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In memoriam

LIGIAE BÂRZU

(1930-2003)

archaeologist and professor

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**Remembering LIGIA BÂRZU**  
**(1930-2003)**



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Rodica **URSU-NANIU**, University *Spiru Haret* of Bucharest

We shall never truly know to what extent an encounter, a person, a book or a life situation has influenced our destiny and becoming. If not for the awakening of self-consciousness, that *imago, transformation* and *becoming* of each of us, was prepared long before it occurred, through providential encounters with those who guided our formation, without us being aware of this thing. The awareness of the moment in which the assumed construction of one's own status begins coincides with the understanding of the importance of the people met by the will of destiny and without whom one's own becoming would not have been possible. Only then, reliving the stages of life in the mind, the image of the mentors takes shape, enveloped in an overwhelming gratitude, in a deep and ever-growing admiration for their way of being, of thinking, of working. Although the tumult of life and daily challenges do not always leave room for prolonged memories, it is always a moral obligation to commemorate those who supported us morally and professionally at the outset of our carrier. Evoking the teacher and scientist Ligia Bârzu is both a privilege and a moral duty. A privilege because she was successively our teacher, guide, and colleague. A moral duty as a natural part of our existence because the cultivation of memory is, equally, a recuperative gesture for those who have left and a purifying one for those who remain. We owe to professor

Ligia Bârzu not only a part of our personal and scientific development, but also the inspired example of a dignified, assumed, and honest life.

She was a dedicated and hardworking person, who traversed the various stages of her university teaching career, progressing from lecturer to teacher. Her education was under the guidance of esteemed teachers such as Ion Nestor, D. M. Pippidi, Gheorghe Ștefan. Devoted to scholarly pursuits, she excelled in researching an extremely complicated and complex issue related to the period of the great migrations. Her doctoral thesis, entitled ‘Continuity of the autochthonous population in Transylvania in the IV-V centuries’ and coordinated by Professor Ion Nestor, was printed in 1973 at the Romanian Academy Publishing House. Faced with a scarcity of written sources depicting the historical evolution of the first half of the 1st millennium AD, when the former Roman province of Dacia was exposed to waves of migrants, archaeological research assumed paramount importance. Thus, Ligia Bârzu’s participation in the archaeological excavations at Bratei, Mediaș, Sărata-Monteoru, Dridu became an important part of her professional growth, mirroring her analytical and synthesizing skills in interpreting archaeological findings and aligning them with other historical sources. The outcome of these research endeavours becomes evident in the subsequent monographic works. These publications, in particular, focused on the issue of Daco-Romanian continuity within the northern regions of the Lower Danube and the ethnogenesis process of the Romanian people, representing major themes that hold significant importance in understanding Romanian civilization, language, and history.

Working in an extremely difficult period from a historiographical point of view, Ligia Bârzu managed to establish important collaborations with the archaeological school from Cluj, under the conditions of a particular evolution of Romanian archaeological research that tended towards the fragmentation of archaeological interests.

The results of her work, especially the data collected from the archaeological sites such as Sărata-Monteoru and Bratei-Mediaș, were integrated into a meticulous interpretation, based on the tools offered by typology, analogy and contextualization, avoiding rigid interpretations and leaving permanent place not only for nuances, but also for reinterpretations generated by new discoveries. Another distinctive aspect of her scientific contribution lies in the comprehensive perspective she applied to the addressed problem. She incorporated findings from related fields such as geography, topography, and linguistics, allowing her to formulate extremely interesting conclusions. The examples presented below illustrate this dual focus: avoiding fragmentation and categorical

conclusions, on the one hand, and on the other, identifying, by broadening the geographical framework of the historical phenomena addressed, a legitimacy for similar historical processes in various cultural spaces.

