

RECENZII

SILVIU NEGUȚ, *Geografie umană – Human geography*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2011, 614 pag.

“Geografie umană” outstands through its topic, structure and content as a fundamental study in the domain of geography. Its elaboration was based on consulting vast foreign and Romanian bibliographic references and on appealing to both traditional and modern principles and methods in order to define more clearly and exactly the place and the role of human geography in the European and worldwide context.

The book has two distinct parts harmoniously combined in a whole, namely: “Geografia umană teoretică” – *Theoretical Human Geography* and “Subramurile geografiei umane” – *The Subdomains of Human Geography*.

In the first part of the book entitled “Geografia umană teoretică” the author underlines the complex evolution of geography from the phase of knowledge of facts, to that of examination and description of geographic environment and finally to the phase of its explanation and valorization. It is stated that once with the crystallization and consolidation of modern geography, more specifically in the last decades of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, human geography reveals itself in deed as a science with its own field of research, object and methods of study. Its founders are considered to be Friederich Ratzel (Germany) and Paul Vidal de la Blache (France) who stood at the origin of the concepts of oikumene, vital space, urban function (Fr. Ratzel), humanized landscape, geographic region (P. V. de la Blache) and moreover at the basis of research orientations regarding the relations between land, society and state.

The study also remarks the determinant part played by the founders of human geography/anthropo-geography – Fr. Ratzel (political geography), P. V. de la Blache (regional geography) to whom other names were added in time e.g. Elisse Reclus, Camille Vallaux, Jean Bruhnes, Albert Demongeon, Max Sorre, Max Derruau, Paul Claval etc., personalities who augmented the richness of human geography through new concepts and by inserting at the same time more reflections upon social geography, cultural geography, historical geography.

The author clearly defines the difficult ways through which human geography embraced elements of quantitative geography and prospective geography in the way to answer practical social needs and ultimately to consolidate itself.

The second part of the study presents and explains each domain of human geography, the way how they appeared and imposed themselves among the geographic sciences. The author underlines the fact that the geography of population (demography) developed greatly becoming a favorite topic for numerous geographers in America, Asia and especially Europe and a true domain of human geography as the scientific information relied on censuses effectuated in different countries of the world. The author also demonstrates that the preoccupations in the domain of the geography of settlements (rural and urban) which evolved almost in parallel with those in the domain of geography of population were a reflection of the habitat forms generated by human communities and determined on their turn their typology based on position, morphology and structure, age, spatial evolution, texture, number of inhabitants, function etc.. There are well defined those aspects which envisage the urban network, the forms of urban

concentration, the suburban/periurban area, the ruralization, urban typologies – with an accent on the functions and characteristics of the urban settlements systems.

The author reveals at the same time a profound knowledge of economic geography and of its subdomains (geography of natural resources, geography of industry, geography of agriculture, geography of transports, geography of commerce, geography of tourism) even by subscribing it as a branch of human geography, as the denomination has less credit and was found appropriate especially during the communist period.

While presenting the domains of human geography (geography of population, geography of human settlements, economic geography, social geography, cultural geography, political geography, historical geography, etc.) the author remarks among the others different types and societies in land planning, the mechanisms which allow the political territorial control, the advantages and disadvantages of production location, the social and cultural contrasts within the human landscapes explaining at the same time the social and political systems from different parts of the world.

The authors' personal vision and preoccupation distinguishes through the attempts of defining and understanding of the most important concepts and structures of human geography, some of them being meritoriously integrated within this ample and rich study (political geography, geopolitics, cultural geography, medical geography, etc.) which offers to the reader in a responsible manner explanations on the limits, content and importance of each branch of human geography. Along his work the author becomes very convincing in appreciating human geography on its real value and moreover even each of its branches through distinct problems and specific methodology.

In conclusion one should consider this study a scientific masterpiece which continues both the national and worldwide main preoccupations in geography for the current scientific period.

GEORGE ERDELI

MIHAELA DANIELA PREDA, *Etnia rromă din Oltenia între tradiție și modernitate: geografie umană – Roma ethnic group in Oltenia Region between tradition and modernity: human geography*, Editura Universității din București, 2010, 314 pag.

