

Boabe de Grâu Journal. Ethnological landmarks, selection of texts, introduction and note on the edition by Florența Popescu-Simion
(Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2023)

In the volume under scrutiny, our colleague — a researcher at the Constantin Brăiloiu Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest — provides a working tool built from meticulous work: systematically extracting articles on folklore, ethnography, and ethnology, as well as pieces on popular education and minority issues in Romania, from the journal *Boabe de grâu*, founded by Emanoil Bucuța and published between 1930 and 1934. The volume is structured into eight chapters, an introduction, an editorial note, a list of illustrations, a bibliography, and an index of authors and their texts published between 1930 and 1934.

The author begins by offering some general considerations on the interwar period, mentioning the editorial landscape of the time through titles such as *Grai și suflet* (1923-1938), *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (1934-1947), *Contimporanul* (1922-1932), and *Arhiva pentru Știința și reforma socială* (1919-1937), concluding that: “however, none of them had as their official, declared purpose the education of the people, as E. Bucuța’s journal would do, nor did they cover such a wide range of topics, from rigorous research to the chronicle of ‘hot’ cultural events and literary entertainment” (11).

This is followed by several pages about the founder of this journal, Emanoil Bucuța, whom the author portrays as an intellectual dedicated to the cultural enrichment of Romanians, the development of Romanian tourism, and the situation of Romanians abroad, summarizing: “Emanoil Bucuța was, above all, a builder. Of magazines, institutions, education systems. (...) He left his mark especially on the institutions where he worked or which he created, which makes him comparable to the members of the 1848 generation, those who built the country, establishing its modern institutions.” (13). Florența Popescu-Simion then offers both an overview of the journal’s issues and a closer analysis of several articles selected from each chapter. We learn that more than 121 authors contributed to *Boabe de grâu*, representing a remarkably wide range of fields – from geography and museography to theology. They also enjoyed considerable freedom in their writing and, with only a few exceptions, each published just a single article.

In selecting material for the volume, the author places the greatest emphasis on studies dealing with the analysis of the village and popular culture, while among the journal’s sections, priority is given to the one titled *Studies and Stories*. At the same time, looking back, Florența Popescu Simion draws our attention to the fact that the *Chronicle* section “can be read as an X-ray of the times, of the trends in the development of Romanian society” (17). The author notes in this section the articles on theatre and the columns on tourism, sports, and physical education.

The author also includes a short section explaining the criteria and process she used in selecting the articles: “the essential criterion on which I based my selection (...) was the connection with ethnology and folklore, with popular culture in general” (20), and then proceeds to analyse the articles grouped into chapters.

In the first section, dedicated to folklore, ethnography, and ethnology, which contains 38 articles, the analysis focuses on the articles by Constantin Brăiloiu, whom the author considers “a perfectly relevant lesson on the major themes of ethnographic fieldwork” (24), George Breazul, on collections and collectors of musical folklore, Henri H. Stahl, on the Drăguș sheepfold in Transylvania, Ion Chelcea, on the village of Boteni in Muscel, Traian Herseni, on the organization of a sheepfold belonging to the inhabitants of Drăguș, in which the method chosen is description rather than interpretation of the ethnographic material, C.D. Constantinescu-Mircești, about a village in Dobrogea – Ezibei – a multi-ethnic village, with an analysis focused mainly on economic issues. This is followed by an analysis of articles on ethnography and folklore from the *Chronicles* section, where the main contributor was Emanoil Bucuța, on the village of Văcăreni, then together with Lena Constante on the icons of Savu Moga, or with Maria Goleescu on the *știubei*. From the section on the Romanian Social Institute, we learn that Emanoil Bucuța was a “fervent admirer of Dimitrie Gusti” (34) and a collaborator of this institution, and the few articles in the section help, according to the author, to reconstruct the atmosphere in which the monographers' research took place.

The section on education presents a portrait of Emanoil Bucuța as someone involved in addressing educational issues, illiteracy, and the lack of education in rural and working-class communities. Florența Popescu Simion has also selected three articles for this volume on places of worship: the church in Fundenii Doamnei, the wooden church in Cuhea Maramureșului, and the church in Viorești (Vâlcea). All three churches have since become historical monuments.

The chapter entitled *History of a City: Bucharest* comprises three articles, one of which traces “the development of this place from the Bronze Age to the dawn of the 19th century” (44), written by archaeologist Constantin Moisil, and providing data on the transition from the Phanariot period to the Western period. The second article, written by Emanoil Bucuța, discusses the heart of Bucharest and presents the natural advantages of the city's location in the plains. The third text is written by Tudor Arghezi and deals with the industrial traditions of the city, presenting the anniversary of the Sclessinger wool factory, and through this a “typical urban trade” (46). At the end of the volume, two chapters address minorities: Romanians living abroad and the various ethnic minorities within Romania. In the first case, Emanoil Bucuța's attention focuses especially on the Romanians of the Timok Valley and the ties they have maintained with Romania, followed by those living in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Balkan Peninsula, where the threat of assimilation is underscored. In the second case – minorities within Romania – the general picture presented is that they were in a favourable situation.

In conclusion, the selection made by researcher Florența Popescu Simion is likely to interest contemporary ethnologists and folklorists, and, above all, to encourage readers to explore the entire journal.

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