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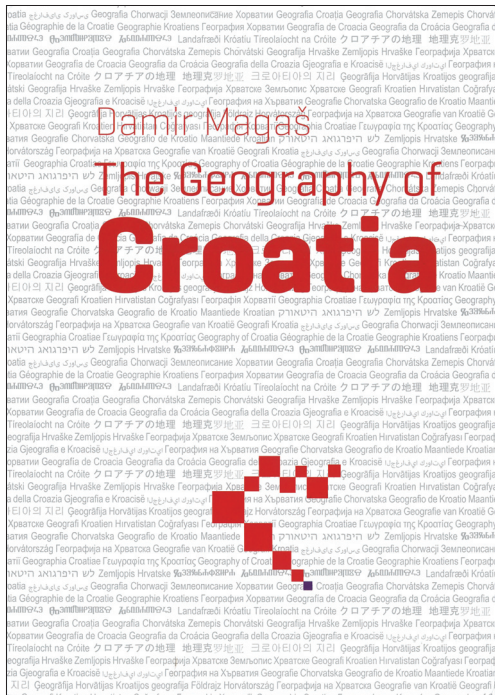
Damir MAGAŠ author of *The Geography of Croatia* volunteered to introduce and describe the physical and social geographical pattern of Croatia. The volume issued by the University of Zadar is the English translation of *Geografija Hrvatske* published in 2013. We can state that this is a seminal work that aims to set Croatia in the global context, and it also tries to familiarise the international audience with

Croatia’s natural, social and economic conditions. The language of the book and the extremely rich appendices with maps and figures are undoubtedly serving this goal.

The chapters of the book are arranged in the traditional way; first readers get to know about the absolute and relative geographical situation of Croatia, and this is where the author emphasises the fact that his country is situated in the buffer zone of East and West, of the continent and the Mediterranean, on the borderline between different cultural regions (i.e. Western Christianity, Orthodoxy and the Islam). In his view Croatia is part of the Western side, even if it means that this way Croatian nation is enlisted amongst the Central European countries.

The division of the country and the dichotomy of countless origins can be traced in various aspects; one of them could easily be the natural conditions of the country discussed in the second chapter. The well-known duality of physical geography has its effect on the climate, on geological and morphological characteristics, on hydrography or on the grounds and situation of vegetation. The northern and eastern part of Croatia belongs to the Carpathian Basin, whereas southward and westward it stretches into the Mediterranean zone facing the Mediterranean (Adriatic) Sea. The transition zone between the two major regions is provided by the steep, Karst Mountains of the Dinarides which, on the one hand, influence the climatic and hydrological features of the coastline, they form a special region of soil and vegetation, but on the other hand they also have impacts on the – later described – population distribution or circulation.

The third chapter is a register and individual representation of landscapes. The 120-page long part of the book reports shortly on all of the landscapes of



the country, along with the general overview of the relief, vegetation and climate of larger landscapes. In this rather lengthy part of the book the latter aspect should have been in focus instead of listing and describing smaller regions in catalogue-type.

In the fourth chapter of the book readers can get acquainted with the historical-geographical characteristics of Croatia. The author sets off from pre-historic times (Holocene), then comes the history of this part of the Balkans before the appearance of Croatians (Greek colonisation, Roman era), and afterwards we can read about the formation of the Croatian nation in the Middle Ages. The second greater part of the chapter deals with the Turkish, Habsburg and Yugoslav era ending up by the formation of modern Croatia. This part of the volume is especially interesting from a Hungarian point of view: it contains information about the Croatian nation's public law status, about the borders and ethnicities of the country in the Middle and Modern Ages. The history of Croatians and Hungarians intertwined throughout centuries, the personal union of the two countries, the status of Croatia (notably under the Hungarian crown, but formally as a sovereign country) had its effect on the national consciousness and history of Croatia.

It is interesting to see how the current geographical and geopolitical situation is matched with that of the Middle Ages, like mapping *Međimurje* ('Muraköz' in Hungarian) as part of Croatia, even if that area was not part of Croatia until 1920. Also, the author refers to his country as a sovereign state even in the Middle Ages, and nothing suggests its peculiar connection with the Hungarian Empire (e.g. when drawing the Croatian–Hungarian borderline). The descriptive parts of the book, of course, clarify this image.

In the fifth and sixth part of the volume the features of population and economy are described in

detail, readers can collect useful information and data about Croatia's demographic, ethnic and migration patterns, about the density of population, the characteristics of settlements, and the present situation of different economic sectors (agriculture, industry, services, including tourism, etc.).

The seventh chapter is a catalogue of Croatian counties (*županija*) likewise the landscape register in the third chapter, however, the description here is based on social geographical aspects (number of population in different settlements, economic situation, circulation, etc.). On the basis of this chapter we get a clear picture on the agglomerations of Croatia, the settlement network, and the division of labour in the area.

The eighth chapter places Croatia within the geographical framework of international communities, organisations and co-operations (EU, CEFTA, UN, NATO, AARC, etc.), whereas the last, ninth chapter deals with the history and development of Croatian geography.

Summarising my experiences, this volume – *The Geography of Croatia* – contains a vast amount of knowledge, it is a decent work, and both the author and publisher are to be praised for finding the right proportions of shared information within the book, for the high quality of layout (especially photos, charts and maps) and the prestigious content. Minor inaccuracies and the peculiar approach (that, in my opinion, reflects on the self-identification of Croatians) do not lessen the value and merit of the book that deserves attention from Hungarian and international audience.

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