

= George Cressey =

George Babcock Cressey (December 15 , 1896 - October 21 , 1963) was an American geographer , author , and academic . Born in Tiffin , Ohio , he attended Denison University and then the University of Chicago , where he received a PhD in geology . After receiving his degree , he taught at Shanghai college and traveled widely in China . Upon his return to the United States in 1929 , he completed a pioneering book on the country , China 's Geographic Foundations .

In 1931 , Cressey received a second PhD from Clark University in geography . He then joined the faculty of Syracuse University , where he remained for the rest of his professional career . At Syracuse , Cressey wrote on a variety of subjects , but focused on " population problems as related to the worldwide distribution of land and arable resources , " and primarily studied Asia , though he traveled to 75 countries on six continents (all but Australia) , over the course of his career . Cressey also served as chair of the department and helped to develop the geography graduate program at Syracuse into one of the best in the country .

In addition to his academic work , Cressey consulted for the US Department of State , the Board of Economic Warfare , and the Military Intelligence Corps during World War II . After the war , he was also an outspoken advocate of better relations with Communist China and traveled widely in East Asia and the Middle East with a variety of fellowships . Cressey was also highly involved in a number of professional organizations , serving as President of the International Geographical Union , the Association for Asian Studies , and the Association of American Geographers .

= = Early life = =

Cressey was born in Tiffin , Ohio , on December 15 , 1896 . His father , Frank G. Cressey , was a Baptist minister and his mother , Frances Babcock , the first woman to graduate from the University of Chicago , taught Latin at Denison University . After high school , Cressey attended Denison University , graduating in 1919 with a B.S. He then entered the University of Chicago , where he studied under the noted geologist Rollin D. Salisbury , receiving a Master 's degree in 1921 and a PhD in 1923 , both in geology . His dissertation was entitled " A Study of Indiana Sand Dunes . "

After receiving his degree , Cressey went to China with the American Baptist Missionary Union and took a position at Shanghai College in Shanghai , China , teaching both geology and geography . While in China , he met Marion Chatfield , an American missionary , whom he married in 1925 . The two went on to have one son and three daughters . Cressey also used his time in China to travel in East Asia , visiting Mongolia and the Ordos Desert with particular frequency . His trips were often dangerous and took him far from other Westerners ; during one of his trips , in Hebei , he was beaten and robbed by a group of bandits . His travels in China covered more than 30 @,@ 000 miles , and formed the basis of a book he began writing , China 's Geographic Foundations : A Survey of the Land and its Peoples . Cressey finished the book shortly before leaving China and gave the manuscript to the Commercial Press in Shanghai to prepare for publication . In 1932 , however , the press was bombed by the Japanese and the manuscript was lost in the ensuing fire .

= = Second PhD and academic career = =

In 1929 , Cressey left China , returning to the United States for a year of study at Harvard University . In 1931 , he earned a second PhD , in geography , from Clark University , writing his dissertation on the Ordos Desert . The same year , Cressey joined the faculty of Syracuse University as a professor of geography and geology , and soon became chairman of the department . After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 , Cressey 's travels in Asia made him a sought @-@ after expert and lecturer on China , and he traveled frequently , giving lectures to academic audiences and the general public . Cressey also began to reconstruct his book , China 's Geographic Foundations , from his original notes , finishing it in 1934 .

In China 's Geographic Foundations , Cressey focused on describing the 15 geographic regions of China , but he also devoted chapters to " history , topography , climate , agriculture , and foreign

trade . " Writing in Political Science Quarterly , Grover Clark called the book " a clear , comprehensive and yet comprehensible description of the land and the people 's relation to it . " The book went on to become " the standard work in its field . " Although welcomed by the Kuomintang , the book was " strongly criticized " by the Communist Party of China because of Cressey 's judgment that China lacked the resources to quickly become a great industrial power .

