

„GEOGRAFIJA RELIGIJE“

Geografski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 2011, pp. 500,
ISBN 978-86-82657-88-0

On the geographical horizon of publishing in 2011 appeared the book made by a professor from the Belgrade University - Faculty of Geography, dr Mirko Grčić - *Geography of religion*. Professor Grčić deserves congratulations for the deep analysis of cardinal chapters and for excellent elaboration of original and layered scientific work. Additional virtues of this work is its language and style that are accessible to the widest circles even average skills and education, but the scientific value of book was not lost.

Grčić's book contains 15 chapters of the first and 9 chapters of the second order, which are incorporated so that the reader can transparently to follow the diverse and complex glossary, in which intersect numerous data and facts that cut through the geography and religion. The book is accompanied with 54 pictures and maps that give us the idea of the geographical location of major world religions, sacred places, then the temples and centers with 190 bibliographic units. Author of the book also attached register of geographical terms which completed the scientific work and allow readers to quickly find the subject of interest and can be easily and quickly focus on particular sequences terms or chapter.

Modern society reckon on two pillars - the school and the church. School has its origins from the Sumerian period, and the church in various forms, slightly shorter. Their roots, genesis and evolution have similarities and differences, but one issue is certain to be out of their wings developed science. Professor Grčić seamlessly leaned on Einstein's maxim, „Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind“, and with this book clearly pushes the envelope of knowledge of the complementary relationship between geography and religion by giving a major contribution to the scientific knowledge of the deployment of religion, putting them in scientific differentiated geographical context.

Professor Grčić bravely grappled with universal and eternal questions of science and philosophy, where the relationship between man and nature, spirit and matter, in space and time, influenced the development of human transcendent. In explaining the genesis, evolution and planetary arrangement of religions, then understanding the specifics of sacred space and the study of pilgrimage migration, and cultural and religious tourism, the author firmly held interdisciplinary, then the geographical approach and system logic, where as

a leading scholar among our geographers, successfully dedicated very complicated analyzes that link geography and religion. Analyzing in depth the nature, causes, genesis and distribution of religions, Grčić refer to the role of geographical factors in planetary deployment of religion, and that is a good foundation for theological, philosophical and political considerations. Respecting geographical factors in a broad multidisciplinary scientific field, Grčić deals with complex issues of genesis, evolution and transformation of religion into the space as the scene where are, since ancient times, ensure compliance and confronted the philosophical and theological scientific theories. Rarely have the opportunity to have such a serious insight into the importance of geographical factors (changes in the natural environment and geographical location) in the search for the reasons that determined the sacred space in which to allocate holy cities, rivers, mountains and monasteries, as well as facilities which kept the fate of the nation, personalities and numerous families from the spiritual and secular life. Noting that all the great religions emerged in the marginal zone of the Eurasian continent, which is bounded on one side the aquatorium, on the other side the high mountains, from the Himalayas to the Pyrenees, Grčić introduces readers to a polarized physical-geographical area in which alternating mountains and plain, arid and humid areas, deserts and "heavenly garden", where since the early time develop agriculture and animal husbandry. This belt, from the Mediterranean Sea to India, has civilization importance, and he considers it as the *spiritual axis* of eastern hemisphere.

Looking at the geographical distribution of great religions and civilizations (eastern and western sectors), professor Grčić analyzes them planetary depth and finds that they are equidistant from a given point, intended as the North Pole, at the intersection of Meridian (60° East longitude) and Parallel (66°30'30" North latitude) and conditional relocated North Pole, which can be legitimately regarded as the emergence of deployment where they occur: Jerusalem, the Lhasa and the centers of ancient rivers (Memphis, Ur, Elem, Harappa, Beijing ...) and Mediterranean civilizations (Athens, Rome, Paris).

Changes in the environment as an important factor in the development, differentiation and disappearance of religion, professor Grčić mainly linked with the climate changes that are in the region of South and Southeast Asia, ranging from humid to arid climates. Such contrasts are the natural influence on the ups and downs of civilization and the evolution of religion from polytheism to monotheism. Thus disappeared civilization in the valleys of Yellow River, the Nile and the Euphrates and Tigris (Mesopotamia). It is of great importance to understand that Carthage in ancient times was the granary, and today it is a desert landscape. Taking into account the natural changes that accompanied the rush of Indo-European tribes from the north, Grčić stigmatize the power of various forces and veneration. He believes that the phenomenon of religious centers in the south-west and southern Asia affected by the geographical position of the triple border

of Europe, Asia and Africa where were crossed the trade routes from all directions of the old world and so masterfully introduced geographical factors as important in explaining the emergence of religions and religious centers.

