

“SCAUNE” CHURCH. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GLIMPSE

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Abstract: A limited archaeological research was occasioned by an ongoing restoration project of the “Scaune” church. For a better management of the intrusive intervention, a non-invasive investigation of the nave and the narthex was first carried out. Data resulted from the electrical resistivity tomography (ERT) was subsequently verified. The results of the archaeological research consisted in identifying three crypts and a cemetery in use before the present-day church, and in new data on the foundations of the church built in 1705.

Rezumat: Proiectul de restaurare a bisericii „Scaune” a prilejuit efectuarea unei cercetări arheologice limitate. Pentru o mai bună planificare a intervenției intruzive, a fost efectuată mai întâi o investigație non-invazivă a naosului și a pronaosului. Datele rezultate în urma realizării tomografiei rezistivității electrice au fost, ulterior, verificate. Rezultatele cercetării arheologice au constatat în identificarea a trei cripte, a unui cimitir anterior bisericii actuale și în strângerea de date referitoare la fundațiile bisericii construite la 1705.

In 2018, “Scaune” Church, as it is known in documents, became the subject of a restoration project aiming to resurrect the monument and give a new life to its interior paintings. The fact that some of the interventions affected the floor of the church by setting an underfloor heating facility, was considered a good opportunity for an archaeological investigation, the church itself never being studied before from this point of view.¹

The “Scaune” Church was build, according to the foundation inscription and the votive picture, in 1705 by Atanasi from Târnovo and his nephew, Stavro. According to the foundation inscription (Fig. 1), a wooden church was first built here, around the year 1611, church that appears in documents only after the year 1675.² This resonates with the general picture, being noticed that, at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries, many wooden churches were replaced by others, built using stone and brick.³

The merchants from Târnovo built a stone and brick church that survived the fire from February 27th, 1739, that affected Sava and Colțea monasteries, together with other three churches, 16 first-rate houses, 49 second-rate, 77 third-order, five church cells, 40 butcher’s stumps and nine shops.⁴

At the first half of the 17th century, Bucharest was a growing city that needed a more adequate internal organization. It was the time when districts were mention in documents under the name „mahala”,⁵ having in centre (not necessarily a topographic one) a church. And the “Scaune” Church was one of those churches that was the core of such a district.

Mentioned at the dawn of 18th century, in 1702,⁶ “Scaune” district was, at its beginning, a neighbourhood formed around a specific guild, that of the butchers.⁷ In this district, on the shores of former Bucureștioara river, there were houses, shops and, most of all, the butcher’s stumps, that gave the name of the neighbourhood.

¹ We express our gratitude, for their help and understanding that archaeology needs a time that wasn’t foreseen in the restoration project’s timeline, to Victoria Jipa, Mihai Bârsan and Jenică Dantis (parish priest).

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² Giurescu 1966, p. 89.

³ Rotman 1975, p. 87; Sinigalia 1987, p. 34.

⁴ Dapontes 1881, pp. 185-186: „Le mardi 27, à six heures, un incendie considérable éclata à Bucarest; il commença par les grandes maisons du monastère de Saint-Savvas, dans le fumier de l’écurie; le feu se propagea en ligne directe et ne se serait pas arrêté, vu la violence du vent, si, sortant de Bucarest, il ne se fût éteint, faute d’aliment. Le monastère de Colța et son église devinrent la proie des flammes, **ainsi que trois autres églises, seize maisons de premier ordre, quarante-neuf de second ordre, soixante-dix-sept de troisième ordre, cinq cellules d’églises, quarante étaux de boucher et neuf boutiques.** Le Prince avec les boyards, les Albanais et les séimènes du palais, ainsi que le pacha et ses gens se rendirent sur le lieu du sinistre, afin de prendre des mesures pour restaurer et remettre à neuf ce qui restait des trois églises incendiées. Construites en pierres, ces églises ne s’étaient pas écroulées sous l’action du feu.”

⁵ Sinigalia 1987, p. 32.

⁶ Sinigalia 1987, p. 34, quote 104.

⁷ “Scaune” means the butcher’s stump.