

BOOKS REVIEWS

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GEOGRAPHICAL ATLAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MORDOVIA

Mordovian State University, Saransk, 2012.

The Geographical atlas of Republic of Mordovia, a capital work dedicated to one of the subjects, to one of the republic of the Russian Federation, has recently been published in Saransk, in edition of the Mordovian State University Nikolay Platonovich Ogariov. A considerable number of the University scientists took part in the preparation of the Atlas, while the redactors' team was led by the professor Anatoliy Aleksandrovich Yamashkin, the dean of the Geographical Faculty in Saransk and the president of the Section of the Russian geographical Society in the Republic of Mordovia. The edition was prepared with the support of a grant of the Russian Geographical and by a number of authors – geographers, historians, ethnographers, culturologists, economists, sociologists, demographers. With their help, the Atlas described the history and the present times of the multinational Mordovian Republic, including the variety of its nature and population and its rich spiritual, cultural and material traditions. The publication of the Atlas is invaluable, especially considering the fact that in 2012 the thousandth anniversary of the unification of Mordovian and Russian peoples.

The content of the Atlas is divided into six thematic units:

- Natural conditions and resources (pp. 11–55),
- History of the Mordovian region (pp. 57–73),
- Population and social infrastructure (pp. 75–103),
- Economy (pp. 105–125),
- Ecology (pp. 127–147),
- Natural and cultural heritage of the city borough of Saransk and of the municipal districts (pp. 149–201).

These chapters, which make up the main part of the Atlas, are preceded by a short introduction titled Administrative-territorial division (pp. 8–9), containing the most important information about the Republic, followed by two geographical maps – an administrative and a physical one (figure 1), and a Conclusion (pp. 202–203), which sums up some of the most important facts displayed in the Atlas.

Except for the introduction and the conclusion, which are naturally limited to the basic information, all the thematic units have been written on a very high scientific and informational level, although pretty concisely, which is not surprising when taking into account the limited space of just about 200 pages of A4 size. The texts include a large number of statistical facts, which are either stated inside of the texts or in separate tables. They are also rich in geographic maps and other illustrations, created according to high professional standards. All the maps showing the whole Republic are done at the scale of 1 : 1,750,000 and that makes them visual enough and well integrated in the printing format of the Atlas. A great number of maps and illustrations help make such a diverse topic clearly and visually presentable, that being one of the principle requirements for publications of geographical nature.

For Serbian readers and scientists, this Atlas provides an extraordinary opportunity to get acquainted with one of the territory- and population-wise smaller federal subjects of the vast and complexly organized Russian Federation. The elements of the state as a whole are divided into: federal cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg), republics (Adygea, Altai, Bashkortostan, Burvatia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, Karachav-Cherkessia, Karelia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia, Sakha (Yakutia), North Ossetia-Alania, Tatarstan, Tuva, Udmurtia, Khakassia, Chechnya and Chuvashia), krajs (Altai, Zabalkaysky, Kamchatka, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Perm, Primorsky, Stavropol and Khabarovsk Krai), oblasts (Amur, Arkhangelsk, Astrakhan, Belgorod, Bryansk, Vladimir, Volgograd, Vologda, Voronezh, Ivanovo, Irkutsk, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kemerovo, Kirov, Kostroma, Kurgan, Kursk, Leningrad, Lipetsk, Magadan, Moscow, Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Oryol, Penza, Pskov, Rostov, Ryazan, Samara, Saratov, Sakhalin, Sverdlovsk, Smolensk, Tambov, Tver, Tomsk, Tula, Tyumen, Ulyanovsk, Chelyabinsk and Yaroslavl Oblast) and autonomous okrugs (Nenets, Khanty-Mansi, Chukotka and Yamalo-Nenets Okrug). In addition to the facts that the Russian ethnos outnumbers the other nations and that all the inhabitants of Russia are thought of as Russians abroad, the wideness of its territory and the complex and ever-changing political and social organization of Russia is one of the main reasons for such poor knowledge of the other nations and their territorial units, as well as of the Russian Federation. Mordovia got the present status (that of a republic) in 1994. Before that, it had been a self-administered territorial unit: an okrug (from 1928), an autonomous oblast (from 1930), an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (from 1934) and finally a Soviet Socialist Republic (in 1990).

