

IN MEMORIAM UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR
DR. NICOLAE CIANGĂ
(1947-2019)



Much too early, on the 21st of July 2019, the professor, colleague and especially the HUMAN Nicolae Ciangă passed away, in absolute discretion and surrounded by his wonderful family which he limitlessly loved and valued. He was an exceptional mentor, a vocational teacher of both the soul and the mind, a man with a vast general and geographical culture, lover of nature and beauty, a mild, sensitive and generous soul, a model of devotion for the profession and for Cluj geographical community. Professor Nicolae Ciangă succeeded to inspire colleagues and friends and also to open up and enlarge new horizons of geographical knowledge for generations of students, to teach and coordinate them. At the

same time, students highly appreciated and loved him, so they will honour him, will keep his bright memory alive and will be always thankful for everything he offered so generously throughout his entire life and professional career.

He was born on the 21st of November 1947 in the village of Voinești, today a neighbourhood of the resort-town “of the 1000 springs”, Covasna, in the county of the same name, in an area with an exceptional natural setting. He would early discover his sensitivity and love for nature, which was then cultivated by the teachers in the primary and secondary schools, and later, by those at the Science High School in Covasna, where he studied between 1961 and 1965. These teachers directed him towards the geographical field, which he embraced passionately and dedicated his entire life. This started even the next year, 1966, when he listened to the „call” and continued to develop and deepen his vocation after he entered the Faculty of Biology and Geography within „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, specialization: Geography. He brightly graduated in 1971 as top of his class.

In the same year he was assigned to Cluj, where he would work between 1971 and 1991 as a scientific researcher within the Geographical Research Team of the Romanian Academy, Cluj Branch. During this time, he was directly and actively involved in the writing of a high number of scientific studies, research contracts and projects which were practically applied, focused on different issues, but predominantly related to the field of Human Geography and Tourism, in which he became a reputed and appreciated specialist.

An important stage in his professional achievement was the period when he was a PhD student at “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași. In 1991, he successfully defended the thesis entitled “Tourism in Eastern Carpathians. A Human Geography Study”. This effort was crowned in 1999, shortly after the publication of the PhD thesis in form of a book, when he received the “Simion Mehedinți” Award of the Romanian Academy. This award proves the value and special appreciation of the scientific results he obtained.

The year 1991 also marked an important change in his career as a researcher. He then became involved in the higher education as a permanent member of the teaching staff at the Faculty of Geography within “Babeș-Bolyai” University. At the university, he quickly asserted himself and went through all the stages and levels of scientific and teaching achievement. In 1997 he reached the highest academic position, that of university professor, becoming an authentic and highly appreciated teacher. At the same time he remained a passionate and prolific scientific researcher, focused mainly on the most dynamic field of Geography – that of Tourism. The period when he was an active university professor was the most fruitful one, as the very conclusive results he obtained were published in more than 120 studies and papers. Almost all of these studies were published in highly ranked and traditional journals indexed in international databases and, more recently, in ISI journals, indexed in the Web of Science. 15 of these studies were published abroad. He also published 24 books or chapters within scientific books as the main author or co-author. He contributed as an editor and with high-quality scientific papers to the publishing of many collective volumes, printed by prestigious Romanian publishers (Romanian Academy Press, Cluj University Press, Bucharest University Press) and foreign publishers (in countries like the United States of America, Poland, Serbia, the United Kingdom, South Korea).

Within these contributions, apart from the traditional approach, professor Ciangă always sought to approach new and impacting issues and directions of research in several fields of Geography. In Tourism, his interest was related to Tourism Planning, the setting of models to assess the attractive value of tourist resources, general and special models and strategies for the development and promotion of tourism at different territorial levels and taxonomic ranks, the risks induced by tourism activities etc. In Population Geography, he studied the workforce resources and their capitalization, which constituted the subject of contract research in mining production units in Hunedoara or Maramureș counties, or in agriculture – for Apuseni Mountains or Cluj County. The Geography of Primary and Tertiary Activities represented an integral part of the regional investigations concerning the Transylvanian Basin and Plateau, the Eastern and Western Carpathians, which were published in the form of chapters or subchapters in the Geography of Romania, volumes 2 and 3, but also as scientific papers and university lectures. He also studied the underground waters, especially the hydromineral sources, within the entire Carpathian and Transylvanian area. These studies were used in contracts and were consequently published, or contributed to

the chapter concerning the water tourism resources in his PhD and the lectures regarding the Geography of Tourism in Romania. Another field of interest of his was topeclimatology, where he studied geographical areas comprised within 1:200 000 maps – Bistrița, Cluj, Șimleu Silvaniei, Satu Mare, Timișoara, Alba Iulia, Turda – using both geographical research methods, but also statistical, mathematical and mapping research methods.

