

# BUILDING PROJECTS IN BUCHAREST AT THE TURN OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BETWEEN DELAY AND ABANDONMENT\*

Ioana - Maria Petrescu, Constantin Bogdan Stanciu\*\*

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**Abstract:** During the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several large-scale architecture projects were launched in Bucharest, dealing with outstanding public edifices. Unfortunately, the insufficient financial resources repeatedly forced the mayorship and the Government to postpone, or even abandon for good, the accomplishment of a number of these works, although in some cases all the necessary demarches had been already carried out. Additionally, for lack of a coherent strategy on the capital city development, several urban interventions, deemed as vital in terms of city modernization, were irrevocably given up.

**Rezumat:** În ultima decadă a secolului al XIX-lea, în București au fost începute mai multe proiecte de anvergură pentru realizarea unor edificii publice importante. Din păcate, lipsa mijloacelor financiare a constrâns de multe ori Primăria și autoritățile să amâne, sau chiar să renunțe definitiv, la finalizarea unora dintre aceste construcții, chiar și în cazul în care demersurile necesare fuseseră deja încheiate. În absența unei strategii bine definite privitoare la evoluția orașului, mai multe intervenții necesare modernizării capitalei și îndeosebi bunei funcționări a acesteia, au fost complet abandonate.

In early 19<sup>th</sup> century, once Romania perceived the influence of the western cultural movements, Bucharest gradually underwent a change in its look from an oriental settlement toward a European city, albeit it reached a modern appearance not before the first urban scale operations were carried out. During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building works conducted in the capital city significantly modified the urban shape, while the reconfiguration of the street network and, implicitly, that of the plot pattern brought about changes in the land division and renewal of the building stock. Since then, Bucharest's development has been coordinated by specific regulations, with the new legislation on building and urbanism exerting a powerful influence in terms of modernization.

The process of the urban metamorphosis, which started since the very first years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gathered momentum in the aftermath of the Union of the Principalities,<sup>1</sup> once the public institutions of the modern Romanian State have been set up. There was an undoubted need of appropriate buildings for all the bodies settled in the days of Cuza<sup>2</sup> and consolidated after the coming of Carol I,<sup>3</sup> in such fields as administration, legislation, justice as well as education and culture. The great public edifices erected in this respect have contributed to the reshaping of the city's architectural profile.

Nevertheless, until the Romanian War of Independence (1877), which brought the autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, the Government lacked the necessary financial resources to provide public institutions with their own new premises. Following the proclamation of the kingdom,<sup>4</sup> the economy went on an upward path<sup>5</sup> and public budgets continuously expanded, allowing the Government to lend substantial amounts of money<sup>6</sup> with an aim to build railways, modernize roads and erect public edifices. Against the background of the significant progress recorded after 1881, Romania could be deemed as a prosperous state.

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\*\* "Spiru Haret" University, București.

<sup>1</sup> The Union of the Principalities took place on January 24, 1859 and consisted of the unification of the old states Moldavia and Wallachia.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The first ruler of the United Principalities between 1859 and 1866.

<sup>3</sup> Carol I, born Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. He was reigning prince and then King of Romania from 1866 to 1914.

<sup>4</sup> Romania was proclaimed kingdom on May 10, 1881.

<sup>5</sup> Aslan 1905, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup> Aslan 1905, p. 182. From 1881 to 1887, the loans extended to various ministries amounted to lei 471,574,203.73.

The favourable context allowed launching several large-scale projects, albeit many of them were too ambitious for the country's economic strength. Unfortunately, the financial power of the young state has been often overestimated, so that some vital urban interventions were postponed and a number of works, although agreed following important international competitions, were even definitely abandoned.<sup>7</sup>

### The Palaces of the Legislative Power. The Aftermath of the International Competitions

The most significant edifices of the capital city – including the palaces of the legislative bodies – provided the topic for prodigious competitions. In the Principalities, architecture contests have been organized since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and their number grew towards the end of it. The first contest hosted by Bucharest seemed to be that regarding the project for a National Theatre. The idea of setting up such an institution was probably expressed for the first time within the programme of the Literary Society founded in 1827.<sup>8</sup> However, the final decision on building the National Theatre has been taken no earlier than 1843 during the reign of Gheorghe Bibescu,<sup>9</sup> who nominated a commission to find an appropriate site and appoint one of the renowned European architects.<sup>10</sup> Under these circumstances, Johann Schlatter went to the Academy of Arts in München in order to approach an architect for a project of a theatre similar to that in Dresden.<sup>11</sup> In 1845 Prince Bibescu was submitted several versions drawn up by Xavier Villacross, Balzano and Iacob Melik. It seems that the most appreciated one was that of Villacross. Nevertheless, the final option was for Viennese architect Heft whose project was drawn up in 1846.<sup>12</sup>

But the first public competition of architecture in the real sense of the word was that on the building of the Palace of Justice. Apparently, this contest was scheduled through a decree enacted by the Prince in 1859, according to which an edifice for the judicial authority would be built in Constantin Vodă square.<sup>13</sup> The winner was the project drawn up by Alexandru Orăscu. Unfortunately, it was not achieved for financial reasons.<sup>14</sup> Discussions on this issue resumed in 1878, when the authorities decided to organize a new international competition. However, the idea was given up for unknown reasons, after the conclusion of the preparatory

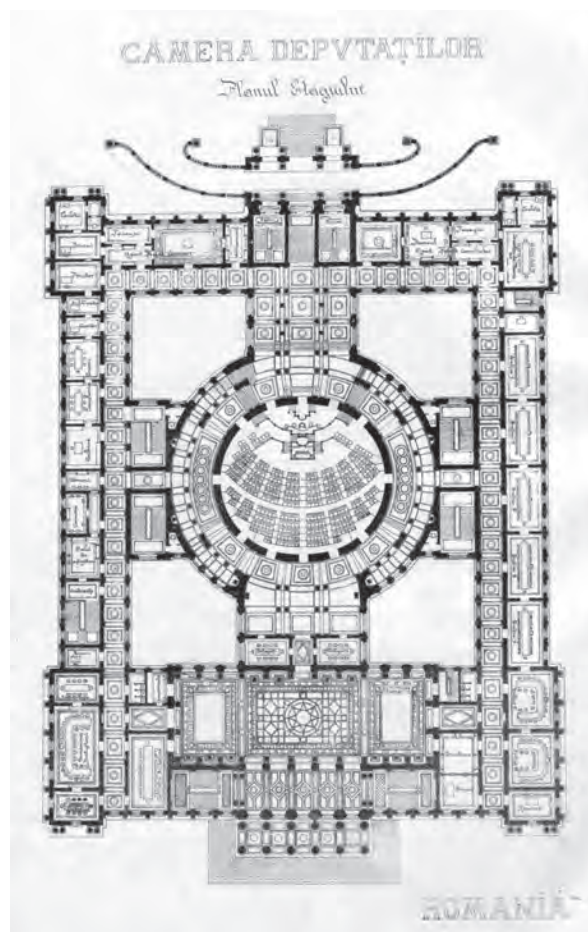


Fig. 1. D. Maimarolu. Project for the Chamber of Deputies Palace, 1890. Floor plan.

<sup>7</sup> Among the architectural projects which were the subject of international contests but were subsequently given up, mention should be made of the Central Railway Station and the Senate.

<sup>8</sup> Potra 1990, pp. 523, 525.

<sup>9</sup> Gheorghe Bibescu. Prince of Wallachia between 1843 and 1848.

<sup>10</sup> Potra 1990, p. 529. The commission's members were Barbu Știrbei, Iancu Filipescu, Petrache Poenaru and Vladimir Blaremburg. At first, the theatre was planned to be constructed in the centre of the square, where a life-sized statue featuring Pavel Kisselef was also projected. This square was intended to carry the name of the said Russian general.

<sup>11</sup> Socolescu 2004, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Mărgineanu Cârstoiu *et alii* 2005, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> The costs were scheduled to be born by the Government along with the Prefecture of the county of Ilfov.