The size of Mordovia (26,121 km²) makes it comparable to countries such as Albania (28,700 km²), Belgium (30,500 km²) or Armenia (29 800 km²). According to the results of the 2010 census, Mordovia had 824,800 inhabitants, which represents 0,58% of the population of Russia and indicates a low population density (31,9 inhabitants per km²). The population is ethnically mixed and consists of more than 30 nationalities (according to some other sources more than 50), from which the most populous ones are Russians, Mordovians and Tatars. The majority is Russian (above 60% of the total population). On the other hand, the indigenous Mordovian and Tatar peoples make up for a bit more than 30% and 5% respectively, while the other nationalities are considerably smaller. Mordovians belong to the Finno-Ugric group of peoples and consist of two sub-ethnos: Erzya and Moksha. The Moksha are mainly settled in the western parts, and the Erzya in the eastern parts of the Republic. The total population of the Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia (including also Udmurt, Mari, Komi, Komi-Permyaks, Karelians, Khanty and Mansi peoples) is about 2.6 million, including the peoples who have their own national sovereign states (Hungarians, Finns, Estonians). The official languages of Mordovia are Mordovian (Moksha and Erzya) and Russian. All major world religions are present, but Orthodox Christianity is the dominant one. Numerous ancient monasteries are until today pilgrimage places for thousands of people from all parts of the world. Some of them are: the male Joan Bogoslov (in Makarovka village), Holy Trinity (Bolshoe Chufarovo) and Alexander Nevsky monasteries (Kimlai) as well as the female Paraskevo-Voznesensky (Paigarm), Sveto-Tikhvinsky (Kurilovo) and Sveto-Olginsky (in the city of Insar) monasteries.

Geographical atlas of the Republic of Mordovia



Figure 1: Republic of Mordovia

Mordovia is located almost in the center of the European part of the Russian Federation, at the edge of the Volga basin, between the Moksha and the Sura rivers. Considering its topography, land, climate, mineral and natural resources, the territory of Mordovia, despite its relatively small size, is geographically diverse enough to provide an adequate environment for agriculture development as well as for other economic activities. The climate is temperate continental, characterized by severe winters (the average January temperature is -11°C) and by moderately warm summers (the average July temperature is $+19^{\circ}\text{C}$). The average year precipitation is about 450-500 mm. The landscape mostly consists of hilly plains, gradually rising from the West (Okadon plain) to the East (the Volga Highlands). The highest point is at the altitude of 324 m. Hydrographically, Mordovia is also divided into two parts: the western part (53% of the total territory), which belongs to the Moksha river basin and the eastern part (47%), which belongs to the Sura river basin. The total number of rivers is above 1,500, but only 10 of them are longer than 100 km.

The main natural resource of Mordovia is considered to be underground water. It is part of two artesian basins: the Volga-Sura artesian basin (80%) and Volga-Hoper artesian basin (20%). The estimated exploitable underground water resources are 2,604.4 m³ daily, 90% of which is drinkable. As of the beginning of 2011, 21 sources had been investigated, 11 of which were exploited. Besides sweet water reserves, mineral waters are also significant. Among mineral resources, the most important one are clay, sand, stone, diatomite, chalk and peat.

Natural and other conditions define the economic structure of Mordovia. The foundation of the economy is the agro-industrial complex and its most important field - animal husbandry (milk and meat production, as well as poultry farming). Tillage enterprises are specialized in production of wheat, sugarcane, potato and peas. Mordovia is not only one of the leading Republics in milk, meat and egg production in Volga (Privolzhsky) Federal District, but it is also one of the top five in the whole of Russian Federation. Its four leading enterprises are among the 300 best enterprises of Russia. Food industry makes up for more than a quarter of the industrial production of Mordovia. It is the base of the agro-industrial cluster, one of the tree clusters present in the current economy of Mordovia. The other two are the industrial cluster (the so-called production force), which comprises electrical industry (lighting, electrical and optical equipment, cable production,

construction materials) and the innovation cluster, which is related to the high-technology production based on the most recent scientific discoveries. The innovation cluster involves the autonomous institution "Techno-park Mordovia", the national research Mordovian State University, the Nanotechnology Center, two investment funds and other funds supporting the innovation business, as well as the Business-incubator and the Republic Lyceum-a high school for gifted children. Besides industry and agriculture, civil engineering is also important. It comprises about 60 medium and big construction-assembly firms, 20 enterprises producing construction material and mechanical industry and 10 project and scientific research organizations.

