Floating Spaces, Symbolic Geography

Josef Wolf

Josef Wolf

Josef Wolf
Researcher at the Institute of History and Regional Studies of the Danube Swabians, Tübingen, Germany.

Distinguished Chairman of the Romanian Academy, Professor Ioan-Aurel Pop,
Esteemed Chairman of the University Senate, Father Professor Ioan Chirilă,
Esteemed vice-rectors, Professors Ioan Bolovan, Rudolf Gräf, and Călin Rus,
Esteemed dean, Professor Ovidiu Ghitta,
Dear Dr. Mathias Beer,
Ladies and gentlemen!

I am deeply moved by this unexpected event. I have never sought titles or distinctions, but the honor bestowed upon me today brings me tremendous joy. I see this title not only as an acknowledgment of my scholarly activity, but also as a proof of the good cooperation between my home institute and Babeş-Bolyai University.

Professor Gräf, my dear Rudi, I am grateful for your analysis of my scholarly work and for the manner in which you have just presented it. In what follows, I shall refer precisely to some of the elements mentioned in the Laudatio. I would like to begin with a few aspects concerning the study of history, the beginnings of my scholarly

activity, and the major points of fracture in my biography, namely, the departure from Cluj and the relocation to Germany, after which I shall focus on my scholarly work. Unavoidably, for this I shall have to draw on autobiographical data and on memories.

Marc Bloch, a pathfinder for the history of mentalities and social structures, began his classic historiographical text *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (1949) with a question asked by a child to his father about the purpose served by history. The question itself had a pejorative connotation, but Bloch wanted to bring into discussion the very legitimacy of history. The historical is like the cannibal in the fantastic accounts of yesteryear: "If they can smell human flesh, then the prey is nearby." To study history means to pursue pleasure, for this is the most important element of the profession. There is much truth in this approach.

What made me study history was mainly the social reality that emerged around me in the aftermath of World War II and the concern for the status of my ethnic group: what had made possible the catastrophe that engulfed not only the German nation, but also the German minorities in Eastern and Southeast Europe? Why did so many people succumb to the lure of ideology or were unable to resist it? What are the reasons behind the suffering inflicted upon the German minority in Romania in the immediate aftermath of World War II? What was the future of this minority under a communist regime and in a changing world?

My father was deported when he was 16 years of age, contrary to the legal provisions in force (deportation was reserved to men aged 17 to 45). This was not the fault of the Russian officers or of the Romanian gendarmes, who drew up the lists in keeping with the latest census data. The Russians did not care who got deported and what age they were, as long as the quota was met. The fault lay with his own stepfather, appointed mayor after 23 August 1944, as he had been expelled from the German Ethnic Group in 1943 for his lasting cooperation with the Romanian liberals and for having protested against the conscriptions into the German army. In order to protect the members of his own generation, who had reached the age of 45, he lowered the age limit from 17 to 16 and from 45 to 44. My father never forgave him. As a child, I took me a long time before I could understand all that. Amid the shortage of officers in the final stages of the war, my maternal grandfather had received significant promotions and therefore ended up in a Soviet POW camp for Romanian army officers. His fellow prisoners helped him change his identity, and by declaring himself Romanian he could avoid internment and returned to the country with the first group of released Romanian officers, in November of 1946. Upon his return he found his children, but not his wife—my grandmother—who had been sent to a mining labor camp in the Urals, from where she returned only in 1949. In order to escape

the unwanted attentions of the communist police and secret services, in the early 1950s my grandfather became a party member, only to be later expelled. In the evenings, as he was preparing to leave, I would ask him where he was going. His reply was: "To the Rosary Association" (*Rosenkranzverein*), but in fact he was attending party meetings. Also as a child I became aware of cultural differences. After the agrarian reform of 1945, Romanian colonists took up residence in the German village. I learned Romanian as a child, and treasured it like I treasured my mother tongue. In search of my origins, of my identity, I decided to study history, a decision I have never come to regret. After a few decades of activity, I can say without hesitation that it was my profession as a historian that made me into a complete human being.

Beyond the ideological legitimacy, the university provided me with a solid foundation of general knowledge, essential to my professional and cognitive development. During my studies in Cluj I developed an attachment to those professors which I believed had many things to teach me. Chief among them was Professor Pompiliu Teodor, who became my master and mentor. In fact, he was a creator of school for many Cluj historians. His influence and the influence of his school are still felt today, and I count myself among his disciples.