<sup>14</sup> It seems that the prefecture could not keep its commitment.

works,<sup>15</sup> and this project was directly consigned to architect Filip Montoureaanu. Ion Socolescu – who, 15 years later, would declaim against the project drawn up by architects Blanc and Marcel on the Central Railway Station – started a protest campaign against Montoureaanu and his project, so that the work was eventually abandoned.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the authorities approached an architect who had already demonstrated his competence in solving such a program. His name was Albert Ballu, known for his project on the Palace of Justice in Charleroi.<sup>17</sup>

The idea of building headquarters for the authorities had been formulated back to the days of Cuza, but the political and economic context were not appropriate for the Government to achieve this plan but after the War of Independence. The proposal regarding an international contest on a project for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate was first discussed in 1873.<sup>18</sup> Although the articles published in the *Annals of Architecture* suggest it took place in 1879, we assume this competition occurred four years later. Our opinion is confirmed by the fact that the site intended for the Parliament, situated on Elisabeta Avenue<sup>19</sup> across Cișmigiu Gardens, has been bought in 1883. That year the Government also voted a lei 5 million loan for the construction, and the programmes for both Chambers were drawn up (these two institutions were scheduled to share the same building).<sup>20</sup> The submitting deadline for the participant projects was apparently set for November 15, 1883.<sup>21</sup> The jury – made up of architects coming from France, Austria, Italy, as well as two Romanian architects and an engineer, Romanian too<sup>22</sup> – didn't award any first prize. The best competitor was Alexandru Săvulescu.<sup>23</sup> The result of this contest was abandoned for unknown reasons and the issue of Parliament premises was resumed no earlier than the last decade of the same century.

In 1890 the second contest for the Parliament was announced, with an international participation, too. This time, the Government decided the two Chambers be located in different premises – the Palace of the Chamber of Deputies nearby Cișmigiu Gardens, while that of the Senate in Constantin Vodă Square.<sup>24</sup> The competition ended in November and gathered as many as 53 pre-projects, of which 37 for the Chamber of Deputies and 16 for the Senate. At the section on the Chamber of Deputies, Dimitrie Maimarolu was awarded the first prize (Fig. 1), Giulio Magni won the second prize, while Ion Mincu and Constantin Băicoianu, the third one. As regards the section on the Senate, Alexandre Marcel ranked first (Fig. 2), followed by Albert Ballu and Ion Socolescu.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Palace of Justice 1890, p. 112. To prepare the contest, a commission of magistrates was nominated to deal with the programme and all needed details.

<sup>16</sup> Socolescu 2004, p. 80. Ion Socolescu shows that he led a press campaign against the project and also tackled this issue within a conference organized at the Athenaeum. To this conference, King Carol I sent the Court marshal. See also Noica 2008a, p. 65. Montoureaanu's project seemed to be also criticized by the technical commission.

<sup>17</sup> Socolescu 2004, pp. 80, 129. Albert Ballu, who had previously won the contest on the Palace of Justice in Charleroi, was seemingly recommended by Lecomte du Nouÿ. See also Fezi 2010, p. 24. For the projects on the palaces of Justice in Charleroi and Bucharest, Albert Ballu was awarded twice the Duc prize. Ballu's plans were probably finalized before 1886, but the building works – conducted by Ion Mincu – started no earlier than autumn 1890.

<sup>18</sup> AnArch 1, 1891, II, p. 1 (*The construction of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate palaces*). The idea seemed to be expressed during the meetings of the Chamber of Deputies, in the parliamentary session 1873-1874. See also Noica 2008b, pp. 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> This avenue is a part of the axis crossing Bucharest from east to west. From 1878 to 1890 it was named the Independence Avenue, while its name changed into Elisabeta Avenue no earlier than 1890.

<sup>20</sup> AnArch 5, 1890, I, p. 113 (*The House of Parliament*).

<sup>21</sup> The date is referred to in a document presumably issued in the year when the above-mentioned loan was approved. This document includes the programme and requirements of the contest for the Parliament. See B.N.R. – Brătianu, folder 712, leaves 143-148 (*Topic for the design of a palace of the Romanian Parliament*).

<sup>22</sup> B.N.R. – Brătianu, folder 712, leaf 148: mention is made that the architects members of the jury were not allowed to take part in the competition.

<sup>23</sup> Socolescu 2004, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> According to a decision taken by the plenum commission of the two Chambers, the final building projects would be worked out by the best ranked Romanian architects in each section. This decision stood for a significant stimulus for the domestic participants. See the AnArch 12, 1890, I, p. 214 (*International contest for the construction of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate palaces*).

<sup>25</sup> AnArch 12, 1890, I, p. 213 (*International contest for the construction of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate palaces*). Out of the selected works, Romanian architects were the authors of five projects for the Chamber of Deputies and of two projects for the Senate.



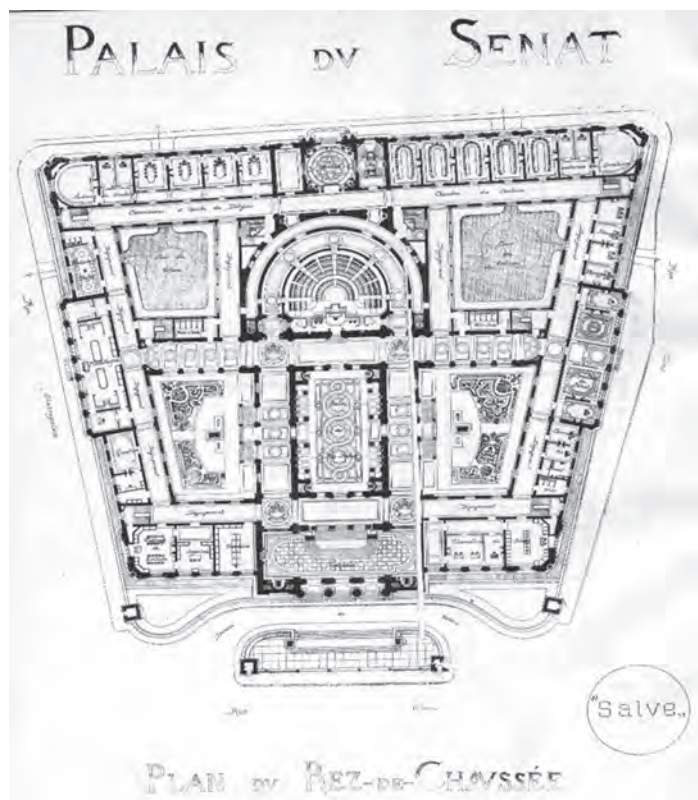


Fig. 2. A. Marcel. Project for the Senate, 1890. Floor plan.

For the French architects and particularly for Julien Guadet, the good performance of the Romanian architects – former students of the famous *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris – stood, first of all, for homage rendered to the school where they had received an outstanding education.<sup>26</sup> As regards the architects working domestically, the good results of the Romanian competitors showed their compatriots' undeniable professional skill and consequently proved that the complex architectural solutions could be successfully taken up by Romanian specialists. Unfortunately, the aftermaths of this contest were not the expected ones.

### The Palace of the Chamber of Deputies

Following the competition, Dimitrie Maimarolu signed a contract with the Ministry of the Interior in order to achieve the final project. In this respect, he would leave the country for a field trip, with a view to study the houses of parliaments around Europe.<sup>27</sup> One year after the end of the contest, the authorities hoped that the project would be up for auction so that the edifice would be finished no later than in 5 years from the start

of the construction works.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, in autumn 1893 the project was still unfinished.

The reasons why this building was delayed are not clear yet. The certain thing is that, after several of stand-by, the ground set aside for the Chamber of Deputies was given to other institutions. Thus, as mentioned in the Journal of the Council of Ministers on June 30, 1898, the ground located on Elisabeta Avenue passed into the possession of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, which intended to raise the National Museum thereon.<sup>29</sup> The financial crisis that affected Romania during the subsequent years hindered this initiative too. In 1903 the Ministry of the Interior asked for a part of this plot with a view to build the firemen barracks.<sup>30</sup> The rest of the ground was given to the Ministry of Public Works for its own headquarters.<sup>31</sup>

In early 1906, the then Minister of Finance – Take Ionescu – commissioned again Maimarolu to build the Chamber of Deputies. However, at that time the Government no longer possessed either the former site or sufficient financial resources to buy another plot of land and support extensive works. As a consequence,

<sup>26</sup> AnArch 1, 1891, II, p. 14. Julien Guadet congratulates Maimarolu, with a special mention on the particular contribution of *École des beaux arts* in Romanian architects' vocational formation.

