

*Banquets of Gods, Banquets of Men.  
Conviviality in the Ancient World*

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SILVIA MUSTAȚĂ

This volume includes the proceedings of the sixteenth international colloquium of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology of the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj, on the subject of "Banquets of Gods, Banquets of Men. Conviviality in the Ancient World", held on November 23<sup>rd</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in Cluj. Due to the diversity of subjects addressed by the participants, the two days of the conference were subdivided into morning sessions reserved for epigraphical and historical topics and afternoon sessions for the archaeological ones; which is reflected by the structure of this volume.

*In memoriam*

**HARTMUT WOLFF**  
**(1941 - 2012)**



**Radu Ardevan**  
Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai Cluj

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 passed away Professor Hartmut Wolff, a highly distinguished scholar and worldwide appreciated specialist of Roman history. His unexpected demise strongly affected not only the field of the sciences of the

Antiquity, but especially the hearts of all who knew him. One can say that H. Wolff has represented, for a long time and with remarkable brilliance, a precious and today less frequent type of humanistic scientist, gifted equally with large erudition, high critical spirit and kindness – as once there were in the time of the Renaissance or of the Enlightenment<sup>1</sup>.

Hartmut Wolff originated from Oldenburg, in northern Germany, where he was born on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941, as the son of a teacher of artistic drawings. He grew up in an atmosphere of sensitivity, respect for culture and appreciation for the Humanities. Already in the school years he mastered several languages (English, French, Italian, Latin, ancient Greek), and familiarised himself to these cultures. Highly interested in the ancient history and civilization, he chose to pursue such studies in the University of Erlangen (1963-1967). It was the turning point of his life: there he met Professor Friedrich Vittinghoff, who represented his lifelong beloved and admired master. Under his guidance, H. Wolff became more and more involved and competent in the problems of the ancient world, dealing especially with Roman society and civilization. One has to underline that at that time around the same professor was gathered a whole team of highly skilled students, some of whom later became top specialists of these studies (like Werner Eck, Hartmut Galsterer or Brigitte Galsterer-Kroll), a brilliant generation that H. Wolff belonged to. All of them shared the passion and preoccupations of Fr. Vittinghoff and remained eternally devoted to him.

Between 1967 and 1972 H. Wolff continued to study, but at the University of Cologne (Köln), following Prof. Vittinghoff, who had moved there. In these years he deepened the study of the sources, their sharp criticism, the research methods and the specific approaches to the history of the ancient societies. His main topics of interest became social history, urbanization, the spread of Roman citizenship and the dynamics of the state administration in the Roman world during the late Republican and early Imperial period.

In 1972 H. Wolff defended his doctoral thesis, entitled *Die Constitutio Antoniniana und Papyrus Gissensis 40 I*. Actually this represented only an appendix of his achieved research on the grants of Roman citizenship in general – a huge work of more than 1000 pages, unfortunately never published. The dissertation was printed in 1976, but only as an internal publication of the Cologne University. Every reader can appreciate the author's wide erudition, knowledge of the sources, their sharp and well explained criticism, the abundance of ideas and also his

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<sup>1</sup> The few lines of this obituary could be written thanks to the generous help of several German scholars, who supported our efforts. Prof. Oliver Stoll (University of Passau) and Armin Eich (University of Wuppertal) provided us with precious data, Dr. Markus Zimmerman (University of Bamberg) informed us about many writings of H. Wolff. Highly useful were the data and the text kindly offered by Prof. Werner Eck (University of Cologne) – see below, fn. 2. For the photo we are indebted to Prof. Martin Jehne (University of Dresden). We express once more our special gratitude and consideration to all of them.

comprehensive vision of social history. These qualities remained the hallmark of all his further activity.

Between 1972 and 1978 H. Wolff worked at the same University, as *Wissenschaftlicher Assistent*, and gave courses also at the Rhenan Pedagogic Institute of Neuss. In all these years he pursued intense scientific research and produced a large number of papers on the same main topics. Only one of them approached, as a theme of collateral interest, the politic struggle at Athens in the difficult year 411 BC. Researching the grants of Roman citizenship, he soon realized the importance of the military diplomas for the problem and devoted more and more attention to these sources. In 1977 he habilitated at the same prestigious University, with a large thesis (more than 1000 pages) on the Roman policy of citizenship. Despite the wide field of his approach and its high appreciation in the academic environment, the author himself saw such a work as an incomplete one, intending to enlarge it sometime later with the „indirect“ citizenship grants, and also with a final synthesis. It is very sad that he never succeeded to revise and publish this impressive volume<sup>2</sup>. To that situation contributed also his total commitment to the didactic activity, which he accomplished in the best and most distinguished manner.

Soon after, in 1979, he was appointed Professor for ancient history at the University of Cologne. But in 1980 he obtained the Chair of Ancient History in the newly founded University of Passau. H. Wolff remained in this institution until his retirement in 2007 and pursued here a very consistent activity. Since 1992 he acted as interim leader of the Bavarian branch of the South-Eastern European Society. In 1991 he became associated member of the German Archaeological Institute.

It is necessary to list his teaching performance first. As professor, he held impressive lessons and could always touch the hearts of his students. Several generations of younger specialists owe him enormously. It is to be noted that some of his former pupils became outstanding representatives of these historical studies<sup>3</sup>. He loved the didactic work and dedicated himself entirely to it. One can say that he asked rather much from the students, but his critics were always well grounded, expressed with gentleness, targeted towards the progress of learning. Especially Prof. Wolff never stopped teaching the methods of research and critical examination of the sources – vital conditions for coming closer to the truth.

