12 chapitres qui les composent résument fort bien les questions traitées. Les deux dernières parties sont toutefois plus faibles. La quatrième, en effet, a pour objet l'étude économique régionale et l'auteur se contente de dresser le bilan de l'histoire économique de chacun des pays, tout en reprenant, lorsqu'il y a lieu, les grands thèmes des chapitres précédents.

La dernière partie qui se veut une prospection des tendances de l'Amérique latine reprend aussi, quoique sous une forme différente tout ce qui a déjà été dit. De la conclusion, on pourrait en somme dégager l'axiome suivant : « un pays est pauvre parce qu'il est pauvre ; c'est en cela que consiste le cercle vicieux de la pauvreté ». Il nous a semblé curieux toutefois qu'il mette tant d'acharnement à vouloir nous le démontrer.

Paul-Yves DENIS

### GEOGRAPHIES OF TWO STATES : REVIEW AND COMMENTARY ON THE METHODS OF REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

LANTIS, David W. (in collaboration with STEINER, Rodney, and KARINEN, Arthur E.).  
**California : Land of Contrast.** Belmont (Calif.), Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1963.  
xvii plus 509 pp., maps, photos, appendices, bibliography, index.

WILLS, Bernt Lloyd. **North Dakota : the Northern Prairie State.** Ann Arbor (Mich.),  
Edwards Brothers, 1963. xi plus 318 pp., maps, photos, tables, index.

#### *Unlike Books with Similar Purposes*

For two books with similar objectives, these two recent state geographies could scarcely be less similar ! The objective of each is to instruct students and the general public of the respective states about the geography of their state, but the approach of the first book is diametrically opposite to that of the second. David W. Lantis' geography of California represents the regional approach (*approche régionale*), that is, the geography of California is treated by individual regions within the state. Bernt Lloyd Wills' book on North Dakota is a regional geography in the sense that it is the geography of a particular region, in this case a political region. But the approach in this volume is topical (*approche générale*), that is, the geography of North Dakota is treated by individual subjects on a state-wide basis.

A second major difference between these two books is that of size, format, and type of printing. This difference reflects the colossal difference in size and importance of the two states concerned together with the contrasting potential market for the two books. Lantis' *California : Land of Contrast* is a large, heavy, and solidly bound volume printed on smooth paper. The publisher, Wadsworth Publishing Company of Belmont, California, apparently a newcomer in the field of geography texts, can be justifiably proud of this book. It is a most impressive volume wholly in keeping with the fact that California is the nation's most populous state with a vast market for such a book despite its rather high cost. Furthermore, California is an exceedingly popular state which generates much interest among people all over the continent and abroad, whereas North Dakota is one of the least known states which is not a subject of lively interest outside its own boundaries. Wills' *North Dakota : the Northern Prairie State* is an 8½×11 in. volume, narrow in thickness, lithographed on coarse paper. This does not mean that the format of the book is unpleasant. The text has the appearance of neatly typed, double-column pages ; and the reproduction of the numerous photographs is excellent for a lithographed volume. In view of the fact that North Dakota is one of the least populous American states (less than 700,000 population) with a very limited market, this book is an impressive and modestly priced publication.

*Plan and Contents of the Two Books*

Lantis' book on California is divided into three very unequal parts which correspond to the broad physiographic regions into which the State of California falls: the Intermontane Region, the Sierra-Cascade Region, and the Pacific Borderlands. After an introduction, entitled « Forethoughts, » of only seven pages, the author begins with the sparsely populated « Northeast » and proceeds southward to each of the other California sections of the Intermontane Region: the « Trans-Sierra, » the « Mojave Desert, » and the « Colorado Desert. » He turns next to the two sections of the Sierra-Cascade Region which fall in the state: the « Sierra Nevada » and the « Southern Cascade. » Last Lantis treats the heavily populated Pacific Borderlands by sections in the following order: « Southern California, » the « Central Coast, » the « Great Central Valley, » and the « Northwest. » These ten regions are clearly demarcated on a map on page xvi in the introduction. All of the regions of the Pacific Borderlands except the « Northwest » are treated by sub-regions with only a brief introduction to the region as a whole. As would be expected, the sub-sections covering the major metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, San Francisco-Oakland, and San Diego are by far the longest. Even in the other regions, the treatment of some topics is parcelled into small regions — Surprise Valley, the Warner Range, the Pit River Basin, etc., in the case of the « Northeast, » for example. At the end of the book are a number of appendices, a bibliographic section, and an index. The appendices cover climate, landforms, natural vegetation, soils, population, and agriculture. The great value as well as the important omissions of these appendices have been amply treated by Richard F. Logan in another review of Lantis' text (*Professional Geographer*, XVII (1): 29, 1965). The « Bibliography » is not a mere list of references but rather a voluminous (17 pages) and very valuable commentary on the numerous publications about the Golden State. A more useful and complete bibliographic treatment of California will be hard to find indeed.