<sup>27</sup> AnArch 8, 1891, II, p. 152 (*The construction of the Chamber of Deputies Palace*).

<sup>28</sup> AnArch 12, 1891, II, p. 207 (*Various writings*).

<sup>29</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1812/ 1904, leaf 8. In 1898, the Council of Ministers approved the building of the headquarters for the Natural History Museum.

<sup>30</sup> In 1903, "The Ministry of the Interior asked and received that land in order to settle a part of the police authorities." See A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1812/ 1904, leaf 8.

<sup>31</sup> Noica 2008a, pp. 96-98. The building works began in 1906, and the ceremony of cornerstone laying was organized on April 25.

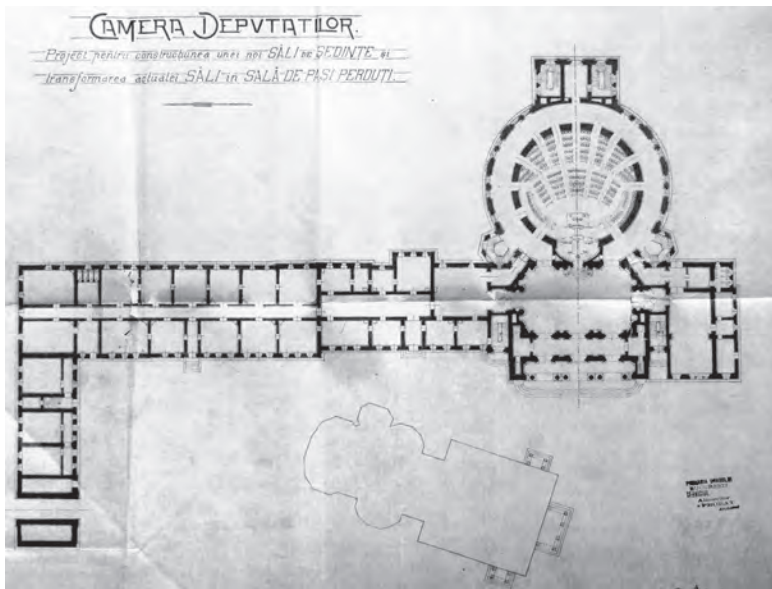


Fig. 3. D. Maimarolu. Project for a new meeting hall, 1906.

the authorities made a compromise – to reshape the old building of the Chamber, located on Metropolitan Hill.<sup>32</sup>

Maimarolu's project, drawn up in 1906, was much more restricted than the first-prized version submitted in the 1890 competition (Fig. 3). It was limited to construct a new meeting hall and reshaping the existing one, in the *hall of the lost Footsteps*. The old gathering hall was located in the south wing of the Metropolitan Houses. The new hall, having a shape similar to that included in the 1890 project, was designed to continue the old one outside the premises, on the steep side of the hill.

Five years later, Maimarolu carried out a new project, presumably at the request of the Ministry of Finance,

featuring the addition of a building volume, west of the previously accomplished meeting hall.<sup>33</sup> The works continued as scheduled. For the extension of the headquarters it was necessary to pull down some older constructions. Since this operation was not agreed by the Metropolitan bishop, the plan was flipped over, so that the projected extension was built east of the meeting hall.<sup>34</sup> In 1914, a new wing was begun having, in all probability, an architectural profile similar to the preceding one.<sup>35</sup> As stated in the contract, the works were scheduled to finish in September 1915; however, they were still in process at end-1916.<sup>36</sup>

The Palace of the Chamber of Deputies was presumably one of the most expensive buildings erected in Bucharest during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Obviously, the Government would have spent much less if this edifice had been erected on the site located on Elisabeta Avenue instead of the Metropolitan Hill where, as expected, the sloping site put the engineers at test. The instability of the brickwork structure as provided in the initial solution made engineers change the structural project, so that the final option was for a structure entirely built of reinforced concrete.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> This used to be the place where the meetings of the National Assembly were organized during the Organic Regulation regime. The National Assembly, which subsequently became the Deputies' Assembly, was chaired by the metropolitan bishop. This was probably the reason why the Metropolitan Houses was chosen as the place where the gatherings of this Chamber would be organized. At first, a few cells were transformed into a meeting hall. According to Nicolae Noica, in 1881 an amphitheatre was built next to this hall, similar to that of the German Reichstag, with two rows of boxes and galleries. See Noica 2008b, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CCXCVIII / 4, leaf 40. Following the bid on the right wing building, the works on the Chamber of Deputies Palace were taken over by Ștefan Burcuș and Scarlat Petculescu. As agreed in the contract signed by them after the bid, the construction was expected to be accomplished by October 15.

<sup>34</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CCXCVIII / 4, leaves 71, 74. The contractor explained the situation in a report submitted in June 1912. The change led to higher costs of the works and to delayed completion. The contractors were allowed to a protraction until May 31, 1913.

<sup>35</sup> This part had been projected on the right side, west of the meeting hall.

<sup>36</sup> Noica 2008b, p. 61. Out of that wing, designed to surround the meeting hall and join the part previously built, only a small portion has been actually achieved. The works lost momentum because, among others, the price of construction materials (such as iron, zinc, glass) increased considerably during wartime.

<sup>37</sup> Noica 2008b, pp.49-51, 56. Anyway, the Superior Technical Council had recommended the use of reinforced concrete for the floors. Effingham Grant, one of the two contractors, approached engineer Gogu Constantinescu who saved the building by inserting reinforced concrete into the pillars, vaults, dome, balconies and galleries.

### The Senate Palace

As announced in the August 1891 issue of the *Annals of Architecture*, the building works on the Senate Palace were postponed since the Government approved only the loan for the Palace of the Chamber of Deputies, the construction of which was deemed as taking precedence. However, missing financial resources were not the only reason for delaying the construction of the Senate Palace. The other cause was the lack of land, because Constantin Vodă Square<sup>38</sup> – the site on which the contest for this project had been organized – actually belonged to the Ministry of the Interior which intended to raise the Telegraph and Post Palace thereon.<sup>39</sup> Few years before the outbreak of World War I, the Senate of Romania, still waiting for a suitable headquarters, was functioning in the University Palace, that it had occupied for more than forty years.<sup>40</sup>

In 1911, the Senate took again into consideration the possibility of building its palace and a special commission, chaired by Gheorghe Gr. Cantacuzino was appointed to address this issue. After a thorough analysis of the best projects chosen two decades before, the commission concluded that these works were no longer appropriate for the current requests of the institution at that particular moment, and therefore it invited architects Ion Berindei, Petre Antonescu, Grigore Cerkez, Arta Cerkez, Dimitrie Maimarolu, Paul Smărăndescu and Victor Ștefănescu to compete within a contest advertised in a restricted circle. Each participant was scheduled to receive a reward amounting to lei 4,000 and the building work was expected to be consigned to the author of the best project.<sup>41</sup>

Just before the competition started, two members of the commission, charged with finding a site<sup>42</sup> “having an appropriate configuration for the edifice be placed in as aesthetic conditions as possible”.<sup>43</sup> They proposed the acquisition of Bibescu’s land stretching on the right bank of river Dâmbovița. This acquisition was not agreed by the invited architects who expressed their opinion in a petition. “As one of the tremendous monuments of the capital city, the Senate ought to be rather placed in a square, with no other buildings all around and having the perspective of a main street; this is the way all monuments in Paris are built”.<sup>44</sup> The selected site had several shortcomings. Being placed right on the river bank, the building not only would have lacked perspective, but also it would have been overshadowed by the Palace of Justice and the financial administration buildings, under construction in the close neighbourhood of Bibescu’s land. Moreover, because of the poor quality of the soil and the river bed, the foundation would have been very expensive and therefore the overall investment would have been extremely costly. The Prime Minister, who was responsible for the contest arrangements, didn’t give up in front of all these arguments and underlined that the architects’ performance “will be all the greater as they succeed to carry out a better work in adverse conditions.”<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup> As regards Constantin Vodă Square, it is worth mentioning that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ground of the former inn Constantin Vodă, located in Podul Mogoșoaiei, was proposed several times as a site for some important public buildings. It was this square for which in 1859 Prince Cuza enacted a decree stipulating the organization of a contest for the project of the Justice Power Palace. Few years later, the same site was taken into consideration by the Minister of Finance when holding forth the project of a palace for the public authorities, hosting various public institutions. During somewhat the same period, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction commissioned architect Gaetano Burelly to draw up the project of a gymnasium school on the above-mentioned place. See A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 186/ 1865, leaf 19 verso.