Grčić follows and analyze schedule monotheistic religions, which were suppressed polytheistic and pagan, introducing us to the world of the holy places, “first” and “second order”. He acknowledges that the places of „first order” associated with important events in the life of the founder and prophet of a particular religion, of which the great religions share and creating sacred places of „second order”. In this context Grčić cites examples from the Christian tradition in which the center of the universe is Jerusalem and Palestine is a „holy ground”. After the division of Christianity, each of its sacred branches formed a sacred place of „second order”, so in Orthodox the center became Constantinople and the temple of Saint Sophia, a Catholic center became Rome with a still remote places of pilgrimages. In fact, the area of religious traditions is polarized, where are separated rivers, mountains and monasteries that have become the objects of bowing pilgrims.

Referring to A. Jakovski, professor Grčić performed functional typology and ranks of sacred places and divorced four ranking religious pilgrimage centers depending on the international significance of the pilgrimage which feature the dominant or less dominant socio-economic function. So, professor Grčić goes on to analyze the deployment of religions and religious centers of the first or second row stands 11 major macro-region in the world, where each macro region includes a number of cultural sacred places that have international significance. He presented in one place the most important religious centers: Europe from the domination of Christianity; North Africa with the domination of Islam; Western and Eastern Africa with the domination of Islam and Christianity and tribal enclaves cults; West Asia dominated by Islam and Christianity and Judaism enclaves; South Asia the religions of Hinduism, and enclaves of Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam; Southeast Asia with the religions of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity and Hinduism enclaves; East Asia with Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism and enclaves of Islam and Christianity; Central Asia with Buddhism, especially Lamaism; Central Asia with Islam; Latin America with the dominance of Christianity and tribal enclaves beliefs; and North America with Christianity and other religions enclaves.

In some chapters Grčić has subtle considerations about religion as an element and factor of the culture, that in its genesis explored the significance of geographical environment and successfully researched sacred places, sacred centers and holy places. Grčić focused the attention to the polytheism of the ancient civilizations and researched dualistic religions (Zoroastrianism, Zarvanism, Mazdaism, Juzidism, Mandeism), to make us more easily introduced into the field of monotheism. Finally, are discussed in separate chapters all the world’s religions. Most of space Grčić devoted to Christianity (135-224), and successively

treated Islam and Muhammad's way of salvation (225-252), Hinduism and sacred time in the world (263-327), Buddhism (327-380), Jainism, Sikhism, then Chinese religions (Confucianism and Taoism), Shintoism and finally looks at non-traditional religions: Baha'i religion, Adventism, Jehovah's witnesses, Mormons, tenrikjo, Unification church, Integral yoga and Movement of unity. If we look from the perspective of knowing the deployment of religions on the planet, this could be the most important part of the book.

Book *Geography of religion* is written in a clearly style, plainly and precisely. Packed with numerous data about geography and religion, which Grčić presented in the researching of most important religions, sacred places, sacred centers and holy places. This mosaic of planetary religions in a geographically diverse area shows that the world evolved differently depending on the environment and geographical location, where it is the religion of the religious community gathered, until the time when it became the basis of great civilizations and „cohesive power of great empires“ (Confucianism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam). At the end, Grčić indicates the ethical merits of religion, because science and religion rely on each other in the quest for dignity and truth.

With this book Grčić has achieved his current ambitions and gave us superb scientific work that can be written only by widely educated geographer, scientist and erudite, who is closely God-loving, or a connoisseur of eschatological principle. It can be said that the book is based on the imperatives of clarity, accompanied by original ideas, facts, observations and interesting sites, so, this work is Grčić's analytical intelligence.

Milovan R. Pecelj¹

Примљен: 25.12. 2016.

Прихваћен: 27.01.2017.

1 University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography. E-mail: milovanpecelj@yahoo.com