

RECENZII / BOOK REVIEWS

Mariana-Cristina Popescu, **HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN POTTERY IN PRE-ROMAN DACIA (2ND CENTURY BC – 1ST CENTURY AD)**, Ed. “Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie”, București, 2014, 280 pages, 70 plates, 12 maps, 20 charts, 3 tables, ISBN 978-973-88465-7-9

Mariana-Cristina Popescu's monograph fills a lacuna that had been perpetuated for a long time in the research of the Dacian era. Four decades ago, Ioan Glodariu's studies outlined too briefly the frame of an extremely complex and various issue, namely that of the Hellenic and Roman imports in Dacia between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD.¹ In the meanwhile, significant studies have been published in numismatics,² in archaeology however there were fewer studies on this subject, except those that focus on some types of metal objects.³ Imported ceramics had been left aside, as the Cinderella of the matter. The diversity and the quantity, not at all negligible, of Greek and Roman ceramics, its chronological and symbolic expression which only appears to be less important than that of coins, vessels and fibulae, determines many researchers to drift away from this piece of ground that has so far remained unexplored, almost virgin. Opening this subject requires accuracy in documentation, getting to know the techniques and the morphology of meridional ceramics as well as getting acquainted with a vast professional literature which is often hard to find even in the best supplied libraries in the country. But above all, approaching such a subject requires assiduity and fierce courage – that courage that, despite all odds remains the only guide towards one's own professional completion. In this regard, Mariana-Cristina Popescu's monograph represents an example worthy to be followed by younger people as well as an example for those coryphaei who forget that the true mission of apprentices is to surpass their teachers.

The monograph is the fruit of a decade of labour. It started as a doctoral dissertation at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj (2004, major professor Ioan Glodariu) and continued as a research theme in many museums and libraries all over the country as well as in Athens and Blegen. The study itself represents a classification and a repertoire of the ceramics species imported into Dacia, like for example the “West Slope” and “Hadra” ceramic types, mould-made (“Megarian”) bowls or *terra sigillata*

of different origins etc. The transport amphorae however are missing! For this reason, the title should have been a notice to readers, making them aware of the narrow theme of the study: this is not “ceramics”, generally speaking, but *Late Hellenistic/republican and early imperial banquet pottery imported in pre-Roman Dacia!* Despite this lacuna, the study does *not lose its value*. The use of imported luxury ceramics illustrates one of the significant components of the acculturation phenomenon to the models of the Hellenistic and Roman civilization undergone by the Late Iron Age communities from South-Eastern Dacia. The informational foundation of the study gathers 644 ceramic pieces that the author personally documented. Other 50 fragments were taken from literature but not found in museums. These too should have been numbered (!) in the catalogue. The material in the repertoire was discovered in 24 sites in Muntenia, southern Transylvania and southern Moldavia and was produced in several centres in the circum-Pontic region, in Italy, Greece and Anatolia (p. 24, map 1).

On the other hand, the ordering the catalogue (pp. 97-189) according to the typology is a less inspired decision. A better choice would have been the listing of discoveries alphabetically, and organizing data into categories like archaeological sites and features. The major professor and/or the editor should have insisted more on this matter. The lacuna in this “typological catalogue” is filled by a list of sites (“Appendix. Sources of the material”, pp. 190-207). Nevertheless the two “catalogues” (of imported pottery and of sites) should have been put together in a synthesized manner. This fault must not be imputed to the author alone; it should be understood in the context of the general lack of interest for the methodology of archaeological documentation manifested in the academic environment not only in Romania.⁴

The conclusions that should be remembered from the investigation presented above focus on several aspects crucial for understanding the cultural phenomena in pre-Roman Dacia. The import of Hellenistic-Roman ceramics illustrates a phenomenon that took place mainly outside the Carpathian space; the few discoveries within the Carpathian Basin are grouped in southern Transylvania. Of the listed sites the ones in Bordușani, Brad, Poiana and Răcățău have the supremacy in that which regards quantity (p. 26, chart 2; p. 94, map 12). From the imported categories, the Pontic *sigillata* prevail (53%), followed by the West Slope ceramics (13%); the other ceramics categories are found relatively rarely and

¹ Glodariu 1976.

