

publications of the project 17 respectively 18 investigated marble quarries from Romania are mentioned.<sup>8</sup> The two bibliographical lists (pp. 33-36 and pp. 106-107) are not unitary, neither in the used guidelines nor in their content. For the sake of the reader it would have been easier to have one list only. A most unfortunate mistake is the misspelling of the name of one of the pioneers in the field, Norman Herz, including in the list on p. 34.

The layout and printing quality of the present book are very good. This necessary analysis of the monuments of Dacia is salutary and had to face, as all first steps do, difficulties and challenges of various kinds. Despite the amended points and mentioned problems, this publication offers new insights on a category of important archaeological finds from the Roman provinces. It is hoped that future projects and investigations will learn from the experience of this project and aim and plan to integrate their work and results within a broader frame of interdisciplinary research, enabling discussion and exchange, while bearing in mind the responsibility towards monuments and the destructive character of sampling.

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#### Bibliographical abbreviations:

- Alexandrescu Vianu 2000 – M. Alexandrescu Vianu, *Histria IX. Les statues et les reliefs en pierre*, Bucarest–Paris, [2000].
- Alexandrescu Vianu 2008-2009 – M. Alexandrescu Vianu, *Ateliere de sculptură în Moesia Inferior. 2. Relațiile cu Bithynia*, SCIVA 59-60, 2008-2009, pp. 53-80.
- Benea et alii 1997 – M. Benea, H. W. Müller, B. Schwaighofer, *Die römischen Marmorsteinbrüche in Kärnten*, Carinthia II, 109, 1999, pp. 549-572.
- Müller et alii 1997 – H. W. Müller, B. Schwaighofer, M. Benea, I. Piso, A. Diaconescu, *Provenance of marble objects from the Roman province of Dacia*, JÖAI 66, 1997, pp. 432-454.
- Müller et alii 1999 – H. W. Müller, B. Schwaighofer, M. Benea, I. Piso, A. Diaconescu, *Marbles in the Roman province Dacia*, in: Schvoerer (ed.) 1999, pp. 131-140.
- Müller et alii 2001 – H. W. Müller, B. Schwaighofer, M. Benea, I. Piso, A. Diaconescu, *Greek marbles in the Roman province of Dacia*, in: Y. Bassiakos, E. Aloupi, Y. Facorellis (eds.), *Archaeometry Issues in Greek Prehistory and Antiquity*, Athens, 2001, pp. 199-211.
- Penția et alii 1999 – M. Penția, N. Herz, M. Șeclăman, *Marble provenance study of some Roman and Byzantine artifacts discovered in northern Dobruja – Romania*, in: Schvoerer (ed.) 1999, pp. 157-164.
- Penția et alii 2002a – M. Penția, R.H. Tykot, L. Nedelcu, A. Barnea, *Thracian horsemen: a provenance study of marble sculptures from Dobruja, Romania*, in: J.J.Herrmann, N. Herz, R. Newmann (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone. ASMOSLA 5*, London, 2002, pp. 256-262.
- Penția et alii 2002b – M. Penția, N. Herz, B. Turi, *Provenance determination of classical marbles: a statistical test based on 87Sr/86Sr, 18O/16O and 13C/12C isotopic ratios*, in: L. Lazzarini (ed.), *Interdisciplinary studies on ancient stone*, Padova, 2002, pp. 219-226.
- Schvoerer (ed.) 1999 – M. Schvoerer (ed.), *Archéomatériaux. Marbres et autres roches. Actes du IV<sup>ème</sup> conférence internationale ASMOSLA IV, France, Bordeaux-Talence, 9-13 octobre 1995*, Bordeaux, 1999.
- Nicolae Lascu, **BULEVARDELE BUCUREȘTENE PÂNĂ LA PRIMUL RĂZBOI MONDIAL**, Editura Simetria, București, 2011, 213 pages, ISBN: 978-973-1872-18-6

Boulevards are the most appropriate synecdoche for Bucharest's development as a modern metropolis: their history testifies not only to the first modern urban regulations, the organisation of modern traffic and the introduction of modern facilities, but also to the restructuring of the entire urban territory, the appearance of complex urban functions and policies, and the shaping of a coherent urban space, worthy of an European capital.

