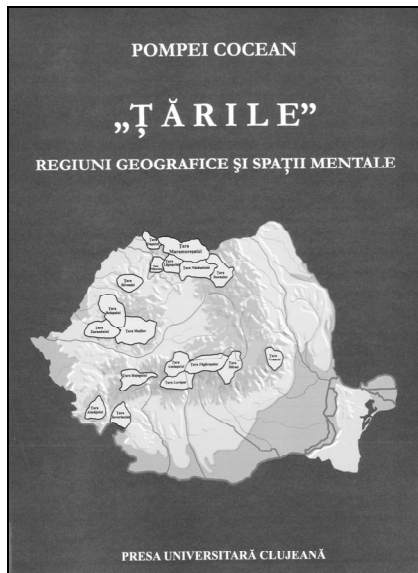


BOOK REVIEWS



Pompei, COCEAN, (2011),
“Țările”: regiuni geografice și spații mentale (*“The Lands”: geographical regions and mental spaces*), Presa Universitară Clujeană Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, ISBN 978-973-595-328-7, 247 pages, 31 figures, 37 photographs, references, abstract.

The study *“The Lands”: geographical regions and mental spaces* (*“Țările”: regiuni geografice și spații mentale*), elaborated by Prof. dr. Cocean Pompei from the Faculty of Geography from Cluj-Napoca, represents the scientific and innovating result of a regional geographic approach on the “land” type territorial entities from Romania, proposed by him and completed over time through the 18 PhD theses referring to such regions and coordinated by him. The author has approached the theme of the “lands”, referring to their meaning, identification and delimitation, the emphasis on the specificity and uniqueness elements, etc., in the four parts of the present study.

In **the first part** of the study, the “lands” are defined as *project regions with systemic features*. The author emphasizes and demonstrates the defining aspects in the process of delimitation of such regions: the natural and anthropogenic elements (ensured

even through the manner of forming the respective territorial entities); the presence of a rich and diversified support basis (favored by their geographic localization at the contact of larger relief units); the internal optimal fluency of the vectors carrying mass, goods, energy, information and interests; the permanent and multi-valent ability to innovate and spread the innovation; the favorable intermingling relations with the neighboring units; the existence of polarizing settlements and of an own mental space, which is very well consolidated and individualized.

The author has considered the definition of the “lands” as *mental spaces*, as the most important aspect, detailed in **the second part** of the study. Firstly, professor Pompei Cocean proposes the phrase *geographic mental space* that he defines and individualizes in relation with other categories of mental spaces, specific to other sciences. Subsequently, the author achieves a hierarchy of the geographic mental spaces, identifying a typology: the perceived, imagined and assumed mental space, while *the Romanian mental space* is divided according to the taxonomy in several mental spaces: national, regional, ethnographic and habitation, to which the metropolitan mental space is added as shaped by the capital city, Bucharest. At the same time, the evolution of these mental spaces that, over time, have diversified their structure and functions, have extended or have restricted the territory, including their dynamic typology (closed, semi-closed and open mental spaces) and the main factors that have contributed to their dissolution (alochthonism, disappointment, substitution and cosmopolitanism) are presented in this study. The Carpathians have been defined by Professor Cocean as an *archetypal mental space of the Romanian people*, discovered at the foundation of the ethnogenesis and the individualization of the 18 regions with the denomination of “land”. Their matrix has been ensured by certain occupations, traditions and customs, beliefs that have shaped the mountainous civilizations, preservers of rich and complex material and spiritual values. The author insists in the second part of the study on the historic factor, with a role in the shaping of the “land” type regions, as typical mental spaces as well as fragments of the archetypal mental space of the Romanian people, emphasizing their evolution over time.

The research continues then with the attempt of the author to define the concept of “land” and to answer to the question according to which the “counties” would represent an incipient stage or an alternative to the process of shaping the “lands”. The special merits of professor dr. Pompei Cocean result from the ingenuity with which he briefly presents the features differentiating the two concepts (“land” and “county”), proposing as well the criteria for the typology of the counties and the methodology of their delimitation, aspects which have led to the inventory at a national level. His merits as a researcher and an innovator in the field of Regional Geography are completed by the introduction of the concept of *resilience* for the regional systems, meaning the phenomenon of adaptation to change of a territorial system, regardless of size, structure and functions.