Wills' volume on North Dakota, topical in plan, is divided into four parts: Physical Geography, Human geography, Economic Geography, and Cultural Geography. The physical section of the book covers the traditional subjects but not in the usual order. Weather and climate come first, followed by physiography, soils, water, vegetation, and wild animals in that order. The economic section contains chapters on agriculture in general, crops, livestock, representative farms, minerals and mining, industry, some North Dakota industries, and transportation. The reviewer is mystified by the distinction between « human » geography and « cultural » geography made in this book. It would seem more logical to have grouped government, which is treated in the second part of the book, with education, religion, arts, health, and recreation in the last part. Part II could then have been entitled « Population and History of Settlement. » The last chapter, « Retrospect and Prospect, » is clearly out of place in the section on cultural geography. Bibliographic material is covered summarily in the preface and in a half-page section entitled « Reference Material » at the end of the book.

*Traditional Approaches and the Necessity of Clearly Demarcated Regions*

To sum up, Lantis' text on California is regional in approach and organisation, and Wills' book on North Dakota is exclusively topical in treatment. These two approaches illustrate a classic and long-standing dichotomy in regional geography. Both of these books are excellent when judged as examples of the traditional approaches represented, otherwise they could not have been used for the present methodological consideration. However, in the opinion of the present writer, each of these approaches represents an extreme position. The kind of regional geography which is likely to most effectively bring out the character of a region, show how it is similar to and different from other regions, and discover the interrelationships between regions cannot be limited to one or the other of these extreme positions. Some kind of a combination of the two methods, or perhaps a wholly new approach not yet convincingly demonstrated, is needed.

In regional geography the area under study should be divided into a manageable number of small regions which are identified and clearly delimited on maps by means of appropriate criteria. The character of each of these regions should be brought out clearly. This can be done solely within the framework of the small regions, but such a treatment usually involves a great

deal of repetition of the characteristics which several of the regions have in common. For this and a number of other reasons it is desirable, if not absolutely necessary, to group the small regions into larger ones at the next higher level of hierarchy (or, conversely, to divide large regions into smaller ones in the case that the author begins with large regions). As the smaller regions, the larger ones should be identified and delimited by means of appropriate criteria. Preferably, both should be shown on the same map; this can be easily done by the use of heavy lines for the boundaries of the larger regions and thin lines for those of the smaller regions. The similarities and contrasts among the regions should be portrayed, and this can generally be most effectively accomplished within the framework of the larger regions. The integration, interrelations, and interactions between regions should be treated. In most cases this can not be done effectively within a strictly regional framework but rather can be shown better by a topical treatment within the framework of some larger region. Finally, a regional study should bring out the personality of the region as a whole. Unless the entire region is exceedingly uniform, it is necessary to recognize the character and relative importance of the larger regions in order to arrive at the personality of the study area as a whole.

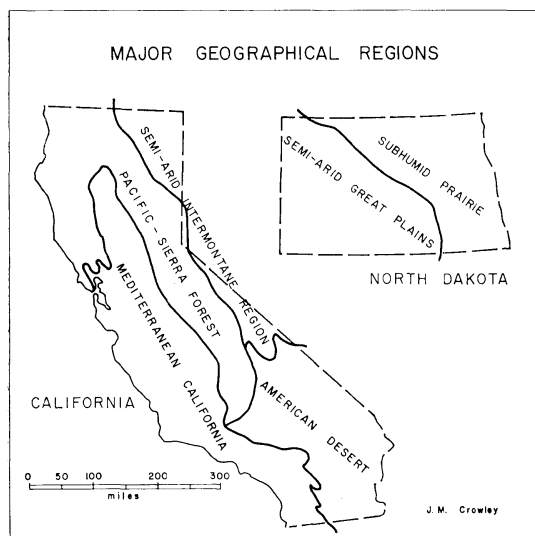


Figure 1

delimited (except for that monstrous, rectilinear boundary between the Mojave Desert and the Trans-Sierra !).