The Atlas also points out some environmental issues. Those are caused by erosion processes, which are especially common in drainage basins of rivers. In addition to the direct damage the erosion processes do to agriculture and other activities, there are also issues concerning the underground waters, atmosphere, ground and surface water. The flora and the fauna are quite diverse, a considerable number of plant and animal species being in the Red Book of the Russian Federation, as species that require special care. Taking special care of those species is not of recent origin. The Mordovia State Natural Reserve P.G. Smidovich was founded in 1935, and it was granted the status of a National Reserve in 1936. It covers the area of the Temnikovsky District, which is at the right bank of the river Moksha. Its area is the size of 32,148 ha, 94.8% of which is forests. The Reserve is a scientific research organization dedicated to protection of nature. The Smolny National Park was founded in 1995 in the northeast part of the Republic (Ichkalov District) and its size is 36,385 ha. Lastly, this section describes the natural monument of the Lake Inerka (56.3 ha) in the Bolshebereznykovsky District. This is the biggest lake of Mordovia and the habitat of almost a hundred rare and extinct plant and animal species.

The capital of Mordovia is Saransk. It has a population of approximately 300,000 inhabitants and it is a major political, economic, scientific, culture and sports center. It was founded in 1641 as a fortress in the southeast part of the Moscow Empire. In 1651 it became the capital of its administrative unit (uyezd) and in the 18th century it was already a trading center. A crucial moment in the city development was the end of the 19th century when the railway between Moscow and Kazan was built. It connected Saransk with both cities. Recently the city has been developing intensively, in part due to the ongoing preparations for hosting the 2018 Football World Cup in Russia as one of the host cities. Nevertheless, this is only one of the aspects of its current development: the city is becoming a economic, cultural and scientific center. In 2011 Saransk won the contest "The most comfortable urban settlement of Russia" among the cities of first category, and in 2012 it placed second in the World Bank contest "Doing Business in Russia".

Saransk hosts one of the biggest universities in Russia (figure 2), which consists of 11 faculties, 7 research institutes and two additional units (Kovylkino and Ruzayevka). The University was established in 1931, under the name of Mordovian National Pedagogical Institute A.I. Polezhaev, in 1957 it became a university, bearing the name of N.P. Ogarev ever since 1970. Nowadays, it has an enrollment of about 25,000 students from more than 30 countries. It carries out research in 28 scientific fields, which belong to one of the two priority development directions:

Energy efficiency and modern materials

Fundamental and applied research of Finno-Ugric civilization



Figure 2: Ogariov Mordovian State University, Saransk

Besides the Mordovian State University, there are another eight higher education institutions.

Other cities are Ardatov, Ruzayevka, Kovylkino, Krasnoslobodsk, Insar, Temnikov, adding to another 14 urban settlements, while Sarov is a city with special status. There are also 1,248 rural settlements, with about 330,000 inhabitants. The town of Ardatov, founded in 17th century (a city since the gubernya reform in 1775, the capital of the administrative unit since 1780), could be of special importance for Serbian readers and researchers. During the World War I, the former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito was held here as a war prisoner. Such a curiosity cannot be found in the Atlas, but is certainly worth our attention. The author of these lines has recently had an opportunity to personally visit and photograph the building of the former jail imprisoning Tito in 1916 (figure 3).



Figure 3: Building of the former jail in which Josip Broz Tito was incarcerated in 1916, Ardatov

As far as the administrative divisions, the Republic is divided into the following districts: 1) Ardatovskiy, 2) Atyuryevskiy, 3) Atyashevskiy, 4) Bolsheberezchnikovskiy, 5) Bolsheignatovskiy, 6) Dubyonskiy, 7) Yelnikovskiy, 8) Zubovo-Polyanskiy, 9) Insarskiy, 10) Ichalkovskiy, 11) Kadoshkinskiy, 12) Kovylkinskiy, 13) Kochkurovskiy, 14) Krasnoslobodskiy, 15) Lyambirskiy, 16) Romodanovskiy, 17) Ruzayevskiy, 18) Staroshaygovskiy, 19) Temnikovskiy, 20) Tengushevskiy, 21) Torbeyeveskiy and 22) Chamzinskiy districts. The district sizes vary between 298 km² (Kadoshkinskiy) and 2,709 km² (Zubovo-Polyanskiy) as extremes, but they are normally in

between 800 and 1,200 km². The districts are quite even considering the population, with the exception of the capital, which is the home to 35% of the total population of the Republic.