<sup>39</sup> In early 1890 – few months before preparing the competition for the Parliament – it was already known that the Telegraph and Post Palace was scheduled to be built in Constantin Vodă Square; even so, the contest organizers didn’t hesitate to propose that site for the Senate Palace. See *AnArch* 3, 1890 I, p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Stan 1997, pp. 70–72. The Senate was established in 1864. At the beginning, the institution functioned in a rented building located on Șerban Vodă Avenue. In 1869, the Senate was functioning in the University Palace.

<sup>41</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 1.

<sup>42</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 9. Two of commission members, namely Mihail Rahtivan and Nicu Cerkez, managed the field acquisition, out of a number of 17 sites. Among the few fields they recommended to the special commission was a 8,000 sqm ground located on the bank of the river Dâmbovița.

<sup>43</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 9.

<sup>44</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 5 verso.

<sup>45</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 20 (*Petition on the way the assessment was carried out in the competition for the Senate building*).



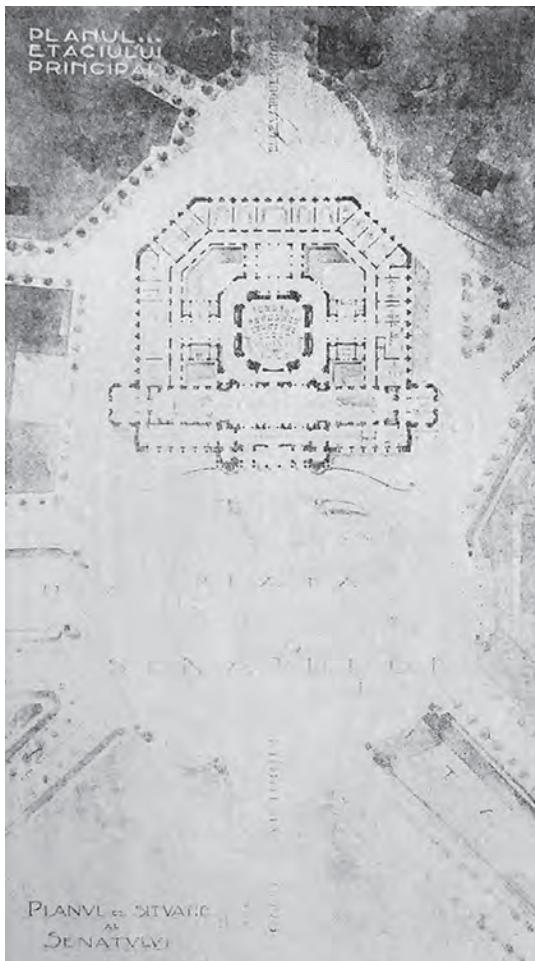


Fig. 4. D. Maimarolu and E. Doneau. Project for the Senate, 1911. Lay-out plan.



Fig. 5. D. Maimarolu and E. Doneau. Project for the Senate, 1911. View.

The contest opening which eventually addressed all Romanian architects,<sup>46</sup> occurred on June 16. Finally eight projects were submitted, of which five belonged to the invited architects.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned in a report drawn up by the special commission and published at the end of 1911, the results were better than those of all previous similar competitions organized in Romania, even than those of the 1890 contest.<sup>48</sup> The best solutions, deemed as equal in terms of performance, belonged to Dimitrie Maimarolu and Ernest Doneaud. Under the pretext that both architects infringed the requirements of the subject and of the contest, the other competitors – excepting Grigore and Arta Cerkez – submitted a protest to the Prime Minister, contesting the jury's decision.<sup>49</sup> Despite their objections, the competition result didn't change.

Soon after the contest conclusion, Alexandru Marghiloman, the then Minister of the Interior, suggested that the Senate Palace be erected on a site located in Ion C. Brătianu Street, between Vienna and Royal Streets. This site was much more favourable than Bibescu's land, featuring a regular shape, a central position and a large surface. The commission agreed that the final project be drawn up for this site.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, for reasons which remain unknown to us, the final project jointly drafted by Maimarolu and Doneaud referred to the site located on the banks of Dâmbovița (Fig. 4, 5), instead of the new one, proposed by Marghiloman.

<sup>46</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 20. It was the demarche of the Romanian Architects Society that made the commission give up the idea of a contest for advertised in a restricted circle in favour of a competition open to all Romanian architects.

<sup>47</sup> Out of the architects who were invited to compete, Ion Berindei didn't take part.

<sup>48</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 9 verso.

<sup>49</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaves 19-25. The protest was signed by Petre Antonescu, Paul Smărăndescu, Victor Ștefănescu, Simion Vasilescu and Alexandru Clavel. According to the published conditions, the contest addressed Romanian certificated architects; the protest states that none of the two winners fulfilled this condition since Doneaud was not a Romanian citizen, while Maimarolu hadn't got an architect diploma. See leaf 22 verso.

<sup>50</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 9 recto + verso. The site was expected to become available in early March 1912 at the latest.

The building works on the Senate Palace began in spring 1912<sup>51</sup> and the edifice was planned to be inaugurated in 1916 on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of King Carol I to the throne. After two years, during which the building was erected only up to the ground floor level, the Government decided to stop the works. For fear of any accidents on an unattended building site, the architects asked permission to cover the holes in the concrete floor. It was no earlier than ten years later when Maimarolu and Doneaud were requested to resume the building works and they started in summer 1925.<sup>52</sup> However, despite all efforts made by some of the authorities after 1927, no further funds were provided for these works so that the building site was again abandoned and the built structures fell into disrepair. In 1938 the area was drained and a temporary pavilion was built atop the ruins of the Senate Palace, designed for a book exhibition.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Issue of the Central Railway Station. A Contested Competition**

The first railway station in Bucharest, namely Filaret Station, and the first rail route in Romania, connecting Bucharest to Giurgiu, were back in to autumn 1869. Three years later the second railway station was inaugurated in Bucharest – first named Târgoviște Station and later on North Station – which became the main railway junction of the city. In less than a decade, the capacity of the North Station – with only six platforms, just two of which for passengers – was exceeded by the increasing traffic of passengers and freight. In order to manage this situation, several studies were drawn up and the best solution was deemed to be the dissociation of the passenger traffic from freight transport. Consequently, the authorities decided to build a new railway station, serving only passengers and located in the central part of the city, while the North Station was planned to be adapted to freight rail transport.<sup>54</sup>

Initially, the tentative location of the new passenger central station was close to Cișmigiu Gardens. After the authorities expropriated several plots of land in the area, a part of the site intended for the Central Station was demanded by the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction with an aim to build the day college Gheorghe Lazăr.<sup>55</sup> Since this request was approved, the authorities had to find another site for the railway station, and the final option was at the crossroad of Elisabeta Avenue with Plevnei Avenue and the bank of Dâmbovița.<sup>56</sup>

With a view to prepare the project, the Council of Ministers decided to organize an international competition.<sup>57</sup> The station building, the main façade of which was intended to front towards Elisabeta Avenue, was meant to consist of a central body, for passenger departures, and two side wings, for arrivals, located at 108m from one another. The wall skin of the building was required to be coated with facing brick. Ashlar was recommended for the socle, cornices, pillars and opening frames.<sup>58</sup> The seven platforms – five for departures and two for arrivals – were deemed to be different from but interleaved between those for travellers' luggage. The platform area was to be covered by glass-roofed arcades.<sup>59</sup>

Although more than 400 architects took note of this event, the number of submitted projects was barely 38, out of which only 12 were selected for the final face-off. The 1<sup>st</sup> prize was awarded to Louis Blanc and Alexandre Marcel (Fig. 6), the 2<sup>nd</sup> one went to Laurent Farge, while Giulio Magni ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>. But the results announcement and the projects exhibition brought about a veritable scandal since both winners were blamed for having plagiarized the station project of Henri Eustache who had been awarded the *Prix de*

<sup>51</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CLVI, leaf 10. In December 1911, the corner-stone was expected to be laid in April 1912. The building was scheduled to be finished in three years at most. The beginning of building works in 1912 is confirmed by Crutzescu. See Crutzescu 1987, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> Stan 1998, p. 181.