Although Lantis had adroitly characterized each of the individual regions of California, he has incompletely succeeded in showing the contrasts between them, an objective suggested by the subtitle of the book, « Land of Contrast. » True, the contrasts between regions can be discovered by comparing the sections on different regions, but in this case it is the reader and not the author who brings out the contrast. This problem results from the fact that the larger regions recognized are not appropriate to such a study of California and, if they were, the treatment of each is insufficient. The broad regions Lantis has used are physiographic regions, which are appropriate to a study of regional geomorphology, not to regional geography. In other words, he did not choose the larger regions according to appropriate criteria.

The broad regions of California which seem most revealing for general purposes are those shown in Figure 1. The part of California having Mediterranean climate, which the present writer chooses to call « Mediterranean California, » includes the Central Valley and the Coast Ranges south of San Francisco Bay. This is the part of the state that most people have in mind when

#### *Lantis' Regional Treatment of California*

Lantis has succeeded admirably in identifying the individual small regions of California and in making them come alive to the reader. Although the method of delimitation is not discussed, it is apparent that his regions have been delimited, as is appropriate for a general study, by a number of associated criteria, mainly physiography, climate, water, vegetation, population, agriculture, and other economic activities. In the case of California this is rather easy because of the striking climatic differences within the state and the close correlation between landforms and climate, on the one hand, and between the latter and economic activities, on the other hand. Lantis' regions are excellent and accurately

they say « California. » This region contains most of California's 16 million population, the three major metropolitan areas and all of the other large cities of the state, and the vast majority of the agricultural output, manufacturing industry, and oil production of California. The Pacific-Sierra Forest Region includes the Sierra Nevada, the Southern Cascades, and the Coast Ranges north of San Francisco Bay. This is a region of high, humid, heavily forested mountains ; it accounts for virtually all of California's lumber production and supplies most of California's water except for that brought by aqueduct from the Colorado River. It is also one of the major playgrounds for Mediterranean California's millions. The Semi-Arid Intermontane Region east of the mountains is an area of basins and ranges, large livestock ranches, and sparse population. It is of little importance to the state's economy. The American Desert in Southeastern California is drier still than the preceding region, but its milder winter climate and closer proximity to the fog-shrouded, heavily populated Southern California Coast give it outstanding importance as a winter recreation area. The limited agriculture exists principally by the importation of Colorado River water. It is within the framework of larger regions such as those outlined above, which group *similar* sub-regions, that one is prepared to show the *contrasts* between the smaller regions. It is apparent that one needs only to regroup Lantis' regions to make them fit into the broad regions indicated above. This is because these larger regions were delimited by the writer with the use of combined criteria similar to those used by Lantis to delimit his smaller regions.

Another weakness of Lantis' book which is also related to his rigid plan corresponding to the small regions is his failure to show forcefully the interaction and interdependence of different regions. The author states (p. xv) that « . . . this book has been developed in the belief that the whole (i. e., California) is the sum of its parts (i. e., the several Californias) . . . » This is not true. For example, the Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada *together* are equal to more than the two individually. The potentialities of the Central Valley, because it lies at the foot of a humid mountain range, are greater than its inherent potentialities. And the value of the Sierra Nevada is greater than the inherent value of that mountain range because its water flows onto the vast plains of the Central Valley. One does not sense the role of the Sierra Nevada in the geography of the Central Valley, and vice versa, when reading Lantis' book.

Finally, what is most lacking in this book is the personality of California ! Lantis has not succeeded in giving the reader the distinctive character of California, not even that of the most important part of the state, Mediterranean California. This is because the treatment of several small regions one after the other does not arrive at showing the personality of the region as a whole. And the brief remarks in the introduction, though quite revealing, are not sufficient.