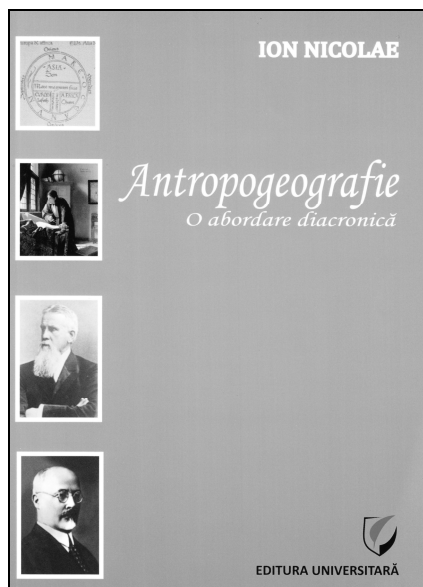
The third part of the study presents the regional specificities for each of the “land” type mental entities, which the author has defined in a unique way in the prefaces written for each of the 18 PhD theses referring to these “lands”. Thus, Maramureş is defined as a “land” synonymous with a civilization; Oaş – a unique “land” in its specificity; folk spiritual values have been integrated in the matrix of the Lăpuş mental space; Chioarului Land is presented as “Cetatea de Piatră” (Stone Challet) Land; the individualisation of Silvaniei Land, a gate to the heart of the “Land”, has been achieved in the most unfavorable historic conditions; Năsăud, a “slope land” extended on a very friendly natural environment in all its details; the uniqueness of Moţilor Land offered by its extension on the peaks of

Apuseni Mountains, not in depressions as the case of similar regions; Beiuşului Land best representing the archetypal model of the “lands”; the uniqueness of Zarandului Land, from the point of view of the natural sub-layer matrix (the overlapping on a succession of three depressions); Bârsei Land with the role of “central place” through its geographic position in the centre of Romania; Almăj, a typical model of intra-mountainous, semi-closed mental space; Amlaşului Land, a typical model of dissolution and metamorphosis of a mental space; Loviştei Land as a typical geographic region; Severin, a Danubian “land”; Vrancei Land, whose rich spiritual heritage confers a mythical aura; Dornelor Land, very strongly naturally fortified; Făgăraşului Land, one of the first mentioned in documents and classified in the “slope lands” category; Haţegului Land, protecting a capital, Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana etc.

In **the last part** of the study, the author approaches the issue of the Romanian “lands” destiny. Even if these territorial entities have preserved their identity over time, even if they have evolved materially and spiritually, we may find that currently they do not possess political and administrative attributes, being assimilated to the counties that totally or partially bear their names. This flaw has consequences on the involvement of the decisional factors in the development and the preservation of their own heritage. Thus, professor dr. Pompei Cocean considers that the future of these territorial entities could be achieved, on the one hand, through the assurance of their territorial cohesion, and, on the other hand, through the multi-valiant brand function that they may fulfill (tourist, cultural, scientific, educational).

The study, *“The Lands”: geographical regions and mental spaces (“Țările”: regiuni geografice și spații mentale)*, is classified in the category of especially valuable and innovative complex regional approaches, meant to value the Romanian cultural heritage acquired over centuries, special merits being attributed in this case to professor dr. Cocean Pompei, for the idea and the courage of approaching such a research, for the enrichment of the geography science with new concepts and research methodologies.

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Ion NICOLAE, (2011), *Antropogeografie. O abordare diacronică, Ediția a II-a, (Anthropogeography. A diachronical approach, The Second Edition)*, Edit. Universitară, București, ISBN: 978-606-591-128-4, references, price 8 Euro.

In the field of Human Geography from Romania a new important book recently appeared. It is about the evolution of the geographical thought approached in a diachronic manner highlighting the key moments of the evolution of Human Geography. Legitimately the work starts through its first part with the conceptualization of the relevant notions that this field of geography deals with. In this regard, the author defines the concept of Anthropogeography and presents both the key concepts of it as well as the beginning of the concerns in Human Geography. So much, the author points out the old stages in the Human Geography thought as the Antiquity and the Middle Age. Further, the second part is concerned on the spatial diffusion of the main ideas in Human Geography filtered by the stage of the great geographical discoveries. In this regard the European expansion assumes an important role it revolutionizing the all history and geography of the world. The theories of the antique geographical thought are capitalized and developed by the new ideas of some great scientists as Kant, von Humboldt and Ritter, scholars considered as founders of the modern geography. In close connection with these aspects, the third part of the book deals with the Human Geography as well as with their founders as for instance some scholars as Ratzel and Vidal de la Blache.