As first head of the Chair of Ancient History, he made constant efforts, with obvious successes, in order to endow and promote it, but always without

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<sup>2</sup> Today the situation of these researches is basically changed; in the last two decades, the number of known Roman military diplomas increased fourfold (see W. Eck, *Die kaiserliche Bürgerrechtspolitik im Spiegel der Militärdiplome – ein Thema Hartmut Wolffs*, conference held at Passau in 8 July 2012, in print).

<sup>3</sup> As examples, Professors Martin Jehne (University of Dresden) and Armin Eich (University of Wuppertal).

putting himself into the spotlight. He supported equally the University's Institute for History, or the Chair for Roman Provincial Archaeology. Such gestures show clearly his broad vision about the teaching of ancient history, and the lack of any vanity or envy. One should not forget also several disappointments and sorrows, caused by the recent negative trends in the educational system; they existed, but never stopped or disturbed either his teaching or his readiness to stand for the true values. Deprived of a family of his own, Professor H. Wolff found precisely in the school his true family, to which he offered all his energy and affection.

The second main dimension of his life and work was the scientific research. H. Wolff never practiced field archaeology, but was a historian of the Antiquity in the most classic sense, i. e. dedicated to the written sources. Of course, he used the data offered by archaeology, numismatics or art history, and was able to verify the accuracy of such researches. His approaches included also the valuation of archaeological items, museum collections, monuments etc.; several times he contributed directly in this sense. But the research of H. Wolff was orientated mostly towards the written sources of the Antiquity: literary texts, papyri, and especially inscriptions. A large part of his contributions were precisely epigraphic ones. He paid much attention to the regional ancient history of Bavaria or of the entire Danube valley, and he used all the available data to light it up. One has to emphasize his interest for the Danubian and Balkanic provinces of the Roman Empire, and his contributions to the knowledge of their civilization.

However, the top position in his preoccupations was taken by the study of the Roman army and especially of military diplomas, the main tool for elucidating the social history of these times. H. Wolff not only read and decrypted many such documents, but insisted on the deeper social interpretation of their data. He even founded in Passau a centre for the critical research of the Roman military diplomas, and involved several collaborators for this effort. The importance of his contributions in this field is shown also by the volume of studies in his honour, published by his colleagues when he retired, a volume dedicated precisely to the Roman army.

One further important topic for H. Wolff was ancient Christianity and its spreading over the Roman world, with special emphasis on southern Germany. It was not only an important way to reveal provincial society in the Late Antiquity. The skilled scientist was also a true Christian, involved in the life of the Church and of its educational institutions. But also this dimension was assumed by avoiding every ostentation.

All the published works of H. Wolff present the same basic features, which show his high qualification as a specialist and his vivid interest for humanistic sciences: wide culture and information, perfect use of research tools, strict method, deep honesty, large understanding of the historical processes. One can add a special awareness of the limits and failures of human knowledge; he saw his own approaches with critical eyes, never ceased searching for the best solutions, and was always able to revise his previous assertions in the light of newer evidence, or



listen to other opinions. This critical attitude was matched by a very obvious modesty. It was not easy to discover his rich soul and his beautiful character. He not only avoided every self-promotion and publicity; today there is no available list of all his written works, he never cared to have one<sup>4</sup>. His high exigency is also responsible for the bulk of important written pages that he never published, always looking for better documentation and solutions.

The number of his printed works is rather considerable, but precisely his main research, that he performed so rigorously and efficiently, remained in typewritten form. On the contrary, Prof. Wolff was the editor, alone or in collaboration, of unusually many volumes of papers and proceedings. It is one more feature which shows clearly his lack of care for his own personal interests and his dedication to others – colleagues, pupils or masters. As a matter of fact, beyond his reluctance for publicity, H. Wolff was a kind soul and a very generous person, who loved life and mankind. In the memory of his students and collaborators he remains as a true gentleman with old-world manners, ready to offer help and explanations, and careful not to hurt anybody even by good intentions. Not to be overlooked was also his fine humour, which included self-irony as well – a perfect way to share a deep wisdom.

Apart from the German students and scholars who benefited by his presence, Prof. H. Wolff offered collaboration and help to many European young historians, especially from Eastern Europe. Among such connections one has to remember his feeling for Romania, especially for Transylvania. He worked on inscriptions of Dacia, researched this province and wrote about it, also visited it several times. His efforts for collaboration with the Romanian specialists are quite noticeable – at that time, these gestures meant very much for us. For the academic centre of Cluj, H. Wolff was always a friend and supporter, and he deserves special gratitude for it.

In this painful moment of farewell, we turn to Prof. Hartmut Wolff with a deep feeling of affection and respect. His memory and his heritage will be cherished among Romanian scholars, too. May the Lord rest him in peace.

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<sup>4</sup> Therefore the list of his writings inserted here is also far from complete.

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**Abbreviations**

AMN

*Acta Musei Napocensis*, Cluj-Napoca

OstbGrzm

Ostbairische Grenzmarken. Passauer Jahrbuch für  
Geschichte, Kunst und Volkskunde, Passau

PJ

Passauer Jahrbuch für Geschichte, Kunst und  
Volkskunde, Passau (new title for OstbGrzm since  
2006)