

Silviu Neguț, *Geografia Umană* (Human Geography), Editura Academiei Române, București, 2011, 614 p., 15 fig., 17 tab.

Human Geography is an outstanding work in this field in Romania. As the author himself confesses, “this work has not been born overnight, it is the fruit of lasting preoccupations that began nearly forty years ago with a prospective approach to Geography and to the new trends in Human and Economic Geography, and in Quantitative Geography”.

It is the first balanced approach to various Human Geography schools, also offering a comprehensive image of national and international profile studies. It is basically a reference work today. The period of transition to market economy and the great many economic, political and social changes it has entailed are also overviewed.

The first part of this eleven-chapter volume deals with the theoretical aspects of Human Geography, the second part focusing on the sub-branches of this science. The detailed approach to Human Geography, as a branch of Geography, goes back to the formation of this discipline as science, initially named Anthropogeography by Friedrich Ratzel and Paul Vidal de la Blache and its development into a distinctive scientific area.

The fundamental notions of Human Geography, such as geographical space, its organization and typologies, hold an important place in the economy of this volume.

Many geographers consider geographical space to be a concept devised by profile specialists in order to enable scientific formalization of the terrestrial space and its particularities. Region and regionalization, place and localization, territory and territorial attributes, as well as nation and the aspects related to it are discussed, too.

Analyses focus on the system, the algorithm, and the model – notions accompanying Human Geography, the epistemology of Human Geography, central-place theory and prospective geography. Geographical epistemology, a long-neglected discipline, emphasises the geographicity concept, that is, the relationships among man, space and environment.

Quantitative analyses in geography have been introduced for reasons of accuracy and precision. The quantification of geography is an objective law of the development of sciences, necessary for social practice, greater precision of geographical studies, for prognosis and a sounder foundation for Geography as science.

The author has long been concerned with problems of quantitative/mathematical geography, a topic discussed also in his PhD thesis. Geography is an area in which ever more quantitative methods can be applied, opening up new vistas.

The second part of this volume gives an outline of what Human Geography is really like (concepts, sub-branches, and approaches over time). This approach is the more important as no unity of ideas exists, and published works have an interdisciplinary character. As regards the Economic Geography – Human Geography dispute, the author considers that englobing the latter term into the former is rather forced, the other-way-round being the normal use. As a matter of fact, it is man who generates human activity and impacts the environment, and not reversely.

Apart from traditional branches – Geography of Population and Settlements in Romania (geography of population, rural geography and urban geography), Economic Geography (geography of agriculture, industrial geography, transport geography, geography of international trade exchanges, geography of tourism), Historical Geography, Geographical Toponymy, Cultural Geography, Political Geography, there is also a border discipline, namely, Geopolitics, touching upon several domains, the author devoting a special sub-chapter to it.

The geopolitical component under communism is discussed at large, especially because the subject was banned by the past regime (definitions, precursors of geopolitics, power structure, spheres of influence, pandemism, the state – the oldest actor on the world stage, frontiers and border-lines).

The work stands out by the fluent presentation of the topics, being relevant also for the author’s outlook on the most dynamic component of Geography, namely Human Geography.

Bianca Mitrică

Victoria Paraschiva Batariuc, Șerban Dragomirescu, Dan Dumitru Iacob (coord.), *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România, seria A, Moldova, fascicula 2, Siret / Städtegeschichteatlas Rumäniens-Sireth*, (Historical Atlas of Towns in Romania, Series A, Moldova, Fascicle 2, Siret), Edit. Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2010, XII+12 p.+7 maps.

A previous issue of the Journal (t. 43-44, pp. 236-237) praised the publication of the first fascicles of the series *Historical Atlases of Towns in Romania: Sighișoara*. The Commission for the History of Towns in Romania, under the auspices of the Romanian Academy, has been putting out an annual journal *Historia Urbana* in six fascicles over the last 10 years, depicting towns in the Romanian historical provinces (two fascicles for each province: Sighișoara and Sebeș in Transylvania, Târgoviște and Câmpulung in Wallachia, Suceava and Siret in Moldavia). Following closely the recommendations and rules of the International Commission for the History of Towns to provide a solid documentary basis on the development of these towns, the Historical Atlas presents the geographical, historical and cultural landmarks of the respective communities.

The latest fascicle in this series is devoted to the town of Siret, one of the oldest Romanian urban centres. In mediaeval Moldavia, the town was a princely residence, playing a political-administrative, religious and economic role, favoured by its location on an ancient commercial route linking Poland, the Baltic riparian area to the Black Sea ports and the Lower Danube. Loss of functions, political changes, and economic developments marked the history of Moldavia in the 16th–18th centuries diminishing the importance of the town which declined, affecting even its urban character, as mentioned by Dr. Dan Dumitru Iacob, the coordinator of this fascicle. The whole series contains two distinct sections: the first section, including explanatory texts, is bilingual (Romanian and German), the second section presents significant mapping documents.

The first section contains a text on the *Physical and Geographical Landmarks* (by Șerban Dragomirescu) highlighting the environment of Sebeș, which is not always favourable to the development of this town, the region being frequently affected by landslides, advections of cold air with eastern and some northern influences blowing from the Baltic Sea. Another text presents *A Chronicle of the Town, Introduction to the town's history, Population growth, Morphological structure, Urban development, Historical monuments, Historical descriptions of the town, Archaeological discoveries, Street names* – attested by historical and geographical documentation illustrated by pictures and reproductions of the first cartographic representation of the town (the oldest record – 1588 – in *Cosmographia Universalis* by Sebastian Münster). Of special interest is the section devoted to 14th century demographic changes in this multi-ethnic and multi-confessional town which, located on the border of the country, was rather neglected. The analysis of the morphological structure (by Dan Dumitru Iacob) may serve as reference for similar studies. The evolution of street names over time (18th – 20th centuries) is presented in a comparative table, for cadastral surveys. It also underlines the vulnerability to change of urban street toponymy in Romania.

The second section of the Atlas (historical and geographical maps) offers a *Sketch of the Town Area* (1784, scale 1: 89 000, 1790, scale 1: 28 800) and the *Plan of the Town* (2005, scale 1: 10 000), both excellently reproduced on high quality paper.

Atlas istoric al orașelor din România, seria A, Moldova, fascicula 2, Siret (Historical Atlas of Towns in Romania, Series A, Moldavia, Fascicle 2, Siret), by the quality of information and documentation (maps included) is a very useful tool for researchers, students and anyone interested in the history of towns in Romania. We are looking forward to the publication of the other fascicles in the Historical Atlas series, namely the Towns of Brăila and Târgu Secuiesc.

Sorin Mihalache