I can still remember a conversation we had at the Society for the History of Historiography—which he had founded in the early 1970s, on his return from the United States—on the issue of party bias in the study of history. According to Professor Teodor, in historiography it is much easier to adopt the party line and judge the results of someone's research from the perspective of the current moment, rather than to carry out a comprehensive analysis that would factor in the normative systems of the respective moments in time. This specific feature did a lot of harm to historiography, conveying the image of a changing, fickle science, which allows for the distortion of historical facts. Historians must not cling to their own point of view, but should rather be able to explain the system of values underpinning their judgment. This means that they must be prepared to distance themselves from their own outlook and from the spirit of their time. Professor Teodor had serious reservations in regard to structural history, and in the early 1990s he talked about a return to the classic paradigm of the narrative discourse, of storytelling. Among other things, one of his maxims on ethnicity impressed me deeply. His father once told him: "Respect all nations, and honor yours." In one of the last conversations that we had, in Pisa in the year 2000, we talked about the political developments experienced by post-communist Romania, and the monarchist master was opposed by his republican disciple.

I also have fond memories of Professor Ştefan Pascu, who constantly supported my family. He firmly rejected all the accusations raised against me when

I was dismissed from my teaching position. I appreciated him both as an erudite scholar and as a human being. When we said goodbye, he had tears in his eyes. The results of his research must be seen in the context of his time and of his generation, and sometime in the future the same will be true for our research. During a public debate that took place in Munich nearly two decades ago I took a firm stand when one of the speakers called him a representative of the nationalist trend of Ceauşescu's time. Professor Pascu cannot be put into the same category as people like Mircea Muşat or Ion Ardeleanu, ideologists of the official historiography.

The course in the modern history of Romania, taught by Professor Liviu Maior, gave a prominent place to Transylvania, integrating regional history in the development of both the nation and the empire. Apart from the evolution of the Romanian movement for national emancipation, he focused on the attempts at reforming the empire. Professor Maior presented us with the image of a dynamic late empire, concerned with its internal reforms. There is little distance between what he taught back then and what he wrote after 1990. The shift in perspective did not involve a complete transfiguration or a turn in a new direction, in response to the new expectations. I could learn a lot from the conversations I later had with him, in Bucharest or in Germany. These discussions brought the necessary corrections to the image circulating in Germany and in the West in general when it came to the political changes experienced by Romania after 1989. Not only did he look at those developments from a novel perspective, but he opened my eyes from many points of view.

Professor Vasile Vesa, I am very happy to see you in the room. You laid the foundations of my knowledge of French history and of the First World War. It was a solid foundation, on which I could successfully build after my arrival in Germany.

Of course, I should mention here the names of those professors who are no longer with us: Camil Mureşanu, András Bodor, Samuel Goldenberg, and Francisc Pall. After I left the country, my colleagues and friends in Cluj did their best to keep us in touch, inviting us to scholarly events both home and abroad: the late Nicolae Bocşan and Corneliu Leu, Ioan Bolovan, Corneliu Pădurean and, last but not least, Rudolf Gräf. Dear Ioan-Aurel Pop, even if we do not get to meet very often, the fact that we both belong to the Cluj school of history, our similar historical outlooks and the closeness between many of our points of view, the mutual professional respect, and other affinities offered the foundation of a lasting friendship.

Despite the situation in those times and of the political context, my student years were quite happy. Still, during my studies I experienced a number of discouraging experiences and met a number of obstacles. Despite enjoying the

support, appreciation and sympathy of our dean, Professor Camil Mureşanu, I could not benefit from the scholarship granted by the British Council in 1975. The same Professor Mureşanu nominated me for the republican scholarship and defended me in the faculty council when, right before graduation, an incompetent and ideologically-biased professor accused me, during the seminar in contemporary history, of drawing on "Uncle Sam's imperialist literature" for an interpretation of the financial organization of the world after World War I.