#### *Wills' Topical Treatment of North Dakota*

Wills, on the other hand, has not divided his area into small regions, and because of this his book falls far short, in the view of the present writer, of acceptable regional geography. A regional division is needed even more in the case of North Dakota than in that of California because the regional differences are less obvious in the Peace Garden State than in California. The reader is more dependant on the author to demonstrate and characterize the regions in the case of North Dakota.

Even more serious than the lack of small regions in the North Dakota text is the absence of a framework of larger regions. In fact, the greatest weakness of Wills' book is the failure to bring out the basic contrast between east and west or, more precisely, between northeast and southwest. Several of the maps in this text, especially that of railroads and that of soils (pp. 246 and 50, both drawn by Warren D. Kress), clearly show the striking contrast between northeast and southwest ; but Wills does not seem to have realized what these maps revealed. In short, the author has failed to recognize and show forcefully that North Dakota falls into two vastly different subcontinental regions ; the northeastern half of the state lies in the Subhumid Prairic and the southwestern half, in the Semi-Arid Great Plains (Figure 1).

Unlike Lantis, Wills has succeeded in making evident a personality for his region, and it would appear that a topical treatment is more conducive to this end than is a regional treatment. Unfortunately, the personality which Wills portrays is not the personality of North Dakota but

that of the Prairie, as suggested by the inaccurate subtitle of the book, « The Northern Prairie State. » The image of North Dakota which dominates Wills' book is that of only the north-eastern half of the state, the Prairie sector. The feeling of the vast and forlorn sweep of the short-grass steppe in southwestern North Dakota is nearly absent from this book. If the author had recognized that his state falls into two distinctly different regions on a continental scale, he could not have permitted himself to make this catastrophic error.

*Writing Style, Factual Content, and Illustrations*

Both authors describe their respective state with much feeling. It is clear that each knows his state well and loves it deeply. Bernt Lloyd Wills is a North Dakotan who is professor and chairman of geography at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. David W. Lantis is professor of geography at Chico State College, Chico, California. Lantis' collaborators are also California geographers. In the opinion of the present writer, a geographer should not undertake the analysis and presentation of the geography of a region unless he *does*, as in the case of the authors under consideration, have a warm feeling of attachment for the region.

Lantis' style is by far the more eloquent. At times his writing becomes genuinely theatrical, for example : « Jupiter's niggardly rains coupled with the generosity of Vulcan have fashioned the Trans-Sierran terrain into a striking succession of naked north-south trending mountain blocks and intervening elongated bassins with glaring playas » (p. 21). The breadth of this author's vocabulary will go beyond the grasp of many readers, for example « auriety » (p. xi) and « portend » (p. xvii). Frequent citations of the poetry of S. O. Kolstoe add life and feeling to Wills' text on North Dakota. However, Kolstoe's verses laud the Prairie, and the effect is to accentuate the overemphasis already mentioned on the Prairie sector of the state.

The use of imaginative side headings adds interest and, at times, humor to *California : Land of Contrast*. Many of these headings are unexpectedly dramatic but cunningly appropriate : « Many Millions » (p. xiii), « Tablelands and Fault Blocks » (p. 9), « Snowstorms and Thunder-showers » (p. 10), « A Stony Land » (p. 11), « Twenty-Mule Teams » (p. 22), « This Barren Land » (p. 23), « Sagebrush and Shadscale » (p. 25), « Cattlemen and Farmers » (p. 25), « A City Seeks Water » (p. 26), « Land of Transit » (p. 36), « Dry Lakes and Worn Mountains » (p. 38), « Oven Hot and Wind Swept » (p. 39), « Kangaroo Rats and Scorpions » (p. 42), « Suburbia in the Desert » (p. 53), and « A Torrid Desert » (p. 58). These colorful and suggestive headings are a far cry from the traditional « Relief, » « Climate, » « Vegetation, » « Agriculture, » etc. The reviewer cannot compliment Lantis too strongly on the use of imagination and insight to give this kind of flavor to his book. This is the kind of regional geography which brings out the character of places. The reader will not find this sort of spice in Wills' text.