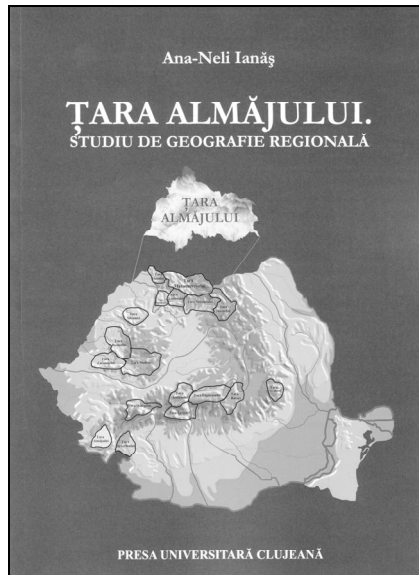
Furthermore the author explains the new and major trends and flows in Human Geography and the crisis of this field during 1940 and 1950. In this regard, the chapters emphasized some questions about the Darwin's thought applied in geography, the regional perspective in anthropogeography, the close connections between society and environment a central and steady theme for geography. Advancing on the time scale the next section of the book is focused on the Human Geography during the post-world wars period as well as on the quantitative revolution from geography. The author reveals the new geography and the important achievements of it as well as the relevant models used in the geographical

research. To illustrate this stage the author samples with two relevant cases in terms of the contribution of Christaller and Hagerstrand. The new perspectives in geography are boarded through the lens of the new geographies so current in the contemporary period. This reality is justified by some brief overviews on the field as the radical geography, the behavioral geography, the feminist geography and so on.

Going further and analyzing the human geography from the last three decades, the author outlines together with the main geographical currents the great fragmentation of the researcher's contributions in geography being sampled some particular geographic fields as feminism, cultural studies, postmodernist geography, critical geography etc. Strongly marked by the scientific revolution of the second half of the last century the Human Geography supported many transformation in close connection with the new perspectives of the modern and post-modern societies as well as with the new trends in the scholars knowledge connected to the contemporary dynamics of the globalized visions within the current research focused on the spatial and functional patterns of the world regardless the scale of resolution. In this all worldwide context Romania is no an exception. The Romanian geographical thought (easier or harder) has been adjusted to the international and universal ideas. For outlining the behavior of the Romanian geography the author dedicates its last chapter to the analysis of the evolution of the Romanian geography in terms of its general key moments. For this the final section of the book deals with the beginnings of the Romanian geography considering the great contributions of some old scholars, further examining the Romanian school of geography and sampling with the relevant contributions of some senior scholars as S. Mehedinti, G. Valsan, C. Bratescu, V. Mihailescu etc.

Starting from this fundamental thought, the author presents the development of the Romanian Anthropogeography, for then to point out the evolution of the field under communism. It is pretty evident an involution during this historic period because the old communist regime has not accept the international thought in the some scientific fields. That is why the Romanian geography is secluded by the international ideas in terms of the geographical research. This left behind will be pretty difficult to recover, but as outcome of the current internationalization, after two decades of post-socialism the Romanian geography is well connected to the all scientific thought of the world. Thus, the new geographies become now un-dissociating part both in the geographical research as well as within the Romanian education system. The book draws the attention through its design and its complexity, being an important and reference tool for different scholars interested by the evolution of the Human Geography within the scientific and academic environment of the world. Moreover, it is very useful in our understanding processes of the world spatial and functional dynamics. This publication could be undoubtedly a real resource for students, teachers and scientists with a focus on the evolution of the Human Geography as well as on its particular thought and paradigms.

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Ana Neli IANĂȘ, (2011), *Țara Almăjului. Studiu de Geografie Regională (The Land of Almăj. A Study of Regional Geography)*, Presa Universitară Clujeană Publishing House, Cluj Napoca, ISBN: 978-973-595-346-1, 442 pages, 159 figures, 32 tables, 47 photographs, references, annexes, content in English, abstract in English, price 10 Euro.