<sup>53</sup> Stan 1998, p. 184.

<sup>54</sup> AnArch 9-10, 1892, III, p. 159.

<sup>55</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 414/ 1889, leaf 26.

<sup>56</sup> Apart from the initial proposal, near Cișmigiu Gardens, other sites were taken into consideration such as those located on Pake Protopopescu Avenue and on Dorobanți Avenue, respectively. The site stretching on Dâmbovița shore was more convenient both in terms of the connections with Chitila Station and of costs. See Analele M.L.P. 1893, p. 109, the report drawn up by M. Romniceanu.

<sup>57</sup> Socolescu 2004, p. 148.

<sup>58</sup> AnArch 9-10, 1892, III, p. 161 (*Contest requirements*).

<sup>59</sup> AnArch 9-10, 1892, III, p. 161 (*Passenger station*).



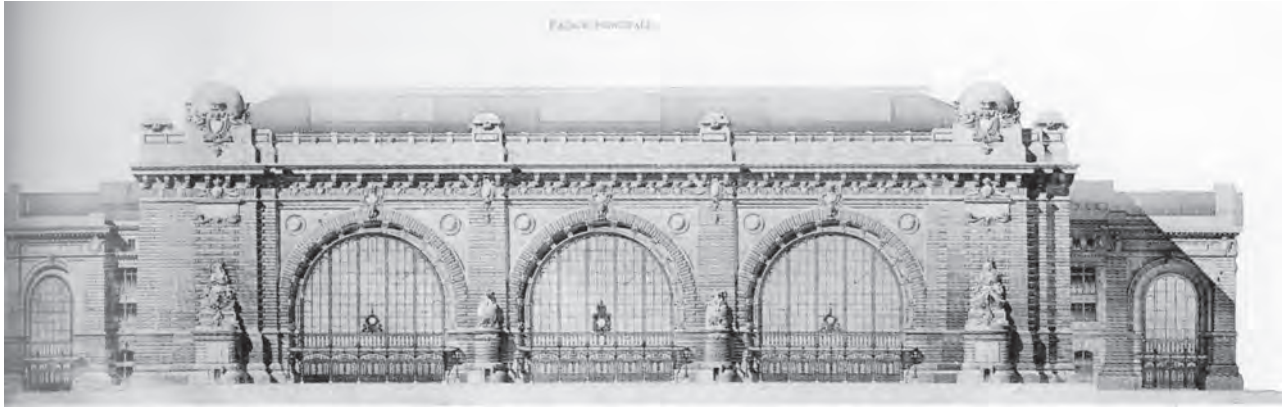


Fig. 6 L. Blanc and A. Marcel. Project for the Central Railway Station

Rome, in 1891.<sup>60</sup> The most virulent protest came from Ion Socolescu whose discontent was augmented by the inappropriate composition of the jury, featuring a large number of Railway Company representatives who were not in a position to assess an architecture project.<sup>61</sup>

Eventually, architects Grigore Cerkez and Ion Mincu were invited as jury members. They declared that the façade of the first rank project was “an obedient copy of Eustache’s project”, while the plans were incorporating solutions taken from the projects submitted in 1891 for the *Prix de Rome*.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, both Mincu and Cerkez requested that the work of Blanc and Marcel be withdrawn from the competition,<sup>63</sup> albeit they acknowledged this project was much better than all the other competitors’. Unlike his two colleagues from the jury, who admitted the virtues of this project, Socolescu upheld it was worthless.

Unfortunately, the lack of funds and very likely the heated dispute made the Blanc-Marcel project be given up. Nevertheless, the idea to build the Central Station was brought back into discussion in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Railway Company commissioned architect Victor Ștefănescu and engineer Alexandru Periețeanu with drawing up new plans for the station. They completed this task two years later, but were not able to carry the plans into effect because of the war outbreak. The project resumed in the 1920s, but neither this time it was put into practice. Finally, the authorities irrevocably abandoned this work, deemed too expensive, and focused on the extension of the North Station.<sup>64</sup>

### **Building Projects for the National Museums**

The National Museum – initially named *Museum of Natural History and Antiquities* – was opened in 1834, at proposal of great boyar Mihalache Ghica, brother of Prince Alexandru Ghica. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it underwent significant organizational changes. The first one occurred in 1864<sup>65</sup> when two distinct museums separated from this unique institution, namely a museum of archaeology and fine arts and one of physical and natural sciences.<sup>66</sup> A third museum was opened in 1906, gathering collections of ethnography, traditional art, applied art and industrial art.

<sup>60</sup> For discussions on the Central Station project, see Socolescu 2004, pp. 147-151 and papers referring to the contest published in the *AnArch* 9-10, 1893, IV.

<sup>61</sup> According to the competition rules, the jury was made of representatives of the board and department heads from the Romanian Railway Company, chaired by the Minister of Public Works. See the *AnArch* 9-10, 1892, III, p. 161 (*Contest requirements*). At last, architects Grigore Cerkez, Ion Mincu and Lecomte du Noüy were invited as jury members.

<sup>62</sup> Socolescu 2004, p. 80.

<sup>63</sup> Socolescu 2004, p. 81.

<sup>64</sup> Popescu 1997, pp. 73-75.

<sup>65</sup> The dissociation between the Antiquities Museum and Natural Science Museum was approved by a decree enacted by Prince Cuza on November 25, 1864.

<sup>66</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 127/ 1864, leaf 144 recto + verso.

Such important cultural institutions needed special buildings, in line with the modern requirements in this field. Upon the request of the museums directorate, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to solve that problem. The first attempt occurred in 1881, when the Chamber of Deputies empowered the Government to erect several public buildings in Bucharest, including the said museums.<sup>67</sup> Three years later, the Government extended a loan amounting to lei 1,000,000 with a view to build the Museums and the Library. In 1886, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instructions received a loan tantamount to lei 20,914,892 for the institutions under its co-ordination,<sup>68</sup> out of which almost half was intended to build a palace gathering the Romanian Academy, Central Library, State's Archives and the National Museum.

The projects were commissioned to Heino Schmieden architecture office in Berlin.<sup>69</sup> The buildings were supposed to be erected on the site of the former Mimi garden – a broad field stretching from the right bank of Dâmbovița to Apolon Street.<sup>70</sup> This architectural complex demarcated an oblong main court facing the river bank (Fig. 7, 8). It was made up of three different buildings connected by means of two quadrant shaped galleries.<sup>71</sup> The main building, located in the middle, should have incorporated the Museum and the Library, while the other two were intended for the Painting Gallery and the Industrial Museum.<sup>72</sup>

In 1886, Romanian authorities approved the first drafts and Schmieden and his partners went on to draw up the final solution. The project, probably including work sheets, was stored in “huge boxes” and probably sent to Duca office,<sup>73</sup> subordinated to the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction.<sup>74</sup> In spring 1888, once the office was dissolved its archive dissipated and many projects were lost. Among the wasted works were that prepared by Schmieden office.<sup>75</sup> In the wake of the loss of drawings, the project was discarded.

During the subsequent years, new projects were prepared but none of them was carried into effect. In 1891, Grigore Tocilescu held forth toward the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction the building of a Museum of Antiquities on the site in front of the University. The project was drawn up by Austrian architect Georg Niemann<sup>76</sup> who had worked together with Tocilescu on the research of the vestiges and carved pieces from Tropaeum Traiani.<sup>77</sup> The building was designed to consist of three parts having in the middle a replica of the Monument of Adamclisi.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless this intention was not put across, the Government had seemingly already paid lei 10,000 for the drawings. Apparently, Tocilescu commissioned another project to Viennese art

<sup>67</sup> A.N.I.C. – Parlament, folder 739/ 1881, leaves 701-702v.

