

**Cecilia Cârja, Ioana-Mihaela Bonda (coordonatori), *Universitari și universități în spațiul românesc (secolele XIX–XX). Studii și interpretări* [Academics and universities in the Romanian space (19th–20th Centuries). Studies and interpretations], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2023, 161 p.**

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Universities represent more than mere centres of intellectual formation. They are dynamic communities where academic traditions, human relationships, and professional trajectories intertwine, shaping the cultural identity of a society. The volume entitled *Universitari și universități în spațiul românesc (secolele XIX–XX). Studii și interpretări* brings together a series of scholarly contributions authored by various Romanian researchers united by a common interest in the history of Romanian higher education. Functioning as a thematic collection of studies, the book offers, through each chapter, distinct perspectives on the development of university institutions, as well as on the professional and intellectual trajectories of academic staff within the Romanian space throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This volume emerged following the National Congress of Romanian Historians, held in Alba Iulia between 8–10 September 2022, which featured a section dedicated specifically to university history. In the aftermath of this event, the volume's coordinators, Cecilia Cârja and Ioana-Mihaela Bonda, archivists and historians within the Archives of the "Babeș-Bolyai" University, published six of the studies presented at the congress, acting not only as editors but also as contributors through their own studies.

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The first study, authored by Andrei and Valentina Eșanu and entitled *Repercusiuni internaționale ale întemeierii primelor universități românești (teze la o ipoteză)*, analyses how the founding of the first higher education institutions in the Romanian space, specifically those in Iași (1860), Bucharest (1864), and the Romanian Academic Society (1866), prompted neighbouring empires to establish new universities as a means of counteracting Romanian educational influence over the Romanian-speaking populations under foreign rule. These new academic institutions included the University of Odessa, founded in 1865 by the Tsarist Empire, the Hungarian "Franz Joseph" University in Cluj (1872) and the German University in Cernăuți (1875). The languages of instruction adopted by these institutions reflected the assimilationist policies pursued by the dominant powers.

Further on, Alexandru-Bogdan Bud's study, entitled *Momente din activitatea profesorului Petre Grimm la Catedra de limba și literatură engleză a Universității clujene (1919-1924)*, focuses on the professor's role in promoting the English language in Transylvania and his notable contributions to consolidating philological education at the University of Cluj.

The next two articles focus on the remarkable figure of Alexandru Borza, the botanist and founder of the city's Botanical Garden. One of these is Florin Nicolae Ardelean's work, *Alexandru Borza și cercetarea botanică la Universitatea din Cluj: stabilirea rețelei de cooperări internaționale (1919-1924)*, which sheds light on Borza's correspondence with various institutions and individuals from Western countries. This correspondence reveals his efforts to facilitate the exchange of publications and scientific materials, to acquire academic works (particularly from the German-speaking world), to initiate scientific partnerships and to design the Botanical Garden. The second study, by Ovidiu-Emil Iudean, entitled *O mobilitate academică peste Ocean în perioada interbelică: Participarea profesorului Alexandru Borza la Congresul Internațional de Botanică din Statele Unite ale Americii*, is the volume's most extensive contribution. Based on archival documents, personal letters, postcards sent home by Borza himself, as well as his memoir, *Amintirile turistice ale unui naturalist. Călător pe trei continente*, published in the autumn of 1926, shortly after the Ithaca Conference, the study reconstructs Borza's journey, the challenges he faced, and the connections he established with scholars from around the world during the summer and autumn of 1926.

Cecilia Cârja's study, *Ani de pribegie. Universitatea din Cluj refugiată la Sibiu în perioada celui de Al Doilea Război Mondial*, describes the tense situation and collective efforts involved in relocating and accommodating the university's academic staff, students, and institutional assets following Romania's territorial losses in 1940. The study also captures the university's ultimate return to Cluj after the end of the global conflict. The author employs numerous archival documents and draws upon diaries and memoirs of key contemporary figures who experienced those troubled times firsthand, such as Professor Onisifor Ghibu's journal and the memoirs of Valeriu Anania, later bishop of Cluj, who, in his writings, recounted the hardships he faced as a student. The study provides insights into the transfer process, administrative and logistical difficulties, and the efforts made to maintain academic activity in exile.

Finally, the volume concludes with the study co-authored by Ioana-Mihaela Bonda and Cecilia Cârja, *Peregrinatio academica în România comunistă. Studenți străini la doctorat și în stagii de specializare la Universitatea "Babeș-Bolyai"*. This article focuses on analysing the presence of foreign students at the Cluj University, pursuing doctoral studies or specialization programs, coming from various regions such as the United States, the German Democratic Republic, Belgium, Venezuela, and Iran. The study relies exclusively on archival documents to reconstruct the profiles of these international students.

Overall, the studies presented in this collective volume offer a comprehensive perspective on how universities functioned during the period in question, and how academics played a significant role in shaping relationships among universities not only on a European level, but globally as well. The volume provides a well-defined image of the efforts invested in consolidating the community of historians and facilitating exchanges of experience and knowledge. The work, in its entirety, reveals a history of these cultural and academic interactions and presents a comprehensive portrayal of the chosen subject. The themes investigated by these scholars are not limited to presenting, in a merely positivist manner, the trajectory of Romanian universities and the people who made history within them; rather, they highlight the difficulties these institutions faced over time and the sacrifices made during turbulent periods to keep them afloat and to ensure quality education for their students.