While teaching at Syracuse , Cressey continued his travels , and in 1937 , he visited Moscow , where he was invited to consult on the production of the Great Soviet World Atlas . After his trip to Moscow , Cressey traveled widely in the Soviet Union , and after returning to the United States he spoke of the great economic potential of the country , despite anti @-@ Soviet sentiment . As a result , he earned " the trust and gratitude of his Soviet colleagues , " allowing him access to their knowledge and resources . Cressey also spent the 1930s developing the academic offerings at Syracuse , building " one of the best Master of Arts programs in geography available in the United States . "

= = World War II = =

After the US entry into World War II , Cressey became a consultant to several government bodies , including the US Department of State , the Board of Economic Warfare , and the Military Intelligence Corps . Cressey also taught and lectured on Asia , for the Army 's training program at Syracuse University , and lectured publicly on East Asia throughout the country . In 1943 and 1944 , he served as a special representative in China through the State Department 's cultural exchange program . In that capacity , Cressey worked with the National Academy of Sciences to help establish Chinese universities , and promote better relations with China .

During the war , Cressey also wrote his second book : Asia 's Lands and Peoples : A Geography of One @-@ Third the Earth and Two @-@ Thirds its People , published in 1944 . The book was aimed at the ordinary American as a general overview of Asia in light of rising American interest in the region due to the war . In the book , Cressey also entered into the debate on how to divide Asia from Europe by arguing that Europe was really only one of the six regions of Eurasia , the other five being the Soviet Union , East Asia , Southeast Asia , India , and Southwest Asia . Cressey also made the controversial argument in the book that " the key to enduring peace in eastern Asia is a strong China . " The book was well received , and Dudley Stamp wrote that it had " the sure touch of the man who has been to see for himself . "

= = Post @-@ war career = =

After the war , Cressey became chair of the newly independent Department of Geography at Syracuse , and worked to make Syracuse a top institution for the study of Asia . He brought Asian scholars and graduate students to Syracuse , and used his department 's funds to send maps and books to the geography departments within Asian universities . During the years following the war , he was also active within the Association of American Geographers , International Geographical Union and the Association for Asian Studies .

During the 1950s period of McCarthyism , Cressey 's interest in China and his " outspoken comments on the shortcomings of American foreign policy " led to his inclusion on various " lists of scholars suspected of sympathy with the Communists , " but the accusations were baseless and Syracuse University continued to fully support him . Ironically , at the same time that Cressey was accused of communist sympathies , the Chinese government included him on its list of its capitalist enemies .

In 1951 , Cressey retired as chairman of the geography department at Syracuse and became Maxwell Distinguished Professor of Geography , a newly created position . Over the next ten years , he traveled frequently and published prolifically . He also received several honors . From 1949 to 1952 , he served as President of the International Geographical Union and in 1952 he was elected as a Vice President , a position he held until 1956 . That same year , he received the George Davidson Medal of the American Geographical Society and in 1958 he received a distinguished

service award from the National Council for Geographic Education . In 1961 @-@ 1962 , he was a Phi Beta Kappa National Visiting Scholar and in 1962 @-@ 1963 he was served as a Department of State Visiting Professor in Asia . Cressey also served as Honorary President of the Association of American Geographers in 1957 and President of the Association for Asian Studies in 1959 and 1960 .

In 1955 and 1956 , Cressey held a Fulbright Fellowship in Iraq and in 1957 and 1958 he served as a Smith @-@ Mundt Professor in Lebanon . From his research and travel during these fellowships , Cressey wrote the book *Crossroads : Land and Life in Southwest Asia* , which was published in 1960 . In the first section of the book , Cressey dealt with the general geographical features of the Middle East . The next eight chapters dealt with the specific countries of the region from Egypt to Afghanistan , creating a picture of the whole region . Cressey focused in detail on the role of natural resources for the countries of the region , concentrating particular attention on the role of water and water shortages . W.B. Fisher , writing in *Geographical Review* , called the book " an authoritative and compelling study , " and Leonard Kasdan wrote in the *American Anthropologist* that the book was the " most useful single compendium of the aspects covered that exists in the literature to date . "

Although he broadened his regional interests in the 1950s , Cressey remained interested in China and his " enduring concern was to restore contact between China and the United States , " after the break in their relations following the Communist victory . He also promoted the study of China , hoping to educate a new generation of geographers with knowledge of China and East Asia .

Cressey died of cancer on October 21 , 1963 at his home in Syracuse , New York .