<sup>68</sup> As stipulated in the law passed on April 18, 1886.

<sup>69</sup> Heino Schmieden (1835-1913) graduated from the famous Bauakademie in Berlin. Together with his partner Martin Gropius, uncle of Walter Gropius, he set up *Fa. Gropius & Schmieden*, one of the largest architecture offices in Berlin. Gropius died in 1880, and Schmieden collaborated with Robert Speer and Victor von Weltzien; the said project commissioned from Bucharest was one of their joint works. Schmieden's office received the commission in 1885. See Popovăț 1999, p. 25.

<sup>70</sup> This ground was located near the site of the School of Veterinary Medicine. Mimi garden is mentioned on Borroczy's plan in 1846. In 1887, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction took possession of Mimi garden from the Municipality, in exchange for the garden in front of the University and the site of “Saint John” church. See A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 193/ 1887, leaf 2. A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 733/ 1890, leaf 5. At first, this site was allotted to the National Museum. Later on, it was given for the institutes and laboratories of the faculty of medicine.

<sup>71</sup> In 1893, a fragment of the project on the Bucharest's National Museum was published in *Handbuch der Architektur-Heft-Museen*, a German study signed by Josef Durm and Heinrich Wagner. According to that draft, the central area of the yard featured a large square in the middle of which a copy of Trajan's Column was projected to rise. See Durm Wagner 1893.

<sup>72</sup> Popovăț 1999, p. 25. The ensemble was designed to be achieved in two stages – first the main building, and later the two side wings.

<sup>73</sup> This department was set up in April 1886 and comprised an architect, an engineer, draftsmen and conductors. It was in charge with the architecture works for the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction. This office was led by Gheorghe Duca, director of the School of Bridges and Roads. See Clădiri școlare – dare de seamă 1898, p. 5; see also Popovăț 1999, p. 25.

<sup>74</sup> Popovăț 1999, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> Clădiri școlare – dare de seamă 1898, p. 5; see Popovăț 1999, p. 25.

<sup>76</sup> Georg Niemann (1841-1912) was one of the most famous Austrian archaeologists. He took part in the first Austrian led campaigns in the Mediterranean. See Niemann had an important contribution to the research on the Palace of Diocletian in Split.

<sup>77</sup> DID II 1968, p. 101.

<sup>78</sup> SCIVA 34-35, 1983, p. 113.

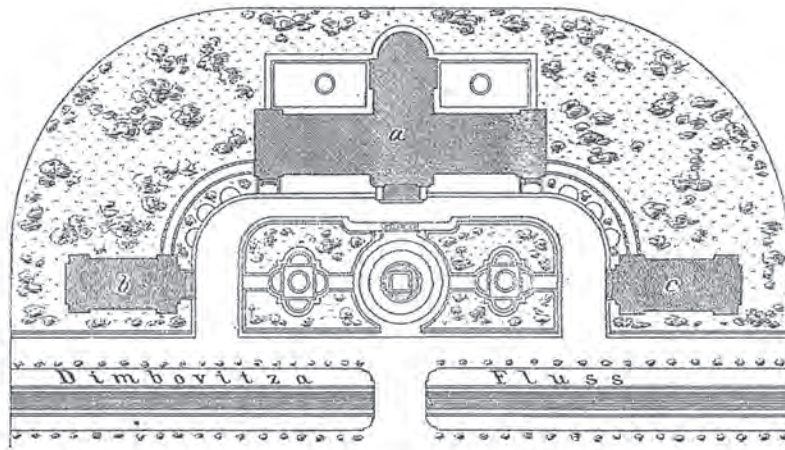


Fig. 7. H. Schmieden, R. Speer and V. von Weltzien. Project for the National Museum, on the right bank of the river Dâmbovița. Lay-out plan.



Fig. 8. H. Schmieden, R. Speer and V. von Weltzien. Project for the National Museum, on the right bank of the river Dâmbovița. View.

the way to do something in this respect within the currently available limits.”<sup>82</sup> Antipa was convinced that “among the cultural institutions, a museum is a must”, not a “luxury”. For the said institution, he wanted a simple, not decorated building, with spacious and “systematized” rooms. Such a building meant to fulfil entirely the museums needs would have cost no more than lei 300,000. This amount was really insignificant for the “main nationwide museum”.<sup>83</sup>

We assume that, due to his modesty, Antipa succeeded in gaining the authorities’ confidence. Consequently, in April 1904, the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction asked his counterpart from the Land Department for the land between Victoriei Square, Kiseleff Avenue, Filantropia Avenue and the State

historian Moritz Dreger<sup>79</sup> shortly after. In summer 1899, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction appointed Louis Blanc to draw up the project of the National Museum on the site stretching between Dâmbovița shore, Elisabeta Avenue and the State Printing House; previously, this site had been set apart for the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>80</sup> Although Antipa and Tocilescu were invited to provide Blanc with all necessary data to prepare this project, the Ministry had eventually to give up this plan too, amid the worsening economic situation.<sup>81</sup>

Once Romania’s financial resources recovered, Grigore Antipa, the then director of the Museum of Natural Sciences, brought back into discussion the headquarters issue. “I am well aware that making such a large expenditure under our present financial situation is hard to embark on”, he wrote to the Minister of Cults. “However, considering the importance of this institution [...] I think we should look for

<sup>79</sup> Popovăț 1999, p. 25. In this regard, it might be a confusion. In 1893, it was Dreger who worked on the first reconstruction in plaster of Adamclisi monument. See DID II 1968, p. 101.

<sup>80</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1812/ 1904, leaf 8. This decision had been approved by Journal no. 30 / June 30, 1898.

<sup>81</sup> Aslan 2005, p. 214. During 1899–1901, the public deficit exceeded lei 60 million. The domestic crisis was brought about by a European-wide crisis.

<sup>82</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1246/ 1901, leaf 201. This happened at the end of 1902.

<sup>83</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1246/ 1901, leaf 201. Antipa also thought that the building would be erected in stages and the expenditure would accordingly be disposed over several years.



Mint. Although this field was located uptown, it was appropriate for such an institution, due to its large surface allowing not only for a future extension, but also for “starting a zoological garden”.<sup>84</sup>

The museum project, “wholly drawn up free of charge” by engineer Mihail Roco, was submitted to the Superior Technical Council for assessment, in July the same year.<sup>85</sup> Building works started in 1904, advanced fast and finished in 1906; conversely, the collection arrangements, carefully monitored by Antipa, lasted almost two years, so that the edifice was officially inaugurated on May 24, 1908. The museum developed rapidly further on. Three years later, the collection had expanded so much that the exhibition area had to widen. Lacking extra financial support for building new wings, Antipa had to manage this situation only by re-arranging the inner space.

Few years after the opening of the Museum of Natural History building, works on another museum started in its close neighbourhood – the palace for the Museum of Ethnography, Traditional Art, Applied Art and Industrial Art, which separated from the Antiquities Museum in 1906. Short time after its setting up, this institution, which was led from the beginning by Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, had functioned in the former premises of the State Mint, on Kiseleff Avenue. The idea of a project for an edifice hosting the new museum appeared back to autumn 1906, architect Nicolae Ghika-Budești being appointed to prepare the plans.<sup>86</sup> This building was intended to rise on the very spot of the Mint. Nevertheless, other sites were taken into consideration until the final solution has been found and the building works have begun.

Back to 1903, Tzigara-Samurcaș had suggested the construction of a building for a national museum, in the likeliness of an “old Romanian inn”, on the site of the former Sărindar monastery where the magnificent palace of the Military Club would be erected subsequently. This edifice, conceived in a traditional style, with a simple albeit grandiose façade, was meant to enframe a square in the middle of which Tzigara-Samurcaș would have intended to place the “little Stavropoleos church”. According to him – who would be appointed director of the National Museum three years later – the modern methods<sup>87</sup> could be put in place to raise this church and move it from the neighbourhood of modern buildings, which were stifling it, into a suitable environment, similar to the one this church “was achieved for”. It seems that the authorities deemed this idea too imaginative, once this proposal was not considered during the final discussions on the actual building of the museum.

