

DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY IN IASI BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS: CHARLES DROUHET AND NICOLAE ȘERBAN

Keyword: “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, the Faculty of Letters, French Language and Literature Department, Charles Drouhet, Nicolae Șerban, "Lutetia" - The French-Romanian Studies Group, N.I.Popa

The title of the paper is the DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY IN IASI BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS: CHARLES DROUHET AND NICOLAE ȘERBAN it is based mainly on information archived at the "Al. I. Cuza" University, Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Faculty of Letters, the National Archives, based on a large quantity of research documents. "Mihai Eminescu" Library in Iasi and the Romanian Academy Library were also equally important sources. And last, but not least, the letters between the professors, already published in the volumes, but also the journals of that time, the press in Iasi and in the capital, completed the information of this paper.

One of the most important moments in the Romanian history is the date of 26 October 1860 when, in the presence of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the Union's ruler, and of Mihail Kogălniceanu, the Prime Minister, a Decree - Royal Ordinance (Royal Decree) was released to create the University in Iasi, that made Iasi the capital of the higher education. The name of Iasi University remains until the 4th decade of the 20th Century (in 1933), when it is changed to *Universitatea Mihăileană din Iași* following the *Royal Decree* no. 3119 of 2 September, given by Carol the 2nd.

The education reform in 1948 changed the name to ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA UNIVERSITY – IAȘI, with a law-decree draft. In order to avoid possible confusions (the Police Academy in Bucharest is also called "Alexandru Ioan Cuza") the official name to be used is the one above, without abbreviating the name of the Union's Ruler.

The FACULTY OF LETTERS was created in 1860, when the University in Iasi was also created. Meanwhile, it is also mentioned, under other names, in various official documents. Starting from 1990 its official name is the *Faculty of Letters*.

Despite of the old and strong French tradition, the University in Iasi had not have a French Language and Literature Department from the very beginning. Founded in 1860, this important cultural establishment had to wait for a while until introducing in its curriculum a subject that today is largely studied not only in the higher education institutions, but also in the most common schools. The French Department in the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iasi was created in 1897, but the French teaching had begun long before, in 1869, with Victor Challiol and Ștefan Vârgolici.

When Charles Drouhet came (October 1909) we can say, without exaggeration, that a new era began for the University. This is the explanation for the profound transformation that was produced almost immediately in the University, but also the increase of the number of students that wanted to study French language and literature.

The paper that made him famous as a literary historian was, no doubt, *Le Poète François Mainard, étude critique d'histoire littéraire*, where the author, after a long research, succeeds in remaking the biography of the poet in order to revive an era and to explain the genesis of a poetical work.

These coordinates of his critical spirit were at the base of all scientific activity, establishing his profile and his values. Like the compared literature studies, all the literary history research are based on a very detailed documentation and an analytical depth.

Drouhet introduced the seminary exercises from the very first, and they were very rare at that time. The oral and written translations from Romanian to French also were very important.

When the professor left for the University in Bucharest, he left a deep regret between students and the other professors. Charles Drouhet was one of the remarkable figures in the history of the French language and literature university studies.

Nicolae Șerban was a substitute professor at the French Language and Literature Department of the Faculty of Letters of the University, after Prof. Charles Drouhet transferred to the Capital, thus continuing the important role played by Charles Drouhet in the French-Romanian cultural relationships.

In Iași, as a full professor, Nicolae Șerban also organized the Seminary of the Department where he developed an unique activity. The specialization of French Language had, in that time, the highest number of students. The books published by the Prof. Nicolae Șerban show the main directions of its activity as a researcher, teacher and cultural animator. The handbooks of Prof. Șerban tried to build, in the students' minds, a general idea on the evolution of the French literature, by respecting its chronological order.

The role played by Serban was very important also for the French-Romanian relationships. In 1921, Prof. Serban founded, in Iasi, "Lutetia" - The French-Romanian Studies Group, with the main purpose to disseminate the French culture in Romania and the Romanian culture in France.

An animator of the French-Romanian friendship, Prof. Şerban had an incredible determination, a rich imagination, an overflowing energy, a young and bold enthusiasm.

The solid work of the two professors are an example of life dedicated entirely to science and education.