For example, the publication of the preliminary data obtained through the research of the Gepids cemetery, conventionally named ‘cemetery 3 from Bratei’, afforded the author the opportunity to apply this instrumental-methodological set that accompanied detailed exposition of the funeral inventory:

”Trebuie făcută precizarea că nici una din analogiile amintite nu prezintă un tip identic cu piesa noastră (este vorba despre discuția asupra unei cataramă de centură din argint, *n.n.*), care diferă în primul rând prin structura verigii în partea în care sînt fixate placa și spinul. Toate exemplarele menționate (anterior sunt prezentate peste 10 exemple pentru discușarea analogiilor potențiale, *n.n.*), cu excepția cataramă de la Kisterenye, au clar demarcată porțiunea de verigă destinată montării plăcii, în vreme ce la Bratei veriga este continuă, dar mai subțire decît în partea anterioară. Avînd în vedere acest detaliu, ca și absența oricăror elemente ornamentale cu excepția acelor de la baza spinului, ca și unele deosebiri în forma acului, putem considera cataramă de la Bratei drept o variantă a tipului luat în discuție, ale cărei origini **pot fi căutate** (*s.n.*) în cataramăle cu placă ovală descoperite în M.34 și M.181 din cimitirul 1 de la Bratei 8 și în cataramăle cu placă ovală din medii provinciale romane tîrzii, cum sînt cele descoperite în necropola de la Callatis”

‘It must be specified that none of the above mentioned analogies present an identical type to our piece (all this discussion concern a silver belt buckle, *our note*), which differs primarily in the structure of the link in the part where the plate and the spine. All the mentioned specimens (more than 10 examples were presented within this intended demonstration using typology method, *our note*), with the exception of the buckle from Kisterenye, have clearly demarcated the portion of the link meant for mounting the plate. In contrast, in Bratei the link is continuous, but thinner than in the previous part. Considering this detail, along with the absence of any ornamental elements except those at the base of the spine, as well as some differences in the shape of the needle, we can consider the buckle from Bratei as a variant of the type under discussion, whose origins **can be sought** (*our emphasis*) in the oval plate buckles discovered in M.34 and M.181 from cemetery 1 at Bratei 8 and in the oval plate buckles from late Roman provincial environments, such as those discovered in the Callatis necropolis’ (‘Monumente germanice descoperite la Bratei, jud. Sibiu/Germanic monuments discovered at Bratei, dep. of Sibiu’, *SCIVA*, tom. 37, nr 1, 1986, p. 89-104, p. 94)

In other cases, the approach carefully combines the conceptual benchmarks of analysis with validating exemplifications or exceptions, always keeping room for redefinition. Thus, in the



textbook of *General Archaeology* (edited by the ‘University of Bucharest Publishing House’, in 1985, later re-edited with an updated content), the emergence of cities starts from the presentation of the concept of ‘urban revolution’, authored by Gordon Childe and subsequently re-discussed by Renfrew Collins. Based on numerous examples, covering the ancient Near East and European civilizations and also the pre-Columbian cultures, Ligia Bârză concluded:

”În același context pot fi amintite discuțiile relative la momentul în care Roma a devenit oraș. Și aici se pune problema măsurii în care încetarea folosirii văii dintre cele șapte coline drept loc de înmormântare și transformare a ei în piață publică, reprezintă un moment definitoriu pentru statutul așezării. Cu privire la acest aspect, opiniile variază în legătură cu valoarea acordă de către un specialist sau altul informațiilor din cartea I a lucrării lui Titus Livius. Pe de altă parte, aceste opinii oscilează în funcție de importanța atribuită criteriilor arheologice de judecată, cum sînt pavarea forului, înălțarea unor construcții monumentale, apariția unor locuințe fastuoase, efectuarea de lucrări edilitare (aducțiuni de apă, pavarea străzilor etc.). În sfîrșit, discuția presupune inclusiv rolul dinastiei etrusce în procesul transformării Romei dintr-un grup de sate într-o așezare urbană. Aceste câteva date (cu referire la întreaga discuție din acest subcapitol, *n.n.*) destul de disparate, sînt suficiente pentru a realiza **complexitatea problemei, pe de o parte, și pe de altă parte, imposibilitatea de a găsi o explicație pentru o evoluție sau alta, dacă se recurge la concepte rigide** (s.n.).” (*Arheologie generală*, București, 1985, p. 223)