² Chițescu 1981.

³ Beldiman 1988; Beldiman 1989; Rustoiu 1995; Rustoiu 2001 *et alii*.

⁴ *E.g.* Teleaga 2008.

vaguely represented (between 1 and 4 %, p. 91, Chart 3). In that which regards the functional aspect, most of the imported luxury vessel consists in drinking containers (p. 91, Chart 4) or, to be precise, pottery types destined for *Symposia*. The flow of the luxury ceramics points to a preferential cultural relationship between the local communities outside the Carpathians and the Greek centres of manufacture from the circum-Pontic regions. The imports of western ceramics appear more timidly, in the 1st century AD. The study presents once more the strange situation according to which, in many pre-Roman sites (excepting those on the Siret river: Poiana, Răcățâu, Brad), chronological indices specific to the 3-4 decades before Trajan's conquest are lacking.⁵

The study could have been completed by putting the studied objects in the general context of the Hellenistic and Roman imports in Dacia between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. The author could have also emphasized the difference between the penetration routes of the luxury ceramic crossing Moesia Inferior and those of the Roman coins or Italic bronze vessels imported from the west (through the Illyrian regions).⁶ It is highly probable that luxury ceramics and the imported coins were meant for distinct social categories and the way they are spread reflects cultural processes that took place almost at the same time although independently. However, such a thorough debate would have gone beyond the frame purposed in the monograph.

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Bibliographical abbreviations:

- Babeș 1975 – M. Babeș, *Problèmes de la chronologie de la culture geto-dace à la lumière des fouilles de Cîrlomănești*, Dacia 19, 1975, pp. 125-139.
- Beldiman 1988 – C. Beldiman, *Cu privire la difuziunea produselor de bronz italice în Dacia preromană (descoperirea de la Țigănești, jud. Teleorman)*, Thraco-Dacica 9, 1-2, 1988, pp. 75-82.
- Beldiman 1989 – C. Beldiman, *Plăcuțe de cuirasă (lorica squamata) din Dacia Preromană*, Carpica, 20, 1989, pp. 125-136.
- Bogdan Cătănicu 1975 – I. Bogdan Cătănicu, *Tezaurul monetar de la Poiana (jud. Teleorman). Unele aspecte ale circulației tetradrahmelor Macedoniei Prima și ale orașului Thasos în lumea traco-dacică*, Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică 6, 1975, pp. 177-188.
- Chițescu 1981 – M. Chițescu, *Numismatic Aspects of the History of the Dacian State: the Roman Republican Coinage*

in Dacia and Geto-Dacian Coins of Roman Type, British Archaeological Report, Suppl. Ser. 112, 1981.

- Conovici 1986 – N. Conovici, *Aspecte ale circulației drahmelor din Dyrrhachium și Apollonia în Peninsula Balcanică și în Dacia*, Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române 77-79, 1986, pp. 69-88.
- Glodariu 1976 – I. Glodariu, *Dacian Trade with the Hellenistic and Roman World*, British Archaeological Report, Suppl. Ser. 8, 1976.
- Horedt 1973 – K. Horedt, *Die dakische Sichelbefunde*, Dacia 17, 1973, pp. 122-165.
- Popović 1987 – P. Popović, *Le monnayage des Scordisques*, Novi Sad, 1987.
- Preda 1998 – C. Preda, *Istoria monedei în Dacia Preromană*, București, 1998.
- Rustoiu 1995 – A. Rustoiu, *Le premier horizon de fibules romaines en Dacie préromaine*, Thraco-Dacica 16, 1-2, 1995, pp. 211-219.
- Rustoiu 2001 – A. Rustoiu, *Strucuratori romane din perioada republicană târzie descoperite în cetatea dacică de la Divici (jud. Caraș-Severin)*, in: G. Florea, L. Suci, (eds.), *Studii de Istorie Antică. Omagiu profesorului Ioan Glodariu*, Cluj-Napoca 2001, pp. 199-206.
- Teleaga 2008 – E. Teleaga, *Grichische Importe in den Nekropolen an der Unteren Donau, 6. Jh. – Anfang des 3. Jhs. v. Chr.*, Marburger Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Band 23, Rahden 2008.