Professor Gräf has just mentioned the reasons why I decided to leave the country, not an easy decision for my family. Despite of what happened in 1986, I cannot really call myself a victim. The manner in which we intellectuals acted during the old regime will stay with us for the rest of our lives. What did we do to end up in a situation like that? Also, what we did not do is just as important as what we did. Both attitudes contributed to the consolidation or the stabilization of the communist regime. Amid all the uncertainty and fear, I myself sought strategies likely to help me cope with the situation. A distinguished Cluj professor, whom I much admired, expressed the alternative in the following manner: "If you want to influence the outcome of a football game, you have to be on the pitch, not in the stands." Rooted in the traditional society and in unconditional patriotism, a respected member of my family gave me the following piece of advice: "Keep your head down if you don't want to lose it."

In a classic text (*Politik als Beruf*/Politics as a vocation, 1919), sociologist Max Weber identified two fundamental types of ethical behavior: the ethics of responsibility and the ethics of belief. Those favoring the ethics of belief are guided in their actions by preset rules and values, which bear full responsibility for said actions. In its purest form, this human type features clear representations of values and refuses any compromise, much in the way of saints. They are the few martyrs of the anti-communist resistance. However, many people representative of this type, people with high moral principles and beliefs—in brief, people who think—were nevertheless willing to accept considerable compromises with the regime, to the point of denying their own selves. German sociologist Philipp Reemtsma once said about the complicity of the Germans in the crimes of the Nazi regime: "They didn't do it because they wanted it, but they wanted it because they had done it." He meant that once they had been caught up in the system, there was no way out. As the cabbie who dropped us off at the university said: "We're all vile sinners, may God forgive us!"

When I arrived in Germany, my age was not really the most suitable for embarking upon a scholarly career. I did possess a solid foundation of historical knowledge, but I lacked practice in critical, divergent thinking, materialized in discourse, and also in the art of open debate. The academic labor market was saturated. As the saying went, at age 38 you were only good to be "sold for

scrap." Very few people cared that we, those coming from the East, already had a career behind us. Before my departure, Professor Camil Mureşanu told me about the institute founded two years earlier at Tübingen and, in his typically measured and sober style, gave me some advice. Among other things, I remember him saying that ideologies are present everywhere, and the important thing was to identify their forms and content. Speaking about the criticism directed at me following the ministerial inspection, he argued that in Germany as well "political correctness" played an important part, with rules that I would have to learn. On my arrival in Germany I was unpleasantly surprised to see how many people in the subway were reading the *Bild-Zeitung*, which remains the major political newspaper even today. Despite the considerable diversity of the media offer, the people were interested and many actually believed what the *Bild-Zeitung* was telling them. Even if the political regimes could not have been more different, this led me to analogies with publications like *Scânteia*, *Neuer Weg* (the newspaper of the German minority), or *Făclia*, and made me think about the subordination of the media and ideological manipulation.

Professor Teodor drew my attention to the role of communication networks in science, no less important but somewhat different than in the communist society. From the very beginning, the world-renowned medievalist Harald Zimmermann, doctor honoris causa of Cluj University and director of the Tübingen institute, was interested in involving me in research work and chose me from among the considerable number of applicants. One of my recommendations came from Professor Mathias Bernath, who back then was teaching at the Free University (Freie Universität) of West Berlin and was the director of the Institute for Southeast Europe (Südost-Institut) of Munich, currently operating in Regensburg. I met Professor Bernath, who studied at Moise Nicoară Romanian high school in Arad, through the agency of Academician David Prodan, whose recommendation gave me access to the German scholarly circles. The two had never met in person, but had been corresponding for many years. For Bernath, Prodan was the leading representative of the Romanian historiographical tradition.

Getting a job in research was a most fortunate occurrence. In the society of social economy, it is a luxury to work in such as institute, to be able to devise and set up your own projects. I shall therefore take this opportunity to thank the institute where I work and the ministry to which we are subordinated. I was free to focus on my topics of interest and carry out research in the European archives of my choosing. Only a captivating topic is likely to motivate the researchers, but often they are in no position to turn down topics assigned to them by others.

The interest in regional history and especially in the history of the Banat Swabians is not related only to the profile of the institute; it also has a lot to do with my origin and identity, with the world in which I grew up, socialized, and

acquired my professional skills. This "shirt" I wear stayed on even after I arrived in Germany. Of course, we may wonder about the purpose of such research or about the importance of regional history. The history of Transylvania or Banat, as a scientific discipline, must be seen in the context of general, national history. Regional history is essentially a history of the pre-modern period, namely, of the Middle Ages and of the Modern Era, as they necessarily require a regional perspective. The latter contributes to the study of national history not only by analyzing developments at local and regional level, but also by providing case studies and concrete examples.