Both books are authoritative and the factual content is accurate. Both contain a vast amount of statistical data — perhaps too much. Lantis' book contains a great deal of local description which has the gazeteer flavor. The details in Wills' book are mostly on a state-wide basis, but the volume contains much general background material. Several of the chapters in the physical section contain a considerable amount of material on such impertinent topics as longitude and latitude, the seasons, the equinoxes, convection, the evolution of life through the ages, and the classic soil-texture triangle. This information is out of place in such a text. Surely one can portray the blizzards of North Dakota without reference to sun-earth relationships and describe the vast plains of that state without going back to the Archeozoic era !

Lantis' interpretations are generally defensible although often provocative. The interpretations which Wills makes of his data are, on the contrary, not always to be taken seriously. The book suffers from an excessive and unjustified enthusiasm about the industrial importance and potential development of North Dakota. We are told that « . . . its size and shape are favorable to its growth and development » (p. 305) ! The bizarre notion that the state is favored by its mid-continental location is repeated several times, but its strictly marginal situation with respect to the urban-industrial core of the nation is never mentioned. The author devotes  $4\frac{1}{2}$  pages to lignite (only  $\frac{1}{2}$  page to the chernozem !) and, after having proved that North Dakota has more lignite reserves than even the mighty Texas, leaves the unwary reader

with the impression that North Dakota is a potential industrial giant because of its rich coal deposits.

The cartography in both of these texts leaves much to be desired. Small, excessively reduced dot maps constitute the greater part of the cartographic presentation in Wills' North Dakota text. In the only population map of the state, urban population is spread evenly, along with rural population, over the county in which the city is situated (p. 115). Fantastic! The map of mineral resources (p. 201) is equally ill conceived. The best maps are those of physiography (pp. 32 and 34), soils (p. 50), drainage pattern (p. 59), and transportation (pp. 245-248). There is no map of vegetation nor of the agricultural regions so well illustrated in the chapter on representative farms. The maps in Lantis' volume on California are more impressive cartographically, but the subjects which are covered by maps are limited. The city maps are not very useful; they do not show built-up area, for example. The appendices contain an excellent series of maps, but most of them are too small. Each of these books badly needs a map of cities by proportional circles with the names of the cities indicated. (Lantis has an excellent dot map of California population (p. 466), but this does not serve the same purpose.) And most of all, both books are lacking in synthetic maps showing more than one kind of thing on the same base in order to bring out relationships and integrations. Since a region is characterized by the distinctive combination of features within it, synthetic maps are a must in good regional geography.

The photographs in both books are abundant and generally well chosen, with the exception of a considerable number of Lantis' illustrations which are oblique air photos with the subject at such a great distance that little can be discerned about it. For a lithoprinted volume at such modest cost, the excellent array of photographs in Wills' book is to be highly praised.

#### *Conclusion*

The reviewer has attempted to evaluate the two state geographies under consideration with reference to the methodology of regional geography. The methodological points raised are not intended to be exhaustive; they are merely those which the strengths and weaknesses of the books under study call to mind. Aside from their merits and shortcomings from the methodological point of view, each of these texts has outstanding practical value. Although Lantis' book gives little about California as a whole, it is a gold mine for the geographer, student, or layman who is already familiar with the personality and broad regions of California and desires to learn the character and details of the several small regions of the state. This book is ideal for the traveler, professional or layman, who desires to voyage about in California, book in hand, and see for himself in the field the things so lucidly described and explained in this handsome volume. The Wills book, on the other hand, will not in the least serve this purpose. Its value is to give the state-wide picture and to show the statistical position of North Dakota in the nation as a whole. Both represent a store of information about their respective states.

John M. CROWLEY

### L'EXPLORATION DE L'OUEST CANADIEN

#### **The Western Interior of Canada : A Record of Geographical Discovery 1612-1917.**

Edited and introduced by John WARKENTIN. Carleton Library No. 15. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Toronto, 1964, 310 pp., \$2.95.

In recent years we have seen a major growth in the numbers of paper-back books on aspects of geography. One of the most interesting for a Canadian reader is one in The Carleton Library by John Warkentin. Professor Warkentin, a native of Manitoba but now of York University, has carefully and appropriately introduced selected excerpts from the journals and papers of explorers who travelled in the Prairies Provinces in the period 1612 to 1917. The descriptive notes of the earlier explorers were usually brief but later more scientific observers wrote at length about specific features of the physical environment. The length of the passages quoted reflects this difference.