Figure 4: Administrative divisions of Mordovia

Mordovia has given Russia and the rest of the world a considerable number of important individuals who lived and worked in the Mordovian Republic, whether they were Mordovian or other ethnicities. To mention some of them, noting that the atlas does not show information about each one of them. Of Mordovian ethnicity was the reformer of the Russian Orthodox Church from the 17th century the patriarch Nikon (Nikita Minin or Minov, 1605–1681), as well as his great opponent the protopope Avvakum (Avvakum Petrovich Kondratiev, 1620–1682). An interesting fact is that, according to the Avvakum's version, Nikon's father was of Mari origin and his mother was Russian. Nikon and Avvakum both have monuments in their hometowns (Veldemanovo and Grigorovo respectively), which are (a strange coincidence) so close to each other that they are practically merged. However, not long ago (on August 5th, 2006) a grandiose monument was erected commemorating the 325th anniversary of the Patriarch's death (figure 5). One of the most commonly worshiped saints of Russia, and not only within its borders and its Church, has been the Venerable Seraphim of Sarov (Prokhor Isidorovich Moshnin, 1754 (1759)–1833), who was only canonized by the Church in 1903. Seraphim of Sarov has also been honored in Serbia: in 2011 a street in the town of Batajnica was named after him. A famous admiral, the creator of the Black Sea Fleet and the founder of Sevastopol Fyodor Fyodorovich Ushakov (1745–1817) also passed away in Mordovian region (on his own property in the village of Alekseyevka). The Church glorified him as a saint. Likewise, Saransk paid homage to him, too – in 2006 the building of the Cathedral of the Holy and Righteous Warrior Fyodor Ushakov was finished, in front of which is a monument to Ushakov (figure 6). A true pride of Mordovia is the universally recognized sculptor Stepan Dimitrievich Erzia (Nefyodov, 1876–1959), who took his pseudonym in honor of the Mordovian Erzya ethnos. Mordovian State University was named after the Russian poet and publicist Nikolay Platonovich Ogariov (1813–1877), a revolutionary born about 50 km from Saransk. For a long time (from 1856), he lived and eventually passed away in London, where he led a Russian printing office together with Alexander Herzen. He also helped found the society Land and Liberty and was one of the initiators and a co-editor of the journal Kolokol (figure 7).

The famous Mordvinov family, a Russian noble family of counts, had a few distinguished members, such as the famous ancestor Zhdan Mordvinov (16th century), Semyon Ivanovich (1710–1777), an admiral, Mikhail Ivanovich (1725–1782), an engineer, Nikolay Semyonovich, (1754–1845), Semyon's son and an admiral as well, Alexander Nikolayevich, Nikolay's son, a

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count and an artist and lastly Alexander Alexandrovich (1843–1891), who was a prominent noble in Saint Petersburg. Furthermore, the famous philosopher Mikhail Mikhailovich Bachtin (1895–1975), lived in Saransk (1936–1969) and taught at the Mordovian University for over two decades (1945–1969), after he had served a 5-year exile punishment in the city of Kustanay.



Figure 5: Monument to Patriarch Nikon, Saransk



Figure 6: Cathedral and monument to admiral Fyodor Ushakov

On the territory of Mordovia, there are about 2,000 historical, cultural and architectural monuments, 849 of which are protected national monuments. Museums play a special role in protecting the cultural and historical heritage. They have been established in most educational

institutions and a large number of enterprises in each one of the district capitals. Many of the museums are only known locally, for instance the Mordovian Republican Fine Arts Museum N.A. Erzya.



Figure 7: Nikolay Platonovich Ogariov

In conclusion, to mention a recent curiosity: in 2013, after the publication of this Atlas, Gérard Depardieu became a citizen of Mordovia, and immediately declared that he would become “an ambassador of Mordovia in the whole world”.

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