I was glad to hear that the collection of documents regarding Habsburg Banat enjoys so much appreciation. Unfortunately, nowadays researchers in Germany disregard the production of primary information—the publication of sources—as a form of creativity. Those with a penchant for theory see it as a mere premise or as the early stage of scholarly work. For them, creativity is a process involving a fluent, flexible and original output of concepts meant to solve the problems identified during the investigation of sources. They fail to understand that these are in fact essential tools, still in short supply for the regions that we are currently focusing on.

By ethnicity I mean concepts pertaining to the self- and hetero-assignation of human groups with sociocultural characteristics. The outcome of the assignation of characteristics is an "ethnic group" or, in traditional terms, an ethnicity, a people. The forerunners of the concept of ethnicity can be found in the early so-called community studies of the 1920s. The concept became more widely used in the American sociological studies meant to describe the role of culture within what has been referred to as ethnic revival phenomena, once the social reality of the amalgamation of cultural traditions (the theory of the melting pot) began to be questioned. It was only in the late 1970s, however, that the concept of ethnicity came to replace—in the American and British sociopolitical and historical discourse—the category of race as a manner of describing diversity. In European ethnology, the paradigm of the investigation of "cultural-linguistic islands" (*Sprachinseln*) was abandoned only in the early 1980 and replaced with a new methodology for the study of ethnicity. Henceforth research would focus, on the one hand, on the context of regionalism, migration, and the policy of difference and, on the other, on the structures of daily life and of intercultural communication. This was happening precisely at the time when I arrived in Germany.

Those who study nations or ethnicities can see them as the outcome of historical evolution (of "nature") or as resulting from a social construct. The first perspective is dominant in everyday life, while the second is prevalent in the

scientific field, in the West at least. More recently, the constructivist position has been articulated in the studies of American sociologist Rogers Brubaker, published in 2004 in the volume *Ethnicity Without Groups*. One may question, however, his undifferentiated critique of the non-constructivist, primordialist positions, all labeled as nationalist without any distinctions whatsoever. Also interested in the ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe, Transylvania included, he looks at the groups that suffered from discrimination without paying attention to the bottom level. But discrimination is not only the work of state authorities. Another source of discrimination are the inflexible minority groups, whose rules the divergent individual must obey. The de-dramatization of peoples or nations by constructivists such as Brubaker is often accompanied by a dramatization of minorities. The research focuses essentially on minorities and marginalized groups, disregarding the nation. However, in today's word nations still play an important part, as indicated by the difficult creation of a European supranational entity and by the revival experienced by national thought. Of course, nowadays to think in national terms does not imply a return to an obsolete form of nationalism, but rather to see nations as structures that provide order and guarantee democratic development. One aspect of democracy is that majorities should take, as much as possible, consensual decisions, acceptable to the minorities.

The policy of difference also has its shortcomings, such as the poorly conceived, ideologized, or inefficient forms of positive discrimination. Researchers tend to focus mainly on the members of a specific ethnic group, seen as representatives of their ethnicity, but what is actually important is their behavior in certain life contexts. Research should consider instead what course of action is chosen in a particular situation or another. Such an approach would place, for instance, the whole issue of assimilation in the context of daily life and of the situational instances regarding language use. This, however, would entail a reorientation of the research, dominated by traditional issues such as the formation of groups and the distinctions employed in describing them. Of course, the reorientation is far from simple, as the sources are generated by the elites. We, on the other hand, draw on sources that illustrate the behavior of the common people. The focus should not be on ethnic essence, but rather on the performative dimension of ethnicity. Important is not the existence of one ethnicity or another, but rather the concrete forms they take, the representation of their genesis and historical development.