This is why a monograph such as Nicolae Lascu's 2011 book, devoted to the boulevards of Bucharest, can be regarded as a true history of the modern city for the studied period (i.e. the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century). Out of a rich, but heterogeneous collection of data, archive documents and bibliographical references, the book reconstitutes the complete and detailed narrative of planning and constructing Bucharest's boulevards.

As the author remarks in his foreword, modern arteries defined as boulevards successively appeared in several Romanian towns (Giurgiu, Brăila, Ploiești, Constanța, Craiova, Câmpulung Muscel etc.), but the capital is the only locality in Romania where the boulevards were conceived/planned and [partially] built as a network, and "consequently have generated a

<sup>8</sup> Müller et alii 1997, p. 432; Müller et alii 2001, p. 199.

substantial, complex process of territorial urbanization, thus determining the configuring of the modern city on an extended scale” (p. 9).

The book begins by tracing back the idea of equipping the capital with new thoroughfares (Chapter I - “The Premises”), which first appears in the final section of the Organic Regulation (1831) as a possibility of creating new circulation axes incised in low density urban zones. This type of intervention was seen as a response to a triple requirement that would transform Bucharest into a modern European city: traffic, public hygiene and aesthetic (p. 12). An interesting observation is that from the very beginning the concern for modernising the circulation network has also included the regularisation of the Dâmbovița river line, so that in 1860 a commission of the Municipal Council considers the laying out of two complementary types of arteries, the boulevard and the embankment, both regarded as functional circulations and public spaces with a major aesthetic impact.

The second chapter (“The Projects”) describes the gradual crystallisation of an urban vision for the capital, starting from the problems the city was confronted with and focusing on the idea, also gradually contoured, of a new functional road network. The detailed presentation of each boulevard project and of the special building regulations provided particularly for this type of interventions show the role that the intended arteries played in the modernisation of urban thinking. Since the principles and norms applied for the first time for the laying out of Bucharest’s boulevards, along with the concern for shaping public space, were subsequently generalised to the entire city, the author demonstrates that the boulevards served as an experimenting ground for the new development perspective of the urban structure.

After surveying the evolution of the urban thinking that defined the new arteries, the book follows the dynamics of their planning and implementation as a fundamental element of the process of urban renewal. Therefore, the third chapter (“The Boulevards and the Modern City”) successively analyses the major impact of the boulevards on the main components of the modernised metropolis: administrative mechanism, traffic circulation, functional urban structure, public space.

The sub-chapter dedicated to the functionality of the urban territory occasions the examining of the most important interventions that have transformed large urban areas (the Cișmigiu Garden, the Dâmbovița Embankment, the Cotroceni district), as well as a review of the main projects for significant public edifices that were planned, but eventually not built, along the new arteries (a Parliament House, a Central Station, a City Hall). The question of public space is explored in an aesthetic key, for, as the author remarks, “whether circulation was the first of the reasons that have generated the boulevards of

Bucharest, the second important function, consistently present among the issues raised in the communal Council, was that of embellishing the city” (p. 109). Thus, from the very beginning, the boulevards stood for modern urban spaces that became models for the general transformation of Bucharest’s public space. Moreover, the new arteries, with their rectilinear geometry, and the regularly-shaped squares that rhythm their long courses introduced for the first time rigorous ordinating principles in the irregular and sinuous medieval fabric. The elaborate analysis of public space planning, sustained by numerous illustrations of projects so far never published, also emphasises the role of vegetation as an essential element in shaping and defining the space of the new boulevards and squares, as well as in unifying the urban setting.