‘In the same context, we can mention the discussions related to the moment when Rome became a city. That touches upon the pivotal moment when the valley between the seven hills shifted from being a burial region to transforming into a public space. This transformation has an important significance in defining the status of the settlement. Varied perspectives emerge regarding the weight assigned by different scholars to the information found Book I of T. Livy’s work. However, these viewpoints oscillate depending on the importance attributed to the archaeological criteria used in the topic of the Rome’s urban genesis, such as the paving of the forum, the construction of monumental buildings, the appearance of luxurious homes, the performance of construction works (water intakes, street paving, etc.). Finally, the discussion also includes the role of the Etruscan dynasty in the process of transforming Rome from a group of villages into an urban settlement. These few data (pertaining to the entire discussion in this chapter, *our note*), quite disparate, are enough to realize **the intricacy of the problem, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the impossibility of providing pertinent explanations for one evolution or another, if rigid concepts are favoured** (*our emphasis*).’ (*General Archaeology*, Bucharest, 1985, p. 223)

The rigour with which she understood the interpretation of archaeological evidence often led to integrate her own assertions into wider geographical contexts, not leaving out written testimonies.

Her demonstrations sought to highlight causal aspects, particularisms or, on the contrary, similar aspects. A consistent feature of her documentation and interpretation activities was the meticulous care for exemplification and the coherence of the working premises. Here are some relevant examples in this regard, the first referring to the colonization process of Dacia, the other to the withdrawal of Roman authority from the North-Danube province, both topics generating a whole polemic in historiography:

”Un alt argument pe care se întemeiază autorul privește originea coloniștilor, mai precis marea pondere a coloniștilor de origine neoccidentală. Din nou ne găsim în prezența unei idei vechi preluate de André Du Nay. Afirmarea nu este însă deloc exactă, întrucât nu se bazează pe studiul onomastic al inscripțiilor. O statistică mai recentă (cu indicarea referinței, *n.n.*) dă doar cca 75 nume orientale (semito-siriene) în raport cu 100 nume illyrice, 65 de nume celtice, mai mult de 2000 nume romane sau de factură romană, 400 nume grecești sau de tip grecesc și 70 nume traco-dacice. La datele de ordin epigrafic se adaugă rezultatele cercetărilor arheologice care confirmă ideea unei colonizări masive cu populație originară din provinciile ”occidentale” sau sud-dunărene: Noricum, Pannonia, Moesia, Thracia și Dalmatia. Cimitire cum sînt cele de tip Zlatna - Alba Iulia - Romula sau de tip Cașolt-Calbor nu pot fi atribuite decît unor coloniști originari din Illyricum, Pannonia și, respectiv, din Noricum.”

‘Another argument considered fundamental by the author concerns the origin of the colonists, more specifically the large part of settlers having a non-Western origin. Again we find ourselves in the presence of an old idea reused by André Du Nay. However, such a statement is not at all accurate, as it is not based on the onomastic study of the inscriptions. A more recent statistic (with the indication of the reference, *our note*) gives only about 75 Oriental (Semite-Syrians) names, while the inscriptions offered 100 Illyrian names, 65 Celtic names, more than 2000 Roman or Roman-derived names, 400 Greek or related to the Greek names and 70 Thracian and/or Dacian names. In addition to the epigraphic data, the results of archaeological research confirm the idea of a massive colonization with a population originating from the ‘western’ or South-Danube provinces: Noricum, Pannonia, Moesia, Thracia and Dalmatia. Cemeteries such as those of the Zlatna, Alba Iulia, and Romula type or of the Cașolt-Calbor type can only be attributed to colonists originating from Illyricum, Pannonia and from Noricum, respectively.’ (‘Un nou “Anonymus”. Comentarii pe marginea lucrării lui André Du Nay, *The Early History of the Rumanian Language/ A new “Anonymus”. Comments on the work of André Du Nay, The early history of the Romanian language*’, in *Revista de istorie*, tom. 33, no. 78, 1980, p. 953-973, p. 963)

”O altă problemă importantă, pentru care există contradicții în izvoarele scrise amintite, toate mai târziu decît evenimentul respectiv, este aceea a datei părăsirii Daciei. Astfel, Sextus Aurelius Victor, Orosius, Eutropius, Rufius Festus și Iordanes se referă la părăsirea Daciei (*amissa Dacia*) în vremea lui Gallienus

(253-259), dar, cu excepția lui Sextus Aurelius Victor, Orosius și Eutropius, și sub împăratul Aurelian, fără de nici o explicație. Datele arheologice, epigrafice și numismatice vin însă în sprijinul tezei evacuării Daciei sub Aurelian, neexcluzându-se, prin acestea, posibilitatea ca zona de est a Transilvaniei să fi fost totuși abandonată sub Gallienus, mai ales că în această zonă lipsesc orașe romane.”