In the study of the region of Banat, the element of cultural diversity still remains prevalent, despite the radical changes experienced by the local ethnic structure. This trope is rooted in the experience of the Habsburg administration and eventually became dominant after 1848/49, amid the neo-absolutist attempts at reforming the empire. It is also increasingly employed nowadays by

researchers from the region. Thus, Smaranda Vultur described the urban space of Timişoara as "an interethnic melting pot in which four or five nations have coexisted for a long time." She grounds her thesis on a number of biographical interviews. Victor Neumann employs an explanatory model which resorts to the postmodern concepts of transcultural and multiple identities, chiefly in connection with the acculturation of the Banat Jews. Within the historical transformations, various elements pertaining to identity, lay or secular in nature and associated with group awareness, began to interact. If we consider the logic of collective action in the evolution of regional groups, we identify a more complex situation. On the one hand, the small groups, not integral to state structures, can adapt their interests to a radically changed reality faster than the larger groups—in our case, Romanians, Serbs, or Hungarians. We must also keep in mind the conflicts affecting a region sometimes described in contrast to an essentially peaceful Transylvania. In Banat, the ethnic groups operated within parallel societies, one next to the other but rarely together, and on even rarer occasions they clashed. Daily life featured areas and situations of contact in the context of economic activities, and came to create a number of bridges. Eventually, the practice of interethnic relations fostered new realities. Without denying the dramatic conflicts that ravaged Banat (the civil war of 1848/49 began here, the Bolshevik revolutionary excesses of 1919, the terror inflicted on the Serbian population in occupied Banat during World War II, the discrimination against and the deportation of the Germans from the Romanian Banat in 1944/45, the internment and the expulsion of those living in the Yugoslav Banat) and the suffering they entailed, it is nevertheless important to point out that the confrontations very rarely reached an aggressive stage. The experience of Banat shows us that, considering the presence of deeply-rooted stereotypes, the peaceful behavior of a group at a given moment does not preclude aggression once circumstances change, leading to war and violence.

Professor Gräf has accurately indicated the importance of exhibitions in my scientific activity. They are a somewhat unusual but easily explainable component thereof. In what follows, I shall refer only to the latest such exhibition.

The current exhibition, *Fließende Räume: Karten des Donauraums/Floating Spaces: Maps of the Danube Region 1650–1800*, is also the outcome of a research project carried out together with the Archives of Baden-Württemberg, our partner in other exhibitions or in projects for the conservation and publication of document collections relevant for the history of Transylvania.

Historians remember the debate around redefining area studies in connection to the definition of the Balkans as a historical area. In her book *Inventing the Balkans* (1996), Maria Todorova analyzed the contradictory and essentially negative image of the Balkans in Western culture and the paradoxes of the cultural

references behind this image, as well as the underlying assumptions. Her central thesis states that the Balkan stereotypes, generated at the level of discourse, still influence the perception of the area in question, having a lasting influence upon politics. Within her theory of Balkanism, Todorova in fact problematizes the manner in which the West perceives the world of the "others." This perception is the result of an initial experience, based not on direct contact, but taken up from the accounts of Western observers. Her analysis chiefly draws on a number of travelogues, mostly British and French, from the long 19th century. The prehistory of these contacts is dealt with only in an introductory fashion and in general terms. In this reference text for area studies, the cartographic spatial representations play no part whatsoever, despite the impetus provided two years prior by Larry Wolff, with his *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of Enlightenment* (1994). Wolff resorted to the paradigm of mapping (in the broad sense of the term), especially in the context of his considerations regarding Russia. The Habsburg Empire only plays a secondary part. In a special chapter, "Mapping Eastern Europe: Political Geography and Cultural Geography," he draws attention to the importance of maps.

Our exhibition followed precisely this methodological approach, which leads to the central question: what is the content and the meaning of the spatial descriptions generated by the pre-modern "map" artifact. Thus, the map as a document is reassessed from the perspective of the new history of culture: the map is understood as text, discourse, and visual image. The central concept of such an interpretation is that of "representation," as a dialog between the one who reads the map and the cartographer.

In his seminal text *La production de l'espace* (1974), Henri Lefebvre makes a distinction between spatial practice as a "perceived space," spatial representation as a "conceived space" (the space of knowledge, the cognitive space), and the space of representation ("lived space"). In the context of our project, this triad is seen within its interdependences. Spatial representation is the conceptual space of the geographers, cartographers, military and fortress architects whose work we investigated.

In his study entitled *Imperial Landscape* (second edition, 2002) William T. Mitchell resorted to Lefebvre's triad in defining the categories of place, space, and natural or cultural landscape. For Mitchell, the space for the representation of the landscape is the venue of an unavoidable historical progress, initiated by the imperial power, an interpretation we share in our exhibition.