H. W. Müller, I. Piso, B. Schwaighofer, M. Benea, DER MARMOR IM RÖMISCHEN DAKIEN, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, 114 pages, ISBN 978-606-543-282-6

The Dacian provinces are among the most interesting, puzzling and challenging for the scholars of the Roman period. One of the rarely asked questions concerns the provenance of the used lithic material. The volume to be presented here has been published three years ago, declared to be (p. 7-8) the end result of the long-term interdisciplinary project dedicated to the marble monuments of Dacia: *Petrographische und geochemische Untersuchungen der Marmorvorkommen in der römischen Provinz Dakien in Hinblick auf die Bedeutung in der Archäologie*, coordinated by Harald W. Müller and Ioan Piso, leading an international team, with financial support from Austrian and Romanian research funds.

In the introduction (pp. 9-16), after a short presentation of the history of the province (I. Piso), the geologists and mineralogists, co-authors of the volume, discuss the problem of marble quarries in Antiquity followed by the presentation of the status of interdisciplinary studies on marble. As known from several conferences and published contributions, selected marble monuments in Romanian collections, mostly found in the area between the Danube and the Black Sea,

⁵ Babeș 1975, pp. 136-138; Horedt 1973, pp. 151-152; cf. Preda 1998, pp. 319-323.

⁶ Popović 1987, pp. 105-113; Conovici 1986, pp. 71-78, fig. 1-3; Bogdan Cătănicu 1975 *et alii*.

have been the object of archaeometric investigations.¹ However those studies are not mentioned on p. 16, when dealing with the state of the research on this subject in Romania.

The second part (pp. 17-19), also signed by H. W. Müller, B. Schwaighofer and M. Benea describes the methodological approach of the task, from fieldwork through macroscopic evaluation to laboratory analyses.

The provenance of marble on the territory of the former Dacian provinces is discussed in the third part of the volume (pp. 19-22) by the same three authors, while the fourth part (pp. 23-33) is dedicated to the local marble quarries in the area of Bucova, considered to be the only local marble source used during Roman times. Details on the documented traces of antique quarrying are not given.

These four main parts are followed by a bibliographical list (pp. 33-36) and a synthetic presentation of the results of the stable isotope analysis and end determination in form of three tables (Tables 8 to 10, pp. 38-40). After the enumeration of the collections in which the monuments are kept and the number of sampled items, Table 7 lists the used abbreviations for the provenance of the monuments and the number of objects from each site. Table 8 (pp. 38-39) presents the 69 monuments made of Bucova marble with their determined stable isotopes values, while Table 9 (pp. 39-40) introduces a further 37 samples for which the regions of provenance of imported marble were established within the project. Sixteen monuments made of marble of undetermined provenance are presented in Table 10 (p. 40). It is stated only in previous publications of the project² and at points in the conclusion of this book (pp. 110-114) that those undetermined sources could also be on the territory of Roman Dacia. This marks the separation, both within the volume and the investigation, between the technical and the archaeological/epigraphical part of the project.

The catalogue of the 119 investigated monuments is signed by I. Piso (pp. 41-106). The catalogue entries are using the abbreviations mentioned in Table 7 (p. 37) for their provenance, and are alphabetically organised accordingly. Each entry comprises a short description of the monument, its dimensions, the determined kind of marble, information on the context of discovery - when available -, the location of the monument, bibliography, and a description with a commentary, in some cases the text of the inscription, the dating (sometimes also with a commentary). A convention for giving dimensions (pointing out what is measured and in which order those measurements are given) within the records is missing, which causes confusion in some cases.