The fourth chapter (“The Reality of the Boulevards”) treats the multiple aspects of the boulevards’ building up and coming into use: their gradual construction until the First World War, the categories of works and fixtures necessary for their completion (paved roadways and sidewalks, electric tramways, green spaces - from alignment plantations to flower beds, street lighting - from gas to electricity, street furniture and statuary), as well as the shaping of public space by means of coherent street fronts. Again the author has the occasion to demonstrate that the boulevards constituted an experimentation ground, this time for (in terms of) new building methods, technologies or materials later on extended to every municipal work, and also for new building types (the villa and the rental apartment building) or various stylistic expressions (academic and picturesque eclecticism, Neo-Romanian style etc.). The author actually advances the hypothesis that the first examples of villas might have appeared for the first time in Bucharest on Lascăr Catargiu Boulevard, whereas the rental building, already experimented with in the traditional commercial part of the city, definitely takes root once it appears on the central boulevards.

The sociological aspects of the boulevards’ integration in the city life are dealt with in a separate subchapter (“The Assimilation”) that analyses the new organization of the plots adjacent to the main arteries, the functional characteristics of the new arteries, and their condition of favoured venues for official ceremonies - a more peculiar aspect, but actually relevant for their representative character. After observing that it is a new social stratum, the intellectuals or generally the middle-class, that claims the boulevard as a public space meant to express its status, the author rightly concludes that, “as a whole, the boulevards represent the society of Bucharest in the midst of a new stratification, in which, as everywhere, the bourgeoisie had the decisive role”.

A necessary epilogue of this chapter refers to the interwar period, when, despite the explainable differences in urbanistic vision, scale and architectural language

as compared to the previous decades, the inherited network of the boulevards continued being completed and articulated. Concomitantly, the new arteries got integrated into a more unitary legislative structure, and therefore their singular, particular character in the context of the cityscape was attenuated.

The example of the Haussmannian interventions in Paris is tackled in the fifth and last chapter (“The Boulevards and the Parisian Influence”), and not in the conventional manner, at the beginning of the book, along with the “Premises” and the description of the general historical context. While bringing new arguments in favour of the already recognised and analysed Haussmannian impact on Bucharest, the author, based on thorough research, provides a more nuanced approach of the phenomenon.

Thus, he highlights the difficulty of establishing any direct influence and also identifies a series of substantial differences between the French and the Romanian experiences, which reflect the differences in context. Firstly, in Paris the boulevards are radical *percées* through the historic fabric that modify its geometry, whereas in Bucharest they do not cross and restructure the historic centre, being generally drawn on sparsely built zones or vacant lands, and thereby becoming the modernising axes of the entire urban territory. Secondly, the crossing of the east-west and north-south axes that became the modern centre of Bucharest (Piața Universității) had a strictly pragmatic significance, and not the symbolic meaning of the *Grande Croisée* in Paris, located precisely at the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus* of the ancient Lutetia. And thirdly, the architectural setting of Bucharest’s boulevards lacks the inflexible reglementation and rigorous uniformity of the Haussmannian fronts, presenting instead a more diversified and particularised, yet coherent, image and displaying a varied typological, morphological and functional palette.

This enhanced, nuanced perspective on the Haussmannian influence represents one of the book’s major contributions to the knowledge and evaluation of the Bucharest boulevards both as specific phenomena and as part of a European-wide process of modern urban transformations.

Actually, the entire book is centred on the idea that the boulevards represented a motor force of Bucharest’s modernisation and became a defining factor for the modern identity of the city, a new expression of its *genius loci*.

Based on the critical examination of multiple sources and the systematic processing of an impressive amount of information, the book’s investigation results in the first complete monograph dedicated exclusively to the Bucharest boulevards of the pre-war period – a fundamental text for the study of the modern urban development of the Romanian capital.

Written in an elegant and fluent style, richly illustrated with archive projects, period photographs and explicative schemes, and supported by excellent graphic conditions, Nicolae Lascu’s book is not only a valuable work instrument for specialists, but doubles also as interesting reading for a larger public concerned with the modern history of Romania and its capital city.

In addition to the novelty of the documents presented in the text and its annexes, one of the great merits of the book is the achieving of a refined, innovative interpretation and synthesis of data, materials and observations on the subject. The result is a comprehensive treatise that undoubtedly constitutes a significant, exemplary contribution to Romanian architectural and urbanistic research.

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