

**Meda-Diana Hotea, *The Catalogue of Rare Books  
in the Collections of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library.  
Gh. Sion Donation Vol. I (16–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries),  
Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2006, 165 p.***

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Published in the *Myrobiblion* series (edited by Valentin Orga) with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religion through the National Cultural Fund Administration, this new book compiled by Meda-Diana Hotea continues, by a constant and specific method of manifestation, the extensive programme which aims at the superior bibliophile valorization of the old Romanian and foreign book treasure preserved in the collections of the venerable “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca.<sup>2</sup> In the *Preface* (pp. 5–6) – written with full knowledge of the facts – Doru Radosav, the Director of the institution in his well-known style establishes the inner coordinates of the Gheorghe Sion Collection, representative for the so-called intellectual aristocratism of the Romanian noble elite in the 18–19<sup>th</sup> centuries (p. 6). The catalogue actually starts with several adequate *Preliminary considerations* (pp. 7–29), translated into French and German too. It is necessary to run through them in order to become familiar with the conception and method on which the catalogue is based.

In fact, the *donation librorum*, made by the Moldavian boyar Gheorghe Sion (1855–1944), comprises, as the present catalogue shows, 104 titles of rare books printed in the 16–18<sup>th</sup> centuries in cultural centres such as Venice, Paris, Vienna, Leipzig, Frankfurt and Amsterdam. The majority of the books speak of a real “[...] documentary and

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. for example: Biblioteca Centrală Universitară Cluj-Napoca, *Catalogul incunabilelor* (Cluj-Napoca Central University Library, *The Catalogue of Incunabula*), Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1979 [Compiled by Elena Mosora and Doina Hanga]; Elena Mosora – Doina Hanga, *Catalogul cărții vechi românești din colecțiile Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare „Lucian Blaga” Cluj-Napoca* (The Catalogue of Old Romanian Books in the Collections of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library, Cluj Napoca), 1991. See also Iacob Mârza, in *Apulum*, XXVII–XXX, 1990–1993, pp. 648–649.

iconographic collection regarding the history of the Romanian countries” (p. 10), the books being described in a clear and effective way. In fact, we shall quote the author of the catalogue, Meda-Diana Hotea, who specifies: “[...], the 104 titles have been arranged chronologically, and, within the chronological frame, alphabetically. We adopted a description model with four segments with the aim of highlighting, in as much detail as possible, the characteristics of each publication. The description section is followed by that of the notes referring to the particularities of the copies: the binding, the typographic mark, owner’s note, observations regarding the bibliographic history of the edition etc. I considered relevant, from the perspective of a bibliophile’s interest, to mention only the original bindings, and not those of the rebound copies. In order to reconstruct as adequately as possible the history of the collection, I chose to transcribe the notes. The notes difficult to decipher I have only mentioned. The last section is reserved for the bibliographical references in which both the acknowledged speciality catalogues and those dedicated to the rare books owned by Romanian libraries are mentioned. We used abbreviations in the references, indicating only the author’s name, the volume and the page on which the publication in question is described.” (pp. 12–13)

By reading and, moreover, by consulting the catalogue, which ought to be done according to these specifications, one may observe a useful list of *Abbreviations* (p. 31), followed by the *Catalogue* itself (pp. 33–134). As in the case of other representative catalogues in this domain we can find here too an *Index of Authors, Editors and Translators* (pp. 135–142), *Index of Titles* (pp. 143–149), *Index of Printing Centres* (pp. 150–152), *Index of Typographers, Editors, Booksellers* (pp. 153–158), *Index of Engravers* (pp. 159–160) and a *Bibliography* (pp. 161–163).

Read and, especially, consulted as a true professional work, *The Catalogue of Rare Books in the Collections of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library. Gh. Sion Donation Vol. I (16–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, due to Meda-Diana Hotea’s experience, conforms to national and European scientific standards. The catalogue comprises old foreign books preserved in Romania, which have not yet entered the natural and necessary cultural circulation. Moreover, the present volume pleads convincingly and rationally for a certain *cultural geography*, which Alexandru Duțu insisted on some years ago. From this point of view, there is an evident cultural concordance between Doru Radosav’s cordial and informal invitation to read the catalogue and the “database”, rich in cultural and political connotations. We advice the readers to read this

catalogue of old foreign books made by Meda-Diana Hotea with a pencil in hand.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

**For a History of Death in the Romanian Historiographic Landscape  
– the Presentation of Some Recent Collective Contributions**

***Religiosity and Attitudes before Death in Transylvania from Early  
Modernity to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Mihaela Grancea, 2005 and  
*Discourses on Death in Transylvania in the 16–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, eds.  
Mihaela Grancea and Ana Dumitran, 2006**

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Death is a constant in the history of mankind, anonymous or famous, individual or collective, this always produced intense reactions; it inspired theologians, philosophers, artist and scientists alike. Death is a phenomenon which raised numerous questions to every civilization, the imaginary of death being richly represented in the mythologies of every antique people and in the case of each later religion.<sup>2</sup> The drama of this phenomenon was visibly diminished when man realized that he is mortal and began to leave “traces” of his passing to the future generations. The history of death, recovering and analyzing these traces, revealed another face of the history of life.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the beginnings of the history of death were rather difficult since it was a taboo for a long time, death being banished beyond death, an attitude which changed only when the Christian sensibility of the Middle Ages occurred.<sup>4</sup> Merely in the 1950–60s did the French historians gathered around the journal *Annales* recover this extremely fascinating territory. In the course of time,

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<sup>2</sup> See Mircea Eliade, *Istoria religiilor și a credințelor religioase* (The History of Religious Ideas), 2 vol., Bucharest, Editura Științifică, 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

<sup>3</sup> See Philippe Ariès, *Omul în fața morții* (Western Attitudes toward Death), 2 volumes, Bucharest, Editura Meridiane, 1996, passim.

<sup>4</sup> See Johann Huizinga, *Amurgul evului mediu* (The Waning of the Middle Ages), Bucharest, Ed. Meridiane, 1993, passim.