The above-mentioned interests are also found in the 25 research projects in which he was involved during the period when he was employed as a scientific researcher. These projects were financed by the Romanian Academy, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, or by productive units or state-funded institutions (Deva Mining Factory, Borșa Mining Factory, Cluj Institute for Planning, county councils, the Land Survey Department). During this period, he coordinated the contracts „The setting of topeclimatic maps at the scale 1:200 000” and the „Updating of the land survey situation in the rural build-up areas in Cluj County”.

Later, as an academic within the university, he was actively involved as an operational member or coordinator in all the big projects won and made by the Faculty of Geography in Cluj-Napoca. In these projects, he usually coordinated the chapters related to Human Geography and especially Tourism Geography. He was also part in a series of research projects and grants won through national competition and substantially funded by prestigious institutions (the Romanian Academy, the World Bank, CNCSIS – the National Research Unit). He was the head of four of these projects and grants.

The results of research materialized in the publication of books, volumes, papers, in Romania and abroad. He also introduced new university courses and lectures, such as the Geography of Tourism in Romania, Tourism Planning, Methods of Analysis in Tourism Geography, the Geography of Recreational Activities, Tourism Heritage and Capitalization.

Professor Ciangă's scientific expertise was also attested by his cooperation within six editorial teams of several nationally highly ranked publications, indexed in international databases, by the high number of citations (an average of more than 35 citations annually) for his scientific publications in journals and books, and by his position as an evaluation expert at UEFISCU and CNCSIS (the main national research-related units).

Furthermore, as a corollary to these accomplishments, he also received the status of PhD coordinator. He coordinated the PhD theses of more than 30 PhD students. These theses stood out for their originality and practical applicability of their results. These characteristics were greatly influenced by the quality and rigour of the coordinator's scientific expertise, which benefitted the PhD students. In this context, he was invited as an official reviewer to be part of more than 40 boards for the evaluation, defence and awarding the scientific title of PhD in Geography, at the University of Bucharest, “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași, “Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, University of Oradea and the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.

Throughout his remarkable scientific and teaching career, professor Ciangă was invited to many highly academic and scientific events, both in Romania and abroad (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, South Korea). The academic community recognized his expertise and scientific merits and awarded him numerous distinctions, awards and diplomas.

In 2003 he initiated and decisively contributed to the establishment of the bachelor degree in Tourism Geography, which was based and took over naturally the experience accumulated within the undergraduate colleges of “Tourism Geoinformation and Prospection” and then “Tourism Activities”, in whose proper functioning he also had a major contribution. Also, the master degrees in “Tourism Prospection and Planning” (which functioned between 2004 and 2007) and “Tourism Planning and Development” (since 2007) were also established under his guidance.

Until 2012, he subsequently had the positions of chancellor (1996-1997) and then vice-dean of the Faculty of Geography (1997-2000) and eventually head of the Department of Human Geography, later renamed the Department of Human Geography and Tourism (2000-2012).

However, beyond his merits and extraordinary achievements in academic, social and managerial terms, his personality consisted and gave off a range of very special human qualities: altruism, kindness, empathy, permanent disposition for dialogue, correctness, but also contagious vitality, the alive and curious spirit, always on alert. For these qualities, he succeeded to be a model for generations of students and colleagues, but also for people outside the university. Professor Ciangă was esteemed, praised and loved by all.

His premature departure in the “great voyage” left certainly an immense empty space within his saddened family and we are all poorer – his close friends, all those who knew him and cooperated with him throughout his long career as a researcher and university professor, and those whom he coordinated their steps on the way of scientific knowledge. At the same, the Romanian Geography, the scientific community of specialists in Human Geography and Tourism, and especially the Geography in Cluj-Napoca – whom he served devotedly until his last breath – have lost a wonderful man, a learned scholar, a remarkable colleague and friend, a passionate researcher and an exceptional personality.

May God rest his soul in peace!

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