‘Another important problem, for which there are contradictions in the above mentioned written sources, all of which post-dated the event in question, is that of the date concerning the Roman abandonment of Dacia. Thus, Sextus Aurelius Victor, Orosius, Eutropius, Rufius Festus and Iordanes refer to the ‘lost Dacia’ (*amissa Dacia*) during the reign of Gallienus (253-259). But, with the exception of Sextus Aurelius Victor, the other two authors, Orosius and Eutropius, also mention this loss under the era of emperor Aurelian, without offering any explanation. However, the archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic data supports the thesis of the evacuation of Dacia under Aurelian. This does not exclude the possibility that the eastern area of Transylvania had already been abandoned under Gallienus, especially considering the absence of Roman cities in that area’ (quotation from the chapter that presented the causes of leaving Dacia by the Roman administration, in M. Petrescu-Dâmbovița et alii, *History of Romania, from the beginnings to the 8<sup>th</sup> century*, Bucharest, 1995, p. 270).

By scrutinizing the historical sources – both written and archaeological – in a such manner, Ligia Bârză has often formulated interpretations considered by her colleagues (archaeologists, classicists or historians) valid and convincing. One such example involves her interpretation of Deceneu’s reduction of the areas cultivated with vines as a component of broader religious reforms accomplished by Burebista and his priest (see Ligia Bârză, *La continuité de la création matériel et spirituelle du peuple roumain sur le territoire de l’ancienne Dacia*, Bucharest, 1979, p. 27).

At the same time, the research activity of archaeologist Ligia Bârză was doubled by a prodigious teaching career carried out with great responsibility, before and after 1989, within academic institutions in Bucharest (Faculty of History of the State University and Faculties of History from private institutions: ‘Spiru Haret’ University and ‘Dimitrie Cantemir’ University). The experience of the researcher and the teacher materialized in wide range of special and general courses related to archaeology, Ancient Near East, Greco-Roman world, the history of the first millennium together with the era of migrations. She professionally covered a vast thematic area, chronologically from prehistory to the dawn of the Middle Ages, and geographically – the spaces of at least four continents (Asia, Europe, Africa, North and Central America) inhabited during this long period of time. A course with professor Ligia Bârză was a solid and consistent anchoring to historical evidence, it was an experience of rigour, it was an invitation to reflection. Extremely

well documented, she answered questions precisely, especially in activities such as special courses and seminars, constantly providing references to the primary and secondary bibliography along with multiple interpretive options. Before 1989, she encouraged her students to explore historical and archaeological literature beyond any ideological prejudices. She consistently stimulated critical reading of foreign publications (accessible to her due to her proficiency in five modern languages: Russian, French, English, Italian and German). Firmly believing in the necessity of staying connected to the archaeological discoveries, historical writings, and methodological advancements, she constantly motivated her students. Younger teachers, who were her colleagues, found effective support and guidance from her in their training and publishing activities.

She was a person averse to confrontation, yet she consistently spoke candidly, not pursuit of justice, but to unveil the truth. She overcame the more difficult moments without resentment. She knew how to do her duty and did not allow herself to be enticed by all kinds of partisanship, inherent in any collective, earning her occasional label of a ‘challenging partner’. At the same time, over the years, she maintained her reputation as an honest and sensitive person, preserving an untarnished human and scholar profile, helping those around her unconditionally, regardless their professional status. This profound generosity was complemented by her deep love for animals lacking shelter or care.

Through the education received in the family, she had acquired an openness towards Christian love and a discerning appreciation for the value of things or various activities. She would often share anecdotes of her father, a priest and teacher, insisting that she and her sisters undertake various household tasks. When they tried to decline on the grounds that ‘we have paid staff for this’, her father would clarify: ‘Indeed, we do have assistance, and probably you all will also have when you will be married. Nevertheless, it’s essential to know how to accomplish any work in order to be able to reward it properly.’

