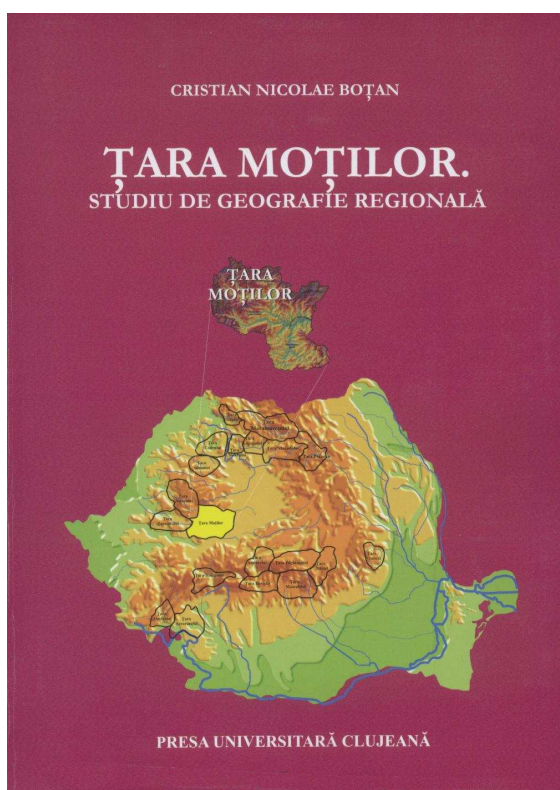


BOȚAN, CRISTIAN NICOLAE - ȚARA MOȘILOR. STUDIU DE GEOGRAFIE REGIONALĂ [The Land of the Moși. Study of Regional Geography], Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, 527 p. ISBN: 978-973-610-977-5.



The Land of the Moși represents a special case within the “lands” of Romania, both by its toponym (derived from the name of its inhabitants) and, especially, by its manner of development and functioning as integrated spatial system.

The analysis begins by establishing the theme in the matrix of the scientific literature and the phenomenon of individualising the “lands” as original spatial entities, the author proposing in an appropriate, synthetic manner several delimitation criteria, out of which, the self-identification of the population with its territory is among the most relevant. The next step represents a compelling journey in support of the continuity of the Romanian population in the Apuseni Mountains, the author appealing to archaeological, ethnographic, or linguistic arguments.

The author’s endeavour to identify the elements of homogeneity, polarisation, functionality, and systemic integration of the Land of the Moși is unique in the regional approach of the “lands”. Thus, a relative homogeneity appears at microscale level, a bipolarisation induced by the presence of two nearby centres, Câmpești and Abrud, an axial anisotropy determined by the axis of the Arieș, and a systemic organisation of the territory in all its joints.

The identification of the Land of the Moși with a functional regional system allows the author to detail its components, starting with the geological one, responsible for the existence of a vital principle of its affirmation and continuity: the gold and silver deposits that have generated a genuine economic-social-mental chain. The Roșia Montană case study updates a theme with many current contradictions as regards the exploitation method and its effects upon environment, as well as upon the region as a whole. The author’s option remains firm, the current project having many unacceptable weaknesses (the destruction of one of the most complex archaeological mining sites in the world, with galleries dating from Antiquity, Middle Ages and modern period; the maximum profits for initiators and the negative consequences for the Romanian state and for the affected region; major risk for the town of Abrud in case of an unpredictable natural disaster and of the Corna Valley dam breaking; the unprecedented intensity of exploitation, which, instead of several centuries in the pace of the previous exploitation, could reduce all the benefits of the mining activity for the region to only 17 years, etc.).

A systemic element with restrictive tendencies is the climate, which has generated typical phenomena of sectoral resilience (orientation of agriculture towards livestock, particularly cattle breeding). In the current conditions, the respective restrictiveness can become an advantage for the development of winter recreational tourism.

The river network has a role in concentrating the spatial dynamics towards axes and corridors, in opening the system outward, in providing a vital resource for it. A greater attention should have been paid to the karst aquifers in the region because of their unique manner of organisation and of their large water reserves.

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The soil cover reflects the lithological, morphological and climatic conditions. The limestone substratum of the Scărișoara-Ocoale and Poieni plateaus has facilitated the formation of rendzina and pseudo-rendzina soils while podzolic soils and lito soils were formed on the crystalline rocks or on the flysch sediments. The limited fertility has direct impact upon the ecological productivity and the profitability of mountain agriculture.

The landscape element most involved in the destiny of the people living in the Land of the Moți remains forest, both as basic resource and unmistakable symbol of the region itself. We find here a genuine and unique wood civilisation, whose products were spread, in a continuous exchange with cereals or household products, throughout the neighbouring regions in the Transylvanian depression, Banat or Crișana, every year. The symbiosis between forest and the Moți has ensured for centuries, through an intimate process of self-regulation, their existential support and the resilience to the conditions of a hostile environment.

The human component of the spatial system under analysis bears the seal of some special features, starting from the population's questionable origin (the author joining, rightly in our view, the opinion according to which the Moți are the true descendants of the Romanized Dacians) and continuing with their attachment to the values of the place (although they represent perhaps the most mobile population group in Romania, with the pendular descent to all cardinal points, they have always returned to their native place, without changing or influencing their customs).

The settlements strongly individualize the Land of the Moți by the widespread small and scattered settlements called "crânguri", original habitat entities, generated by the conjunction of a set of natural, economic, or social factors. Hence the deeply rural character of the settlement system, the two towns becoming rather exceptions to the rule than a real counterbalance towards urban. The town of Abrud was, due to its gold mining industry, the main polarizing centre since the Roman period, its place being taken only in the 20th century by Câmpești because of a more favourable position on a more increased movement axis between the east and the west of the Apuseni Mountains and of the diversification

of the mountain economy, including the incipient affirmation of tourism.

Industry focused, in its turn, on the two main resources of the region: gold and silver ore exploitation (discontinued in 2006 by Gold Corporation) and wood processing, in the specialized factories of Câmpești. Small scale industry is more widespread and is also focused on wood, livestock, textile products, etc.

An economic branch, still in the incipient phase if related to its substantial potential, is tourism. The Land of the Moți concentrates an exceptional natural heritage, seconded by original anthropogenic attractions. However, infrastructure is deficient, both in accommodation and access roads or auxiliary facilities. The upsurge of the rural tourism and the great number of existing projects provide optimistic prospects to the field.

Quintessence of the millenary interrelations between man and the place, the mental space of the Land of the Moți represents a fragment, maybe the most genuine one, of the Carpathian archetypal mental space, appeared and developed together with the Romanian people. In this place, occupations such as mining and wood processing can be found perpetuated and perfected for centuries (invalidating once more, if still needed, the pejorative assumption of our descending from a nation of shepherds); in this place, the material and spiritual attributes of a mountain civilization, inherited from the Dacians and rigorously adapted to the character of the place, are sacredly preserved, including a distinctive mythology. The full and perpetual assumption of the condition of Moți explains the lack of any influence from outside the living space (*l'espace vécu*) – although the Land of the Moți is a typical open mental space, because of the annual oscillating movements towards the lowland plains, where it came into direct contact with the elements belonging to other mental spaces.

The chorem of the regional system concentrates the active, effervescent territories into its nucleus and the repulsive areas, with economic, social and infrastructure dysfunctions at the periphery. The vectors are concentrated axially, along the Arieș Valley continued with the Arieșul Mare valley, out of which, ramifications are detached southward and south-eastward, along the Abrud and the Arieșul Mic valleys.

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