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**Romanian Elites and Cultural Institutions
in the 20th Century between Democracy and Totalitarianism**

– Habilitation thesis abstract –

The subject that I have been studying since 2000, specifically the history of elites in the 20th century and the history of elites-producing institutions, particularly the history of the Cluj University, has recently become an increasingly discussed topic amongst academics.

After having researched the issue of totalitarianisms in the 20th century (Fascism and Communism), my research efforts have been directed to analyzing the history of the university in Cluj. My Ph.D. thesis (later published in 2 volumes) was concerned with the most difficult period of the Cluj University's history, specifically the period 1940-1947 and 1948-1959. These years coincide with the university's experience of far-right totalitarianism and the transit through the long Stalinist decade. Following my Ph.D. thesis defense, I continued to channel my efforts to researching the history of the Cluj university, analyzing its most diversified and provocative aspects. As such, I contributed with a substantial and consistent chapter in the major volume on our University, coordinated by Assoc. Prof. Ovidiu Ghitta; the chapter I produced dealt with the university's integrated evolution during the period from 1945 to 1959, a period of deep and significant disruptions and transformations in academic life.

After my PH.D. thesis defense and its publication, I continued my investigations in the history of the Cluj university, focusing on the professorial body of the above mentioned university. While analyzing the vast Romanian encyclopedic bibliography addressing contemporary culture, I discovered, to my great astonishment, the lack of an exhaustive research instrument that would catalogue the biographical and scientific components of all the professors and researchers working at the Cluj University. Therefore, I continued my research and investigations with the view to producing an *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Teaching and Research Staff* at the Romanian university on the period 1919-2012.

Such an immensely vast project would entail long-term efforts and, so far, I have been able to produce a series of published and unpublished research materials. The first in this line has been the brochure *The Rectors of the University of Cluj (1919-2012)* gathering a collection of encyclopedia entries for all the academic personalities elected or appointed as Rector in the above mentioned interval. The resulting material will be a useful instrument for all those researching or just interested in the personalities that assumed the management of the Cluj university from 1919 to 2012.

The next phase in this project consisted of continuing my investigations towards producing a *Dictionary of Cluj Academic Staff*, and I have managed to finalize the first volume that gathers all professors and researchers from the University of Cluj from 1919 to 1947. Therefore, I produced encyclopedia entries for a dictionary including all (or almost all) members of the professorial body and researchers working at the University of Cluj in the four traditional faculties: Philosophy and Letters, Law, Sciences and Medicine. This first volume is in the process of being published in the shortest possible time. Obviously, I will continue my research on this particular subject with the hope that in a reasonable interval of a few years, the second volume will be published (a volume devoted to the period 1948-1989) and soon afterwards a third volume.

Following the same general topic of university history, I have also analyzed a completely novel aspect (since no one has ever approached this subject in Romanian historiography), specifically the *donations, funds and foundations* existing within the university in the inter-war period; these donations, funds and foundations reference, on one hand, the enthusiasm of our co-nationals, private persons or institutions, that have materially supported the inauguration and functioning of the University of Cluj (later renamed “King Ferdinand the 1st” University in 1927) up to 1947, and, on the other hand, the way in which certain systems were set into place: special collections (such as the Sion Donation), a system of scientific scholarships for students and the rich art collections (the Ciofleac Donations, for example). I have systematically categorized all donations, from smallest to most consistent, all cash donations, as well as the various foundations and trusts developed for the university’s development.

The research and documentation process is currently in an advanced state so that this subject concerning the *donations, funds and foundations at the University of Cluj (1919-1947)* will probably be finalized in this year’s second half and published as a 150-200 pages volume.

Secondly, I am also envisioning collecting data on various aspects concerning the university's history directly connected to my activity within the museum, with a view to broadening and developing the issues our museum desires to present, according to exigencies and requirements typical of a modern museum addressing the most diversified audiences (for example: exceptional scientific personalities, scientific schools at the University of Cluj, Cluj contributions to Romanian and international science and culture, etc.).

Although my primary research subjects have concerned the university and its history, whenever possible, I have also approached other topics of interest, such as the history of Romanian Communism from the perspectives of cultural history and historical anthropology. All my future projects will continue the scientific questions addressed so far.

My immediate interests are directed towards three major directions:

1. I will continue my investigations of Romanian Communism using the instruments provided by the history of the imaginary and historical anthropology. Taking into account the above mentioned interests and instruments, the approach I propose is one concerning the imaginary of Romanian Communism and reconstructing imaginary and mental structures for such an ideology, as well as human typologies proposed by Romanian Communist ideologists and propaganda so as to accomplish the creation of a "new human": the heroine mother, the illegalist, the Stakhanovite, the charismatic leaders, etc. Other subjects that I intend to develop regard the history and historical anthropology of Romanian Communism, with a particular focus on themes such as alimentation in the Communist period, the environment, fashion, loisir, etc.

2. The history of the Cluj university (in its most diverse and diversified aspects) will constitute a primary concern. As such, I will continue my work on the *Dictionary* and attempt the publication of a second volume regarding the Communist period (1948-1989) and, possibly, a third volume for the post-Communist era, a rather more problematic volume since the interval is characterized by an unprecedented expansion of specializations and the academic body.

As part of my museum activity, I will continue my research into the scientific personalities and the scientific schools created around these personalities within the University of Cluj, but also the involvement of professors from the Cluj university in the political life of inter-war Romania.

3. Last, but not least, I will direct my efforts to researching the cultural history of the inter-war period (a topic that I have come about bound by circumstances) using the same

perspectives of cultural history and historical anthropology; my research will be directed to aspects concerning institutions, but also everyday life, loisir, etc. as I continue to investigate inter-war Romanian cultural history and the history of policies and cultural institutions for the above mentioned timeframe.

As an associated teaching staff and researcher, both my published works and independent research activities have proven my interest in themes concerning university history, the history of the elites and their academic education, the totalitarian phenomenon, both Fascist and Communist, etc. I am deeply invested in raising the standards for scientific research and, as such, I have taken part in a multitude of national and international scientific debates to help me determine the “pulse” of contemporary historical research.