This sense of justice, an innate thirst for knowledge, openness to share the readings, and a genuine concern for the education of her students reflect the human nature of this specialist who, for the authors of these lines, was more than just a teacher and a scholar. These sentiments remained unspoken during her lifetime, as expressing them would surely have upset her. She lived with dignity and altruism, departing this world while actively worked on the monograph of the Gepid cemetery at Bratei (later published in German). Her commitment to the profession and real values remains a true model. Such an existence prompts professional optimism and hope for the

perpetuation of human-moral values even in this current world characterized by fluid and extremely dynamic landmarks.

In 1997, an honouring scientific volume was published by the University of Bucharest Publishing House, coordinated by her former students and contributed by many others seeking to convey their respect. Ligia Bârză, in response, offered brief thanks, allowing her eyes to express the anticipated joy of the upcoming reading. Indeed, she had a deep love for reading.

Now we dedicate this issue of the *CICSA Journal* to the memory of this scholar, teacher, and special person who departed from us prematurely two decades ago.

#### List of works:

##### Books:

- *Continuitatea populației autohtone în Transilvania în secolele IV-V e. n. (cimitirul nr. 1 de la Bratei)*, Biblioteca de Arheologie XXI, București, 1973;
- *Continuitatea creației materiale și spirituale a poporului român pe teritoriul fostei Dacii*, Biblioteca de Arheologie XXXVII, București, 1979 (ed. și în lb. franceză);
- *Der Fortbestand der Rumänien im ehemaligen Dazien*, București, 1981 (co-author);
- *Arheologie generală*, București, 1985 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1991; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1997);
- *Paradisul pierdut. O istorie a societăților primitive*, București, 1993;
- *Originea și continuitatea românilor: arheologie și tradiție istorică*, București, 1995 (co-author);
- *Istoria României de la începuturi până în secolul al VIII-lea*, București, 1995 (co-author);
- *Credințe și practice religioase în Europa Preistorică și Antichitatea Greco - Romană*, texte și comentarii, București, 2001 (co-author);
- *Ein gepidisches Denkmal aus Siebenbürgen: das Gräberfeld Nr. 3 von Bratei*, Cluj-Napoca, 2010 (co-author).

##### Studies:

- *Contribuția arheologiei la cunoașterea perioadei hunice la Dunărea de Jos*, AUB, 10, 20, 1961, p. 13-24;
- *Continuitatea populației autohtone în Transilvania la sfârșitul secolului I și începutul secolului V, pe baza descoperirilor de la Bratei*, AUB, 15, 1966, p. 35-48;
- *Romani și daco-romani în secolul IV e. n.*, AUB, 19, 2, 1970, p. 19-35;
- *Cercetarea în domeniul istoriei vechi a României, universale și arheologiei* (co-author), AUB, 22, 1, 1973, p. 9-15;
- *Un nouvel "anonymus". Commentaires du travail de Andra Du Nay, The early History of the Rumanien language*, *Revista de istorie*, 33, 1980, p. 953-973;
- *Monumente germanice descoperite la Bratei*, SCIVA, 37, 1986, p. 89-104;
- *Gepidische Funde von Bratei, Dacia*, NS, 35, 1991, p. 211-214;
- *La station no. 1 de Bratei, dép. De Sibiu (IVe-VIIe siècles), avec une expertise de Maria Bulai-Știrbu*, *Dacia*, NS, 38-39, 1994-1995, p. 239-296;
- *Romanitatea orientală între secolele IV-VII e. n.*, în Zoe Petre, Stelian Brezeanu (eds.), *Miscellanea in honorem Radu Manolescu*, București, 1996, p. 68-76;
- *Sărata Monteoru. Săpăturile arheologice din Poiana Scorușului din 1952 și 1954/Sărata Monteoru. Les fouilles archéologiques de Poiana Scorușului (dép. de Buzău). Rapport préliminaire pour les années 1952—1954*, în MCA, SN, I, 2001, 1999, p. 41-58;
- *Migratori și autohtoni în sec. III-VI e. n.*, SAI, 62, 2002, 57-64;
- *Gepiden als Nachbarn der Longobarden und das Gräberfeld von Bratei*, în Jan Bemann, Michael Schumauder (eds), *Kulturwandel in Mitteleuropa: Langobarden, Awaren, Slawen*, Akten der Internationalen Tagung in Bonn vom 25. bis 28. 2008, 513-578.