At last, the decision in this regard was taken back in 1911, five years after the first drafts had been drawn up. Besides the Museum of Romanian Ethnography and Traditional Art, this edifice was meant to host the Museum of Romanian Painting and Sculpture, the Museum of Icons of the Church House as well as the Antiquities Museum. Further room was required for the annual exhibitions organized by the Official Salon, a library of art and archaeology, and apartments for the manager and staff.<sup>88</sup> At first, the tentative list also included a building for the School of Fine Arts and an amphitheatre serving both the school and the museum. However, some of these ideas were eventually given up for lack of funds.<sup>89</sup>

The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction decided to set up a technical office gathering Grigore Cerkez, Ermil Pangrati and Mihail Romniceanu to supervise the works.<sup>90</sup> From the very first discussions of this team, Cerkez formulated his opinion that a museum should be placed in the central area rather than uptown and proposed the site in front of the University Palace. “A palace having a very broad façade could be built there, keeping in the middle the monument of Mihai Viteazu and virtually translating slightly the other two.”<sup>91</sup> Cerkez’s solution had several advantages. On the one hand, with such a building on that place, the

<sup>84</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1812/ 1904, leaf 8.

<sup>85</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 1812/ 1904, leaf 32 recto + verso. The Council members were: E. S. Miculescu, E. Radu, Al. Cottescu, N. N. Hârjeu and T. Constantinescu.

<sup>86</sup> Popovăț 1999, p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> According to Tzigara-Samurcaș, building translation was frequently used in America at that time; in Romania, this method had been already applied for the construction of the church in Rebegești-Crețulești village (Ilfov county). See Tzigara-Samurcaș 1991, p. 158.

<sup>88</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 11.

<sup>89</sup> Ghika-Budești 1941, p. 6. The School of Fine Arts would be placed towards Filantropia Avenue.

<sup>90</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 12, leaf 3.

<sup>91</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 11 verso.

avenue could benefit in terms of attractiveness. On the other, this site made possible the layout of a generous front were the *lapidarium* of the Antiquities Museum could be placed, in an “extensive colonnade”. Although well aware of how difficult it would have been to secure the permit for that site, the members of the said office decided not to give up this version unless the surface was insufficient to accommodate the whole program. Therefore, they asked Ghika-Budești to think about a draft for this site, too.<sup>92</sup>

The draft drawn up by Ghika-Budești (Fig. 9) for the University garden featured an edifice made up of five different sized bars, having a symmetric orthogonal structure and stretching on a length of about 150 m.<sup>93</sup> The museum axis was placed in line with that of the University Palace. The side buildings, having pavilions at their extremities, were in line with the boulevard. The remaining three buildings displayed a “U” shaped arrangement around a small square with the statue of Mihai Viteazu in the middle. The building placed in the middle of this ensemble was separated from its neighbouring constructions by two parallel passageways connecting the main court with the space behind the building. In order to harmonize the museum edifice with its neighbourhood, Ghika-Budești designed a front reconfiguration for the existing square.

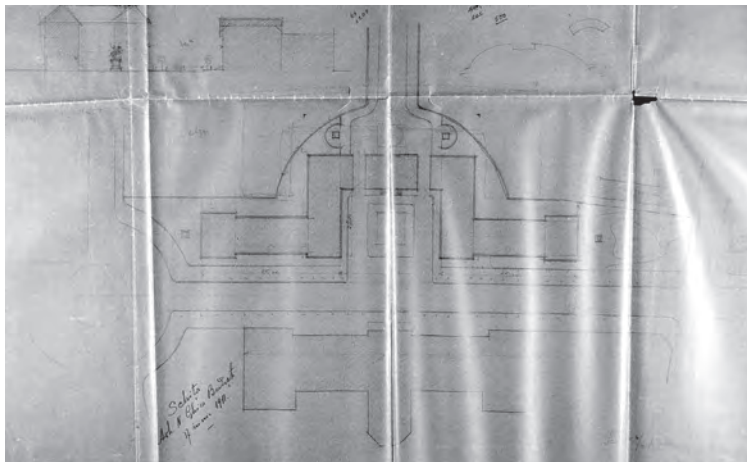


Fig. 9. N. Ghika-Budești. Draft for the National Museum in front of the University Palace.

Starting from this draft, Grigore Cerkez proposed a new version carrying “remarkable advantages”.<sup>94</sup> The main component of Cerkez’s solution (Fig. 10) was a “U” shaped building made up of three rectangular volumes connected by two other volumes featuring a quadrant plan. The building was similarly placed in line with the University Palace axis and enframed by two bars in parallel with the boulevard. The central part of the complex was surrounded by a traffic ring allowing a direct access to the boulevard by means of passageways which demarcated the buildings.

After a careful assessment of both proposals, the technical office selected Cerkez’s solution. In this respect, the commission required the Minister of Cults to make the due intercession at the city hall in order to get the approval for the necessary site.<sup>95</sup> Pretending that Bucharest had a lot of other available sites for the museum, both the city hall and the Ministry of the Interior didn’t agree to this proposal,<sup>96</sup> although according to specialists the project would have benefited that important urban area of the capital city. Since there was no hope to get that site, the office members had eventually to content themselves with the Mint site<sup>97</sup> and Nicolae Ghika-Budești resumed his studies on the ground located on Kiseleff Avenue.

The building works on the Museum of Ethnography began in 1912 but they came to a standstill because the war outbreak, like in the case of all the other contemporary works. They resumed few years after the end of the conflict, but by 1925 the only finalized parts were the halls of the south wing. In 1934, the Ministry allocated new funds to continue the building works. Nevertheless in 1941, when Ghika-Budești was dismissed from the position of building site master upon the request of the institution head, the construction had not been completed yet.

<sup>92</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 15.

<sup>93</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 14. This draft is dated June 17, 1911.

<sup>94</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 11, leaf 15. The draft is dated June 21, 1911.

<sup>95</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 21.

<sup>96</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 35.

<sup>97</sup> B.N.R. – Saint Georges, folder CXC VII/ 13, leaf 39.

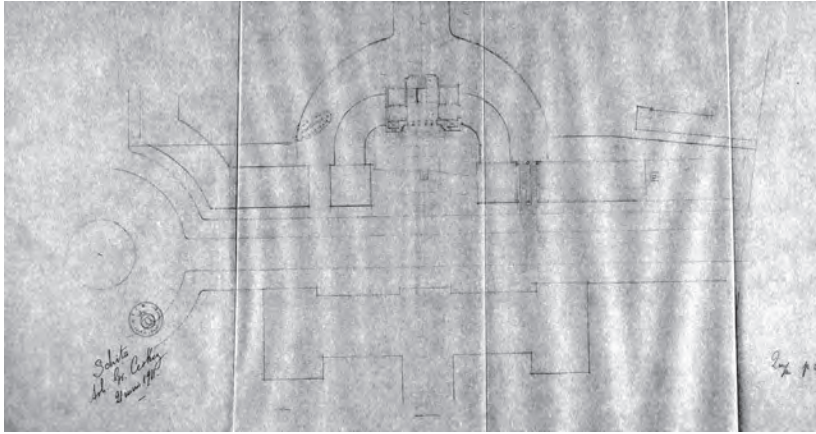


Fig. 10. G. Cerkez. Draft for the National Museum in front of the University Palace.