Due to the pioneering character of the project and its aims, the reader would expect more technical information, such as the documentation and registration protocol for the sampling, which should be a part of such a major publication, as well as mentioning the sampling place within the monument (*e.g.* for inscriptions SA 19 or PO3, preserved in fragments, the sampling spot is not identified). The explanation for the delay of the final publication (p. 8) and the fact that the basic documentation of the monuments was missing, makes it probable that the sampling campaign and the archaeological study were conducted independently and without following a previously established procedure.

Further significant information that is missing from the publication is the minimal description of the samples and the grain size, although this is a standard procedure within specialised studies and their publications.³ This is also the case with the previous reports of the project, except the one⁴ giving technical data on nine of the other investigated quarries within Romania besides Bucova. This particular article is surprisingly not even mentioned in the bibliography of the present book! However one lapidary note in the article from 2001, stating that a few monuments investigated within the project might be made of marble that came "from some local quarry in the north-west of Dacia"⁵ finds no mention and no conclusion in this final publication and leaves open to discussion the use of local marble from other quarries besides Bucova. It is an argument for the continuation of research on this subject and for the imperious necessity of getting the full information from the available samples.

From p. 17 and previous publications⁶ one learns that significant drilling core samples (20-40 mm long and with a diameter of 9 mm!) for thin sections have been taken, *i.e.* the ideal case when investigating the provenance of marble. There is no comment and no illustration of these in this book, although this was expected of the final publication of the project. Also to be pointed out is a dramatic situation: for some of the monuments there is no future possible sampling for thin sections. Therefore it is important to know the whereabouts of the samples and their technical details that could be re-evaluated in the extended existing comparative database, expected to get wider as the research proceeds. For the time being the entire information is unusable for comparative studies, due to the fact that, besides the stable isotopes values, both grain size and texture description are necessary when aiming to determine the marble's provenance. Due to the importance of these missing details for research and for

¹ Alexandrescu Vianu 2000; Alexandrescu Vianu 2008-2009; Penția *et alii* 1999.

² Müller *et alii* 2001, p. 201.

³ *E.g.* Penția *et alii* 2002b; Cramer 2004; Lazzarini 2004.

⁴ Müller *et alii* 1999, pp. 133-134.

⁵ Müller *et alii* 2001, p. 201.

⁶ Especially Müller *et alii* 2001, p. 200.

single museums and collections, it is to be hoped that they are going to be provided in a future publication, even if as an addendum to this book.

The problem is already obvious when trying to fill the gaps, for a new system of identification (for samples and monuments) seems to have been used along the different phases of the project. Even the conventions for naming the sites have been changed: AQ (for Aquae) from the articles from 1997, 1999 and 2001 became CR (for Cioroiu Nou) in the present publication. The discrepancies between the previous publications and this are signalled on p. 8. But for the registration of samples the changed numbering can be fatal. The reorganisation of the catalogue is possible without changing the IDs of the samples. However it is not clear whether the new numbers, changed in the catalogue and in the tables, have been modified all the way back to the samples, nor if the samples are still available and, if so, where.

The determination of the source of the marble as stated in tables 8-10 needs clarification, for, within the given provenance (Proconessos / Marmara, Thasos, Paros, Naxos, Afyon), there is quite a lot of additional information available enabling more precise determination. After beautifully presenting the methodology to be used and the state of the research on an international level (pp. 15-19) it is not stated which database has been used for the determinations within the project. The literature used for the Mediterranean marble sites is mentioned in the 2001 publication. The long term project might have benefited from the progress of the research (for instance within the research and publications of the ASMOSIA - Association for the Study of Marble and other Stones in Antiquity; see also p. 7 in this book) but the reader has no information on this, except for the mention on p. 8, which states that the analyses were finalised in 1996. If there was no additional investigation of the results after 1996, according to this book, the provenance is to be taken as granted and cannot be re-evaluated without new sampling, which would contribute to further damaging the monuments.

