

Bica Ionesi

Review “A memoir of my life and work”

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The book under review chronicles the life, work and achievements of a distinguished professor from the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, geologist Bica Ionesi. We received the book from the author with great enthusiasm, as it would allow us to improve our knowledge of Moldavia - the Romanian region between the rivers Siret and Prut - and its inhabitants, a region that we have seen little of, with the exception of its northern part and the city of Iași, home to the first Romanian university (1860), where we have many friends who are geologists, geographers or biologists. An intellectual with a rural background, we have always had a keen interest in the written word, particularly historiographical and biographical-autobiographical works. The latter provide an authentic window into the lives of individuals, marked by the changes one undergoes, as well as by the specificity of one’s birthplace and of the places where one’s path leads. Dr. Bica Ionesi’s book has indeed offered such insight, proving illustrative in its description of the author’s birthplace and partially of the numerous regions of Romania that she has studied from a geological point of view.

From the wealth of information that the author meticulously provides in describing the harsh eight decades of her life, from the little village in Vaslui County to a professor position at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, we have decided on a brief overview of only three dimensions: the biographical one, the academic one, and that of her scientific activity, which, in the end, define one’s personality. The difficult, worry-filled and poverty-stricken existence of her childhood and youth, prior to her graduation and marriage, the overcoming of which is proof of Dr. Ionesi’s determined nature, will not be the object of the present review.

Bica, the little girl turned renowned researcher and educator in the field of Geology, was born on March 25th, 1928, in the village of Cursești-Vale (Vaslui County), the first-born of the six children of Ion and Maria Cehan. She attended the local primary school, followed by two secondary schools in Vaslui, receiving her baccalaureate diploma in 1947. There was great amazement among teachers and students alike at the news that a girl from the countryside, Bica Cehan, was top of the list at the end of the admission exam for the “Liceul Ortodox” high school in Vaslui. Despite the economic hardships she faced, she proved an exemplary student. High school was followed by the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, where her responsible nature, intelligence, diligence and overall quality as a person earned her, in 1950, while still a student, a position of junior teaching assistant within the Department of Geology-Paleontology, led at the time by the eminent and strict Professor Nicolae Macarovici.

After graduation, Dr. Ionesi began what was then known as “production activity,” which was marked by her social background. Her family having been labeled “bourgeois” and granted limited access to services, schools, promotions, etc. by the communist regime, she was transferred in 1952 from her teaching position to a research position within the “Museum of Natural History” of the same university, where she worked for a lengthy period.

In 1953, she married one of her colleagues, teaching assistant Liviu Ionesi (originating from Frătăuții Vechi, Bukovina), who would become a renowned geologist, professor and member of the Romanian Academy.

Throughout the next nearly two decades she spent at the museum, given that her true calling had always been teaching, she maintained close relationships with the Department of Geology-Paleontology, receiving her doctorate in 1966. In 1971 she reentered the academia, this time not as a junior teaching assistant or teaching assistant as before, but as a lecturer.

Upon her return Dr. Bica Ionesi was met with hostility by the head of the Department and some of her colleagues, hostility which prevented her from advancing in her academic career. To her sadness, she was forced to retire in 1985, then 57 years old, from the same position she was hired in, that of lecturer. A great injustice was thus undeniably carried out, given that Dr. Bica Ionesi is a renowned member of the Romanian academia, both as an educator and as a researcher. Her scientific activity was, both quantitatively and qualitatively, on par with that of the most prestigious professors in the field of Geology, as will be proven shortly. Dr. Ionesi remained nevertheless dignified and she will undoubtedly be remembered fondly by former students, honest-minded colleagues, collaborators, Romanian and foreign friends

alike. As an educator she was firm, fair, with genuine pedagogical abilities and scientific competence, which earned her the appreciation of those who attended her lectures. In 1997, she was awarded the title of *Professor Emeritus*, in honor of her great academic accomplishments.

Dr. Ionesi's scientific activity, either as sole author or in collaboration with other authors, is extensive, focusing mainly on the study of the Badenian and Sarmatian formations from the Moldavian Platform, as well as on the Sarmatian from Dobruja, the Transylvanian Depression and certain Romanian western basins (Oaş, Zarand), including the flysch of the Eastern Carpathians. Her research did not consist of narrow-scoped investigations on routine topics; they encompassed instead studies based on complex methodologies: petrographic - petrological, biostratigraphic - paleogeomorphological and tectonic. Her focus on Micropaleontology and Neogene molluscs places her among the most reputed paleontologists from Romania and Europe. Professor Ionesi is also to be appreciated for having guided young minds toward geological research by enlisting them as collaborators (overall, her collaborators include numerous Romanian and foreign geologists focusing on the Neogene). If we were to provide actual numbers, the scientific activity of Professor Ionesi (sole author or collaborations) comprises 5 monographs and books, 131 papers or articles published in scientific journals both in Romania and abroad, as well as 19 grants, geological reports and studies on the natural resources of Iași County.

It is worth mentioning that Professor Bica Ionesi has referred to this autobiographical book as a reflection of a rather sad life. Indeed, her road was sinuous, paved with obstacles and scarcities, but she managed to overcome them all, step by step. Intelligence, patience, hard work, modesty were the foundation of her career, which culminated in the title of *Professor Emeritus Dr. Bica Ionesi*.

We would also like to stress, in this final portion of our review, the mutually beneficial professional ties between professors Liviu and Bica Ionesi, of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, and their colleagues from the "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, which resulted in scientific collaborations, the participation to scientific events, memberships in doctoral and academic advancement committees, cooperation within various national committees in the field etc.

To sum up, we would like to congratulate Prof. Dr. Bica Ionesi for her interesting book, which provides insight into the activity of a prestigious department, with a long tradition – the Department of Geology. We wish her a long and peaceful life after the tumult of the previous decades.

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