

REVIEW

Otilia Gherghe, *Centenar Muzeul Olteniei 1915-2015*, Editura Antheo,
Craiova, 2015, 279 p. 218 p. text, 61 p. planșe
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„Culture is the sum of all forms of art, love, thinking, which throughout the centuries has helped man be less enslaved” (Andre Marlaux). And what institution, if not a museum, is one of the best representatives of the concept of culture?

In 2015, the *Museum of Oltenia*, a prestigious cultural institution in Romania, celebrated a century from its foundation. Through the activities occasioned by this centenary, it is worth mentioning the release of Mrs. Otilia Gherghe’s book “*Centenary of the Museum of Oltenia 1915-2015*”.

Mrs. Otilia Gherghe’s work consists of an argument, eight chapters and annexes. Each chapter comprises several subchapters. The annexes represents a useful addition as it contains a list of the managers of the institution throughout time, an organization chart of the museum, representative documents for the history of the *Museum of Oltenia* and illustrations.

In order to understand the history of a museum, it is necessary to present the moments prior to the appearance of museum institutions both on a national and, implicitly, a regional level.

The first two chapters of the book “*The grounds of the organization of the first museums*”, (pp. 9-16) and “*The industrial and commercial museums of art, a crucial requirement for the development of the country*” (pp. 17-24) deal with these aspects extensively, offering detailed information on the matter.

Chapter three, entitled “*The ‘Alexandru and Aristia Aman’ Foundation, the first museum of Craiova*” (pp. 25-53) provides the reader with a series of data on the renowned Aman family, patrons of the arts, sciences and, we could also say, the moral founders of the present *Museum of Oltenia*. The first museum appeared in Craiova with the official opening of the Foundation “Alexandru and Aristia Aman”, on December 21st 1908. On January 22nd 1911, at the head of the Foundation they selected professor Stefan Ciuceanu, who led a fruitful scientific and cultural activity. Consequently, between 1911 and 1914 various heritage objects were acquired and historical research was carried out in a series of places in Oltenia.

“*The Regional Museum of Antiquities and Ethnography. 1915-1934*” is the title of the forth chapter of the book (pp. 54-82) and it refers to the evolution of the present *Museum of Oltenia* from its foundation (April 4th 1915) to its moment of national recognition as a citadel of science. We are presented with the situation of the museum during the difficult moments of WWI (p. 61-69), the opening of the *Museum of Natural Sciences* in Craiova and the activity during its first years of existence (pp. 72-77). A subchapter is dedicated to the activity of the great C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, a first-rank personality of Romanian science, who had a marked role in the appearance and evolution of the *Museum of Oltenia* (pp. 77-83).

In the chapter called “*The Regional Museum of Oltenia, one of the richest and most beautiful regional museums of the country*”, (pp. 83-115) we learn about the heyday of the museum, from 1928 to the beginning of WWII. A huge step is made together with the creation of the *Regional Museum of Oltenia* on May 13th 1928, when the collections of the *Regional Museum of Antiquities and Ethnography* of Dolj County were taken over by the *Scientific Circle* of Craiova. The national acknowledgement of the museum came with the inauguration of the permanent exhibition and the National Congress of Numismatics and Archeology held in Craiova between the

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28th-29th September 1934. Both events are presented thoroughly in two subchapters completely dedicated to them (pp. 99-103).

WWII and the establishment of the communist regime in Romania represented for the *Museum of Oltenia* a period of difficulties but also of institutional development and modernization. This particular time frame is presented in chapters five and six, called “*The Museum of Oltenia at a crossroads of a new direction. 1945-1952*” (pp. 116-131) and “*The Museum of Oltenia 1953-1989*” (pp. 132 -171).

After 1995, the Museum of Oltenia entered a rapid period of transformation, as the institution continuously evolved in all aspects. In the chapter “*The Museum of Oltenia 1995-2015*“ (pp. 172-188) we learn about the events that have taken place in each section of the museum up to 2015.

The collection of documents regarding the history of the *Museum of Oltenia* is very useful as it allows the reader to have a complete perspective on the evolution of the institution. The same can be said about the numerous illustrations, most of them in colour, which show different activities throughout time. Another point in favour of this paper is the fact that it does not only refer to the historical evolution of the museum, but also to the general background in which this evolution took place and to the presentation of the personalities who had a significant role in the history of this institution.

In conclusion, due to the subject matter and the richness of information, Mrs Otilia Gherghe’s book represents a valuable piece of publishing dedicated to both specialists and the general public.