The criteria for the selection of the monuments by the epigraphist (I. Piso) and by the archaeologist (Al. Diaconescu) remain unclear. There seems to have been a selection considering the different kinds of available types of monuments and shapes (p. 109: "9 architectural elements, 32 altars, statue bases, stelai and slabs bearing honorary, funerary or building inscriptions, 17 votive reliefs, 61 statues of different dimensions"). But there is no statement regarding the selection within a site or whether the type of settlement was taken into consideration (fortress, town, village, necropolis etc.) or the location of the 25 sites within the province. On p. 8 one learns about the regrettable dysfunction within the project team and the explanation for the unbalanced archaeological

commentary. The documentation of the monuments, within the catalogue segment, intended to be quite detailed, is limited to the monuments with inscriptions while the other (architectural elements, sculpture) are either incomplete (*e.g.* AP1; AP2; RA3) or erroneous (there is no difference made between basis and plinth! – *e.g.* AP14 and AP 18). For the Mithras relief from Slăveni (SV1) the context is stated as unknown despite the well-documented provenance and the additional monuments (also of marble) found on the same spot. The situation is the same with relief SA 35: the main publication of the discovery and the other marble finds are not mentioned, although after old excavations from the 19th century both objects have been accordingly published. The most puzzling is AP16: "Mercurius statue, not investigated" (the reader can assume based on the ID only that it is a statue from Apulum).

The reader has to wonder about the existence of some parts of the text. On one hand, in a publication on the marble in Dacia the historical introduction could have been resumed to a chronological table. The monuments with prior publications (like epigraphic studies or corpora) could have been reduced to their archaeological and technical documentation. The full quote of the inscriptions and the details on the size of the letters etc. are misplaced in the economy of the intended study on marble. On the other hand, the researches of B. Cserni in Apulum should have been mentioned in order to understand catalogue entries such as AP 17 and AP 19.

The conclusion (pp. 109 sqq.) misses considerations on the results of the investigation, differentiating the information on architectural elements, blocks bearing inscriptions, reliefs, free standing sculptures, eventually on the shapes and sizes of monuments, as well as a comparative approach in relation to other Roman provinces. This would have been suitable especially when working with an international team with previous experience on the field. Also, since among the sampled monuments those from Apulum and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa form the majority, and due to the long research history of both sites, more comments on the used lithic material (including local and imported marble) would have been desirable.⁷

The editing of the volume is unfortunately quite faulty and there are several cases of discordance between the used language (German) and the used characters or numbers (one finds both "himation" and "Himation"; "II. Jh." and "III. Jh." instead of "2. Jh." etc.). Inconsistencies in the used literature and in the editing are surprising to say the least. Such an example is the stated number of investigated monuments: on p. 7-115 samples from 15 quarries, 119 monuments from 19 museums; on p. 16 and p. 109-115 samples from 11 quarries. In the previous

⁷ See for instance Benea *et alii* 1997.

publications of the project 17 respectively 18 investigated marble quarries from Romania are mentioned.⁸ 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 Gesteine des Forums von Sarmizegetusa*, AMN 34/1, 1997, pp. 837-865.
- Cramer 2004 – T. Cramer, *Multivariate Herkunftsanalyse von Marmor auf petrographischer und geochemischer Basis*, Doctoral Thesis, Technical University Berlin, Berlin, 2004.
- Lazzarini 2004 – L. Lazzarini, *Archaeometric aspects of white and coloured marbles used in antiquity: the state of the art*, Periodico di Mineralogia, 73, 2004, pp. 113-125.
- Müller, Schwaighofer 1999 – 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 Dobruđa – 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 Dobruđa, 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^{ème} 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

⁸ 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 regulation 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.

Mihaela Criticos