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**IONEL BOAMFĂ**
**Geografie istorică**

(Historical geography)

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**I**N THE city of Iași, the start of the university year coincides with a well established event among geographers, entitled “Proceedings of Dimitrie Cantemir International Geography Seminar,” organized by the Geography Department of Alma Mater Iassiensis. Within this context, at the 39<sup>th</sup> edition of the event, on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University hosted the launch of *Geografie istorică* (Historical geography), authored by Professor Ionel Boamfă.

Quantitatively, it is comprised of a total of 476 pages, also encompassing a number of 14 tables, where the processed statistical information forms the basis of most of the cartographic representations (295 figures). The book also contains an Addendum (pp. 447–449), which proposes several ideas for the optimization of the administrative-territorial organization of Romania, taking into account the results of the 2002 Census. There is also a vast Bibliography (pp. 451–476), with 575 titles, out of which 508 are classic sources, the rest being website links. The front cover depicts “The Geographer,” an oil on canvas painting by Jan Vermeer van Delft, completed around 1669, currently on display at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie).

After its Contents (pp. 5–6) comes a Foreword (pp. 7–8), signed by Emeritus Professor Alexandru Ungureanu, corres-

ponding member of the Romanian Academy.

The book’s author, gifted with one of the most comprehensive scientific educations when it comes to historical geography, succeeds in presenting several concepts regarding the evolution of this branch of human geography. Three distinct development stages are depicted, from the international level to European, and then to national-Romanian level. The subject matter was partially ignored after the Second World War, its return into the scientific spotlight taking place only during the last three decades. Furthermore, the author emphasizes the importance of historical geography and its status as an “intermediate discipline,” between geography and history, concluding with a definition put forward by geographer Élisée Réclus: “Geography is a History of space, while History—a Geography of time.”

The critical and thoughtful analysis of the bibliography allowed the author to create a theoretical and methodological basis, making use of human geography concepts, and formulating adapted hypotheses, updated specifically for the domain at hand. Also worth mentioning from the second chapter, the “Methodological Specifications on the Creation of an Administrative Database for the Romanian Space,” aided Professor Ionel Boamfă in creating an original codification for settlements. It uses a system of letters and numbers marking the state, geographical-historical province, administrative-territorial unit and so on. The result is therefore a code of different “lengths,” facilitating statistical-cartographic data processing, for different eras, based on the aggregated information. For instance, for the City of Cluj—we have the

following code: ROTRS10400101 (RO = Romania; TRS = Transylvania; 1 = Ardeal; 04 = Cluj County; 001 = City of Cluj; 01 = Cluj).

The third chapter of the book, “Evolution of the Natural and Anthropogenic Geographical Space: Review of the Humanization Process and Past Economic Activities with the Help of Historical Geography,” is the most extended (pp. 41–349), focusing primarily on the time-spatial distribution of the ethnic and linguistic structure of the world’s population for a period of more than three millennia (3,200 years), between 1200 BC and the beginning of the third millennium AD (the year 2010). The entire analysis is accompanied by a vast cartographic basis (36 maps) which “aims to depict the current international political-administrative divisions, in order to facilitate data comparison between different historical eras and periods” (p. 42). The second part of the chapter presents the time-spatial distribution of the per capita GDP, from the end of Antiquity (AD 1–600), followed by the Middle Ages, and the modern and contemporary periods (the year 2010).

It also contains some historical and geographic specificities regarding anthroponyms. A larger section is dedicated to issues regarding the time and space evolution of the Thracian-Gaeto-Dacian and Romanian space, with fascinating glimpses into Romanization and the formation of the Romanian people and language. Also, we find some information on the ethnic and religious structure of the Romanian space during modern and contemporary times (1831–2011), alongside 15 engrossing maps.

The same logic, depth and scientific approach are found in the subchapter titled

“Specificities of Agricultural and Pastoral Activities in the Carpathian-Balkan Space” (pp. 196–344), where the author makes use of an entire methodological arsenal, characteristic not only to the two main disciplines, but also to ethnography and linguistics, emphasizing “the past spatial distribution of shepherding based on toponyms and anthroponyms from the European Romanic space, attested by names derived from Latin *\*berbecariu(s)* and *\*pecorariu(s)*, as well as the spatial distribution of names derived from Romanian words: baci [shepherd], stână [sheepfold] . . .” (p. 196), concluding that “as an activity deeply rooted in the Thracian-Dacian and Roman periods, the shepherding from the Carpathian-Balkan space left a rich heritage in Romanian terminology, especially in etymology and proper names” (p. 343).

The book ends with chapter 4, “The Historical Geography Specificities of the Administrative Organization of the Carpathian-Balkan Space” (pp. 351–445), with focus on the old lands-counties-areas of the Romanian countries, as well as the old regime’s attempts to conduct an administrative reform of Romania. Another major focus was on the Romanian representation in the European Parliament, due to the numerous proposals for regionalization from 2012.

The scientific content, the thoroughness of the approach and the text’s accuracy make the book a must read for various specialists, such as geographers, historians, ethnographers, and social scientists.



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