### The Central Girls' School and Icoanei Avenue

The Central Girls' School, which was one of the most remarkable works belonging to architect Ion Mincu, was opened in 1851 under the name "Princely Boarding School for Wallachian Young Ladies". After many years when this institution functioned in a private house close to the Colțea Church, the decision was taken to build special construction for this institution in 1881, few months after the kingdom was proclaimed.<sup>98</sup>

Although at first the Minister of

Cults and Public Instruction requested a site on Grozăvești manor,<sup>99</sup> he gave up finally in favour of another site, more centrally located, near the Icoanei Church. The land was acquired in several successive stages, between 1885 and 1890.<sup>100</sup>

The project was commissioned to Ion Mincu, a young architect who had accomplished his studies in France. Mincu prepared the solution during several years, the first version being completed in 1885.<sup>101</sup> This project had a straightforward starting point, probably drawn up by Mincu himself along with the institution directorate.<sup>102</sup> The school had a complex organizational structure, actually including three distinct units. In order to meet these requirements to the greatest degree possible, Mincu designed two different wings connected by a covered gallery. The main wing was located on Polonă Street, where the access to the building was placed, too; the other wing occupied the front towards Icoanei Street and could consist either of a small building or two separate buildings.<sup>103</sup> Eventually, because of the site shape, Mincu had to give up this first solution and proposed to build the main volume toward Icoanei Street, while the other volume was designed to stretch on the rear side of the ground, with access from Polonă Street.<sup>104</sup>

Although the final project was completed back in 1887,<sup>105</sup> the building works were delayed more than two years. During this period, Mincu was requested to make some changes.<sup>106</sup> Among them it is worth mentioning that in summer 1888, just before the project was up for bidding (scheduled for July 11, 1888),<sup>107</sup> Mincu had to remodel the design in order to adjust the costs.<sup>108</sup> Short time after the bid, when the works were up to begin, the city hall notified the Minister of Cults that the site for the Central School was designed to be crossed by a new boulevard – Icoanei Avenue (Fig. 11), according to a project drawn up by the Municipality.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>98</sup> A.N.I.C. – Parlament, folder 739/ 1881, leaf 702. The law of November 28, 1881 allowed the Government to build in the capital city several public edifices, including the Central Girls' School. For the law dated November 28, 1881 see also *supra*, note 54.

<sup>99</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 2. The request was submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, Trade and Lands; there were two manors at Grozăvești: one belonging to St. Sava Monastery and the other to St. John Monastery.

<sup>100</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaves 4, 187 and A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 435/ 1889, leaf 130.

<sup>101</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 17.

<sup>102</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaves 19-23. The schedule was signed by Ion Mincu and Dimitrie Sturdza.

<sup>103</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 6.

<sup>104</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 183.

<sup>105</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 50.

<sup>106</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 21. The ceremony of cornerstone laying was organized no earlier than April 30, 1889.

<sup>107</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 202.

<sup>108</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaves 55 recto + verso, 193.

<sup>109</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 209.





Fig. 11. Icoanei avenue figured on the Orășcu plan.

designed to open into a large square.<sup>112</sup> Eventually, the Municipality had to abandon this project, but the idea was considered few years later, under the mayorship of C. F. Robescu. In 1896, the City Council proposed that Colței Avenue (today Lascăr Catargiu Avenue) follow a straight route and join the east–west axis on the “large ellipse”.<sup>113</sup> This was an attractive solution not only in terms of aesthetics,<sup>114</sup> but also of functionality, since such a connection between Kiseleff Avenue and Moșilor Avenue could allow a tidier traffic, avoiding jams in the downtown. This idea was supported by some of the councillors, including the mayor who approved the appointment of a special commission in charge with assessing this issue. Nevertheless, the study was not achieved apparently.

The large architectural projects designed at end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries mirrored, first of all, the endeavour to modernize the capital city. Despite the efforts made by authorities, of the works started during this period, some were brought to an end, if only partly, and many others were abandoned for good and all.

The reasons were manifold. Sometimes the break was attributable to the lack of an efficient coordination, mainly caused by missing expertise in supervising such extensive operations. A suggestive example in this respect is the dispute on creating Icoanei Avenue and building the Central School.

Other times, it was the unfavourable overall context that generated the failure in these works. All

The dispute between the Municipality and the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction on this issue revealed that the latter was to blame. If the persons responsible for the school building had submitted in due time the site plan to the city hall, they would have learnt that this ground was scheduled to be partly expropriated for the future road.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the project was approved to be carried into effect on the site near the Icoanei church. Nevertheless, in order to ensure that the avenue opening would not be compromised, the architect was not permitted to build on Polonă Street alignment (Fig. 12).<sup>111</sup>

Obviously, Icoanei Avenue would have granted Bucharest a different configuration than what we know today. This road was intended to start from “the end of Chiselev Avenue”, passing by the church Icoanei straight toward Carol I Avenue where it was

<sup>110</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 209.

<sup>111</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 212.

<sup>112</sup> A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P., folder 434/ 1889, leaf 209. The small square was designed to “absorb” Noptii Street; the latter, which was featured on Cerkez’s plan, disappeared once the “large ellipse” was built, which is the starting point of avenues Pache and Ferdinand. The today’s Pache Protopopescu Square.

<sup>114</sup> Fezi 2005, p. 256. “The avenues all over the world are long and straight. Carrying into effect this proposal would eliminate the inflexion in Romană Square area.”

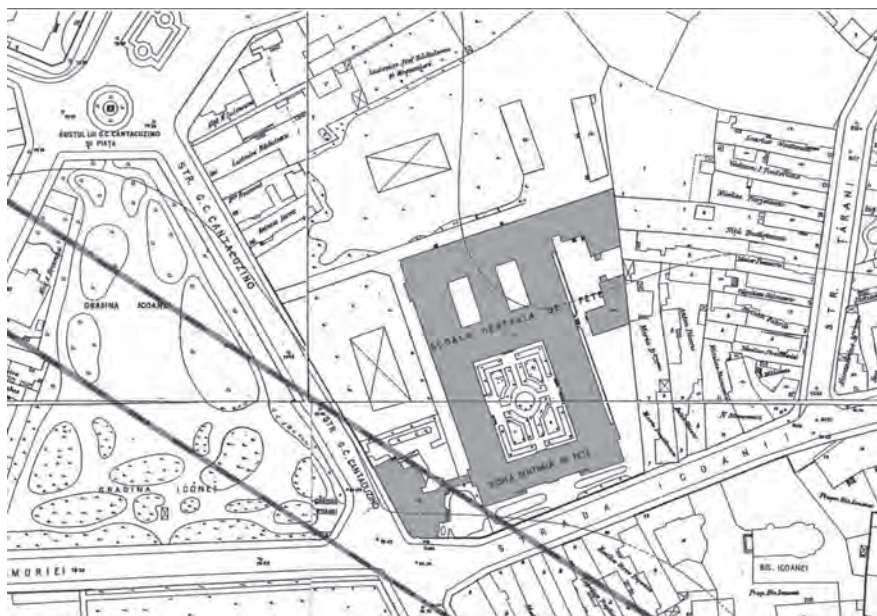


Fig. 12. The Central Girl School. Lay-out plan.

analysis were abandoned mainly for financial reasons. Many of these proposals were too ample and exceeded Romania's financial possibilities. Although the conquest of the State Independence and the Proclamation of the Kingdom of Romania opened the way to a period of economic boom, the budgetary situation could not accommodate the support of such extensive building works. Under these circumstances, the Government decided to sustain only the most important of them.

The numerous and recurring delays had a negative influence upon the city's development. Thus, the project for the Central Station not only brought to a standstill the western area of the capital city, which was set aside for this building, but also blocked the expansion of the North Station.

If Icoanei Avenue had been carried into effect, as a straight lined extension of Colțea Avenue, the roads composing the north-south axis of the capital city would not have probably existed.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, this solution would have undoubtedly prevented the historic centre of Bucharest from the aggressive perforation connecting squares Unirii to Universității, which destroyed the cohesion of that valuable part of the city.

All these protractions additionally gave rise to important money losses. Although the Government could not afford to waste its financial resources, large amounts of money were spent either on projects that never materialized or on costly operations.

#### Bibliographical abbreviations:

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| A.N.I.C. – M.C.I.P.    | National Archives of Romania, Department of National Historical Central Archives – Fund of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction. |
| A.N.I.C. – Parliament  | National Archives of Romania, Department of National Historical Central Archives – Parliament Fund.                                      |
| B.N.R. – Brătianu      | National Library of Romania, Special collections, Brătianu Fund.   |
| B.N.R. – Saint Georges | National Library of Romania, Special collections, Saint Georges Fund.  |

<sup>115</sup> These roads are the avenues Magheru, Bălcescu, Ion C. Brătianu and Dimitrie Cantemir.

projects in process on the eve of World War I – including those for the Chamber of Deputies, Senate and the National Museum – were blocked by the war outbreak; during the following years neither funds nor workforce were available. After the situation stabilized, only a part of the old works was completed.

There were also cases when the break occurred against the background of a problem related to the professional deontology, as happened on the occasion of the contest for the Central Railway Station.

Beyond these causes, the large projects drawn up during the period under

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