The Romanian Regional Geography has been recent loaded by a new book that deals with the study of the Romanian Lands. The book, designed as a doctoral thesis, continues an important series of studies and publications focused on the regional analyses of the Romanian Lands. The chosen region for this study is represented by the Land of Almăj a typical region from the Romanian Banat, a land that in a globalized world still preserves its local identity, culture, customs, traditions and the ways of life of its human communities. The book starts with a theoretical and methodological chapter, the author presenting the design of the applied methodology in order to conceive an objective and realistic analysis of the region. In the light of this consideration this section includes the used principles and means within the regional geography, the analysis of the concept of region as well as the lands as representative regions in Romania. In order to reveal the need of this study the second chapter deals with the research history of the region emphasizing both the relevance of the study in the Romanian geographical research as well as the originality of the work based on a systematic explorations of the main natural and anthropogenic components. Within the Romanian Regional Geography the delimitation of the lands represents a complex problem for which the author consecrates a complex and exhaustive oriented to this issue. For a proper understanding the chapter includes and covered the concept of limits as well as the meanings and typologies of them, their criteria of demarcation considering the politic and administrative criterion, the landscape criterion and the functional one. Based on this complex approach the Land of Almăj is precise delimited within the territory of the Romanian Banat.

Further, the study follows the classical algorithm applied in the research of the regional geography. So, the next chapter reveals the natural components of the Almăj Land Regional System. The author analyzes in a complex manner the territorial morphology, the relief, the climate, the hydrography and the bio-pegogeographical components. In order to emphasize the reality of this particular region the work comprises not only descriptive and

quantitative methods, furthermore the analytic, factitive and correlative approaches being accompanied by peculiar means as interpreting statistical data, participatory observation, cross-field examination, questionnaires survey and so on, all of them being filtered and graphical expressed by GIS Program. As outcomes of such approaches, the made analyses are correct represented by graphic materials in terms of maps, diagrams, charts and sketches that show the dynamics of the introspected features of this territorial system.

The study goes on with the demographic and habitat component, the fifth chapter dealing with the main geographical characteristics of the population and settlements from the Land of Almăj as particular systems that offer to it a special identity in terms of spatial, cultural and socio-economic perspectives. The approaches of these issues are based both on the quantitative and qualitative methods and insights, the author pointing out the main dynamics of these features. The research on the local demography as well as on the local settlements provides a complete image on the peculiar way of life from Almăj. On the other hand it still reflects many unaltered customs and tradition with all the current fluxes of globalization. Often it seems that in this part of Romania, as outcome of the position potential of the region of Almăj many old social and cultural features are preserved ensuring a local specific spatial, structural and functional identity. As well, the local human and cultural capital, the customs, traditions and practices are boarded in the chapter focused on the economic activities. The agriculture as an old and primary occupation, the industry as outcome of the Romanian politics of industrialization and the local services are diachronically analyzed highlighting the region dynamics both during the old historical stages as well as during the last two decades of the Romanian post-socialism. Using a global perspective, for a proper understanding and knowledge of the regional economy and its impact of the current post-socialist practices, the author studies and presents the current socio-economic disparities at the regional level in order to offer a realistic tool for the further regional development actions of this territorial system. Moreover this approach comes to conclude the social and economic dynamics of the region.

The final section of the book based on the previous analyses comes to synthesize the main geographical and socio-economic components. In this regard it deals with the regional chorotype of the land of Almăj as well as with the issues related to the regional development. Originally, the author design the chorematic model of this region, this method being more than representative for the regional analysis in order to capture the particular issues related to the local regional development. For all its contents the book represents an important work focused on a distinctive part of the Romanian Banat that legitimately completed the specialized geographic literature of this region. The accuracy of this study, its expressiveness and scientific perspective make from this book a valuable reader for one of the most relevant lands from Banat. Furthermore, it represents a useful tool for future research oriented to the Romanian Banat. The book highlights the geographical spatial and functional individuality of a particular region with an important social, economic and cultural capital as well as with an original cultural identity less altered by the contemporary fluxes of the current globalization.

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