

BOOK REVIEWS

Alexandru UNGUREANU, Ionel BOAMFĂ, *Toponomastică (Toponomastics)*, Location: Iași, Editura Sedcom Libris, 2006, 19 figures, 270 references, Price: 4 3, ISBN: (10) 973870-193-1, ISBN: (13) 978-973-670-193-1.

Books of toponomastics have always been fascinating for the reader due their relationship to history, to the time profoundness of society. Otherwise it is difficult the scientific layout of understanding the problems belonging to the origin, significance and evolution of toponyms. Without a serious background (from the fields of geography, linguistics and history) and a consistent cooperation between specialists there could not be solved arguments in favour of certain toponyms. Sometimes the solutions are unexpected or remain a mystery. Maybe this mystery maintains the study of toponomastics with a real force of attraction for numerous specialists.

The recent research which has appeared in Iași and has been signed by the reknown geographer Alexandru Ungureanu from the University „Al. I. Cuza” of Iași, correspondent member of the Romanian Academy, together with university assistant Ionel Boamfă represents an important step forward to the geographic view on this field. These two authors combine experience and the solid scientific research with prospective enthusiasm; the result has a densed and new scientific context.

The content of the book has a clear structure, somehow didactic and focussed on the use of the students. The book can easily been read, the explanations are accessible, the language is fluent, filled with ellegance and without unuseful notes. The first pages insists on the confussions made if maps are ignored. The example of „Valea Vinului” from the Rodnei Mountains is relevant for historian C. C. Giurescu, in a study referring to the wineryard and town Odobești, explaining the toponym as being connected to wine cultivation without taking into account the unproper climatic conditions from those mountains (p. 12). Such errors are under observation also in other pages of the book. When analysing the toponyms there is necessary a certain experience, a recognising of linguistic laws and a large view for geographic correlations.

In the first chapter it is analysed the significance of the elements of natural frame (geology, geomorphology, hydrology etc.) and those of human geography. The next

chapters show the stages, the principles and the processes which are at the background of the forming and evolution of toponyms. A large chapter insists on the classification of toponyms. There are relevant some uses of graphs and other cartographic materials for the understanding of space elements with toponomastics.

Even though the intention of the authors was to bring this study in the light of student help, the way of treating the problems and its content make this research to be useful for ethnographers, historians, linguists etc. It is of great help as well for those interested in toponomastics from the point of view of an interested reader.

**Senior Lecturer Sorin PAVEL,
West University of Timișoara**

Remus CREȚAN, *Etnie, confesiune și opțiune electorală în Banat: structuri teritoriale, tradiție, prezent (Ethnicity, confession and electoral option in Banat: territorial structures, traditions, present)*. Location: Timișoara, Editura Universității de Vest, colecția Terra, 2006. 256 pages, 49 diagrams and maps, 34 tables, 188 references. Price: 5 €, ISBN (10) 973-7608-91-7; ISBN (13) 978-973-7608-91-8.

This second edition of 'Ethnicities, confessions and electoral options of the Banat population: territorial structures, traditions and the present' updates the first detailed scientific study of its kind, based on very wide reading combined with material gleaned from both questionnaires and documents. Historical-geographical evolution of the Banat population is based on statistical data from the late nineteenth and census material for 1900, 1930 and 2002. The study, which extends the area of Banat northwards beyond its conventional historical limits, examines certain familiar themes relevant to the region's population including ethnicity and religion as well as the marginality of the Roma population. But it also deals with electoral behaviour which is a relatively original topic for Romanian scholars. Indeed dr. Remus Crețan is to be congratulated for this significant enlargement of the historical geography literature – combining relevant concepts with a solid empirical presentation - which will be useful for the both teachers and students of economics, history and sociology as well as geography. Well-illustrated with graphs and maps, the book deserves to attract a wide readership and to inspire similar studies in other parts of the country.