The study entitled *Etnia rromă din Oltenia între tradiție și modernitate: geografie umană* published by the author Mihaela Daniela Preda as a result of researches performed during her PhD thesis underlines through “modern scientific methods and also by original theoretical and methodological contributions” (Prof. PhD George Erdeli) the complex issue represented by the scientific analysis of this ethnic group.

The study of ethnic groups represents one of the most important elements on which human geography studies focus in the attempt to explain the complex demographic phenomenon of a territory. Moreover the study of the Roma population meets particular aspects and represents a challenge for the modern scientists, confronting with a „controverted”, old and numerous population on the Romanian territory displaying a particular and very complex cultural fund, specific behavioural patterns and ways of life as well as a strong congregational attitude towards both the majoritary ethnic group and the generally adopted current social patterns.

As the author remarks Roma population still represents, similarly to the past period, one of the most controverted and an almost exotic population which continuously occupied during the years a marginal social position. This situation led to the continuity of some behavioural characteristics considered to be „problematic”, and connected to the Roma way of life till the present day. In this context the different attempts to reform Roma population led generally to a

deepening of the existing problems and to a perpetual delay in solving them. Nowadays roma population still draws attention of the large public through media channels as controversial ideas and stereotypes cultivated during centuries and determined by a superficial overview of its problems come out. The disputes on the usage of roma or gipsy denomination are frequent as the first term is considered to bring confusion with the term Romanian and the second received in time negative connotations. At the same time sonorous statistics on poverty, education rate, high fertility rate, the family dimension, social exclusion etc., often represent phenomena explained through ethnic characteristics and supported by slippery arguments and generalized interpretations for roma population.

In this context the above mentioned work represents a valuable study of human geography and a welcomed contribution which analyses from the scientific point a view the problems of roma ethnic group. The geographical point of view is to be a novelty as most studies on the roma topic and generally on ethnic problems, are gliding into history or sociology domains' (Prof. PhD Silviu Neguț). The region of the study: Oltenia outstands as one of the historical regions of Romania on the one hand and as a European development region on the other, downscaling the study and emphasizing it in a regional context but maintaining at the same time its representativity for the Romanian territory in general.

The work is structured in 9 chapters being a coherent scientific demonstration on the topic. One of the first chapters explains the origins of the gipsy population on the Romanian territory presenting both the theories and the factors which led to their current localization. Demographic indices explaining the population dynamic, the structure and the spatial repartition are presented in a following chapter. Two of the most important and original chapters of the study are focussing on socio-economic patterns of this ethnic group in the analyzed area. The economic context is though presented as cultural patterns of different roma groups, separated by different denominations determined by their main occupation, generated nuclei of ethnic subgroups. The social universe of the roma population in Oltenia is described in a very well documented chapter on customs describing the roma traditions. The relations within roma family, rituals and customs connected with the birth, marriage and death as well as the traditional gipsy trial, the traditional clothing and the house and household elements and their esthetic and inesthetic elements from the actual point of view are generously commented by the author.

An important chapter of the book is the one regarding the discrimination or the marginalization of roma population in which the author mentions the newly adopted official denomination of roma as a consequence of discrimination. The researcher also brings into discussion both the phenomenon of endogenous perception and auto segregation and of exogenous perception and segregation as well as the negative and the positive discrimination of roma population at the level of Oltenia region.

Another interesting chapter focuses on the social exclusion and its consequences. The author analyses different indices: of accessibility, urban infrastructure, revenue, and tries to identify different levels of poverty based on data collected during an ample survey. The method also served to collect, analyze and interpret data for the chapter regarding the quality of the housing a reality very hard to be caught for communities living in remoted areas or gated localities/neighborhoods and sometimes even for ethnic subgroups of seminomads.

The last chapter treats the problems of integrating gipsy communities as an obligatory process of a modern society. The author argues the problem of integration vs assimilation and tries to identify the levels of integration for roma population from the economic, socio-cultural (within the educational and medical systems) and political point of view.

In conclusion it can be stated that the study *Etnia rromă din Oltenia între tradiție și modernitate: geografie umană* represents a coherent scientific debate of human geography on the complex issues raised by the controversial and very actual topic represented by the roma population ethnic group studied at the regional level in Romania.

ANA IRINA DINCĂ