One of the outcomes of the territorial expansion of the Habsburg Empire and of the new governance practices in the territories acquired following the peace treaties of Karlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718) was the altered regionalization of the space. New regions were created, such as the Banat of Timişoara, the

Austrian Military Border, which also included fringe areas formerly of Banat and Transylvania, Little Wallachia (Oltenia), and Bukovina. In the sense given to the term by Anthony Giddens (*A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 1, *Power, Property and the State*, 1981), by region we no longer mean a natural space, but rather a territorial segment associated with specific moments, situations, or contexts. Outlined by way of symbolic markings, this segment can be related to certain physical-material features (rivers, valleys, manmade dividing lines). At the political level, these spatial concepts were inscribed in a cultural imagination that transcends the mere description of the geographic area. This takes us to the concept of "symbolic geography," also methodologically relevant for our exhibition.

"Symbolic geography" means that geographic areas are recognized not only on the basis of the natural landscape, but are also created by way of representation and communication, in a constant process of reproduction. This premise is also valid for geographical and cartographical practice, which, in the design and production of maps, resorts to a system of signs that indicate to the user the relevant features of the described area including, among other things, the borders that separate the various political territories, themselves a construct of the rival powers. In the context of our exhibition, the concept of "symbolic geography" is of somewhat more limited significance. Anthropologist Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden (1992) have recently defined the term as a reservoir of discursive operations whereby an initially continuous socially or politically delineated space is fragmented in a more or less clear manner through a recourse to contradictory pairs of signs, frequently associated with polar assignations of value, which come to outline a hierarchy of spatial segments. In the 18th century, spatial concepts such as "Danube region," "Southeast Europe," or "the Balkans" were yet to be born. However, even at that time manifest distinctions were operated in connection to this sub-continental area. During the Habsburg expansion, the spatial representation was filled with new rhetorical strategies, acquiring a number of changed characteristics. In order to illustrate the emergence of representational constructs that could be identified at the level of discourse we have the cartouches of the maps. The symbols in the cartouches reduce complex situations to one image or one action. Their interpretations indicate the efficiency of the map artifact within the act of reception.

Of all the elements that marked and influenced my scholarly activity, family life has always been the most important. I met my great love during my student years. In such situations, ethnicity loses all significance. My family environment, my wife and my children, provided me with a safe space. Dearest Coca, while running the household you also managed to

motivate and encourage me, tried to instill in me a sense of discipline, you understood me and offered me your unconditional support. You helped me with my work in the archives, you transcribed, proofread and offered suggestions in connection to my texts. I am glad that our children have managed to find their own way in life. I also take this festive opportunity to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Some of the concepts mentioned earlier could apply to today's ceremonies—a staging in the positive sense of the term. Cluj University, "my" university, presents itself through the agency of a student who, esteemed Professor Gräf, has indeed remained a "traveller between two worlds"; two worlds whose scientific cultures seem today, if one looks closely enough, a lot closer to one another than the differences between them might otherwise suggest. These festivities are for me a communicational but especially a highly significant emotional event. As I look around this room and think about the beginnings of my scholarly activity, about the years of our youth, "my heart leaps with joy," to paraphrase a great Romanian storyteller who best described the feelings I am myself experiencing. I am happy to see all of you here. I must stop here, however, despite the fact that I still have not mentioned so many of you present in the room, friends, colleagues, people with whom I shared both happiness and pain, employees of our institute. Despite the many years that have passed, our mutual appreciation has remained unchanged. Last but not least, I salute you, my dear Mathias Beer; you were there, right by my side, in the most difficult of times. Once again, I would like to thank Cluj University for this honor, and to thank you all, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends, for taking the time at the beginning of the weekend to join me here today.

Abstract

Floating Spaces, Symbolic Geography

In his response to the Laudatio delivered by Professor Rudolf Gräf, vice-rector of Babeş-Bolyai University, on the occasion of the Doctor Honoris Causa award ceremony, the recipient of the honorary degree, researcher Josef Wolf pays homage to the professors that played a significant formative role during his student years at Babeş-Bolyai University (Pompiliu Teodor, Ştefan Pascu, Liviu Maior, Vasile Vesa, and many others), offers some autobiographical data, and briefly presents his scholarly activity, dominated by his interest in regional history and especially in the history of the Banat Swabians.

Keywords

regional history, Banat Swabians, symbolic geography, ethnicity, Babeş-Bolyai University