The first part of the book deals with the territorial evolution of Banat in its environmental context and summarises the complex ethnic structure of the population as well as the coverage of the topic by previous researchers. Colonisation is linked with specific political and social-economic developments while each nationality is presented separately with regard to its major areas of settlement. The study then goes to profile the confessional structure, tracing the evolution and the organisation of each of Banat's

churches with reference to the more significant historical events. And the final part deals with the electoral geography, prefaced by a short note on the administrative-electoral structure. Electoral activity is examined for whole period from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, while concentrating most heavily on the events of the recent reconstruction of democracy (1990-2002) at the national and local levels. Some interesting correlations between ethnicity, religion and electoral behaviour give a provide some interesting originality for the final part of the book.

**Emeritus Professor Dr. David TURNOCK,
University of Leicester**

Petru Urdea, *Dicționar de nume geografice (Dictionary of Geographical Names)*.
Location: Timișoara, Editura Universității de Vest, colecția Terra, 2004. 336 pages,
23 references. Price: 4 €, ISBN: 973-8433-61-4

The *Dictionary of Geographic Names* edited by dr. Petru Urdea is part of the complex toponymic studies. The content of information begins with geographic aspects, language of origin, the clarifying of their history and the way of forming of each analysed toponym.

The reader has an opened window inside a glossary for numerous apelatives in the world. The value of the dictionary consists in the presenting of a great number of toponyms which involves names of forms of relief, names of waters, oiconyms etc. Many of them have been explained till now as having different significances, but the role of the geographer here is to concisely express the field realities.

Living in a global society one has to begin each geographic study with the understanding and explaining of place names. The way in which they appeared and the role they have in everyday life is essential for being conscious of local, regional and global processes. From the numerous toponyms collected by the author it is shown that the development of toponomastics in a certain territory was due to either spontaneous or to interests brought by authorities. The processes of toponymic layers are obvious in most of the regions in the world. The period of European colonialism left their track on different toponyms, being not excluded the linguistic corruption in the spaces where the *Europenisation* of toponyms replaced the old layers of the indigenous population.

The dictionary has 336 pages, a diverse list of international and Romanian references. It is welcomed to publish such studies in all universities so that more and more specialists in geography, history, linguistics should be informed about the significance of place names.

**Assistant Professor Dr. Remus CREȚAN,
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Nicolae Dolângă, 2000, *Țara Almăjului (Almăjului Land)*, Location: Timișoara, Editura Mirton, 2000, 284 pages, 66 graphs, 11 maps, 3 tables, 194 photos, 160 references, Price: 5 ₸, ISBN: 973-585-234-9.

Țara Almăjului (Almăjului Land) represents an important monographical study of an intramontaneous space from the southern part of the Romanian Banat region, known since the dawn of the Middle Ages.

Starting from a short physical-geographical characterization of the “land” and from the explanation of the word “Almăj”, the author gives an important attention to the macrotoponyms and microtoponyms of Dacian, Latin and Slav origins, of those who reflect the traditional occupations (like agriculture) or some relict toponyms because, as the author is writing in the preface of the book, “these keep an impressive unwritten history of the land”.

The tumultuous history of the Almăjului Land, reproduced in 30 pages of this book, has the geo-demographical consequences reflected in “the existence of the only concentration of Czeck population from Romania”, who live here in six villages which appeared since the beginning of the 18th century. The mixture between the Czeck and Romanian civilisations is impressive, giving birth to an essential popular civilization, whose characteristics comprise the elements concerning: traditional occupations, rural farm, rural trades, popular costume, customs from the Almăjului Valley. The ethnographical characteristics include the folklore, the explanation of some terms specifically for the Almăj subdialect, by making a glossary at the end of the words, are materializing like a model of a monographical study, associated with an exceptional documentation put into value by the rich geographical materials (maps, photos) which appear within the words and reflect the reality of the Romanian spirit from Banat by keeping the same values providing specificity.

The well structured content of the book together with the multitude of geographical, historical, social, folk elements, crowns the outcome of this monographical study, being an important instrument of the knowledge of this Romanian ethnographical dwelling place.

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