

EDITORIAL

Together with the issuing of the 50th number of the new series of *Dacia*, we commemorate 50 years since the inauguration of the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology under the aegis of the Romanian Academy. Anniversaries are as a rule occasions for rejoicing and for expressing one’s satisfaction – but, as I wrote in the leading article of the preceding number, anniversaries are, or at least *should be*, moments of reflection and critical examination of what has been achieved in the interim.

What we need to ask ourselves in the present case is to what extent the research aims, organization and management of our Institute really correspond to the requirements of archaeology in the 21st century, just as we need to wonder if this activity stands up to international standards of scientific enquiry applicable today; we need to consider what changes may be required in the way we perceive and practice archaeology, and in what sphere they may be needed, so that we avoid remaining simply a regional institution, with a restricted and routine activity, modelled on that of the postwar years when our Institute was established.

It would be unfair to say that we have not done much in the last half century. If it is a fact that in the fifties, under the pressures imposed by the totalitarian regime, our traditional ties with archaeologists in Europe were interrupted, shared activities were reinstated in the years that followed, even if this sometimes involved making compromises with the political power of the day. Romanian archaeology recovered much of its pre-war prestige; Romanian archaeologists took up positions within the Permanent Council and Executive Board of the UISPP; there were quite a number of researchers who, in my generation and in the generation before, were granted research scholarships that took them to Germany (especially for prehistoric and classical archaeology), to France, Italy, or the USA. There is one observation that I feel bound to make here: the relationships with European archaeological institutions were mainly restricted to those schools which practised an archaeology similar to that in Romania, and this reinforced the continuation of the usual routines in our research activity. There were too few archaeologists who were aware of the theoretical debates of the day over the interpretation of material culture, as practiced in Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian archaeology.¹

As director of the Institute, in office since 2000, I am aware of the lacunae in the current organizational system, and I know what pressing changes are necessary to align Romanian archaeological research with today’s requirements in the wider world. There is an urgent need for a revision of our research aims and projects. New ideas are needed, as well as debates about the role of archaeology in contemporary society; outdated methods should be given up, and new ways of conceiving of the interpretation of material culture should be adopted. Such fundamental changes are not easy to effect, especially because of an antiquated but deeply rooted mentality – primarily in researchers who are over 60 – but also because of the hierarchical decision-making process at the top of the research network. In our scientific research, the power to take decisions is still directly proportional to age, so any modernizing tendencies are hampered, in archaeology no less than in other disciplines.

In view of these points, I think that one of the first measures we should adopt is to give the young generation of researchers the chance to set out new initiatives. I consider it highly appropriate, therefore,

¹ At this point I cannot refrain from making a confession: although I was really shocked to see, during a study tour in 1972 in the USA, how advanced the anthropological and sociological perspective had become in archaeological research, once I returned to Romania I felt I did not belong in a milieu where such new points of view could not even be debated.

that we are able to publish in the current number of our journal an article by Nona Palincaş “On Power, Organisation and Paradigm in Romanian Archaeology before and after 1989”. This represents a comprehensive presentation of the situation in our Institute fifty years after its foundation. The spirit informing this article – an X-ray of the Institute’s activity – is not *against* but *in favour of* the Institute, and is meant to bring to the fore and explain some of the reasons that have led to the circumscribed character of Romanian archaeological research. Continuing the theme of allowing freedom of opinion and expression, we have published the articles by Alexandru Dragoman and Sorin Oanță about Romanian archaeology in the totalitarian and post-totalitarian periods.²

All these are points of view wielded by the younger generation of researchers eager to assert themselves and to effect radical changes while at the same time bringing about organizational alterations in the branch. It is the case more often than not that the targets of criticism in these articles are, either directly or indirectly, the leading and administrative figures in the Institute’s Board or the Romanian Academy. The only observation I should like to make both to these authors and to the younger generation in general, is the fact that they underestimate the efforts that older scholars (now senior researchers) constantly made while being subjected to so much humiliation under the totalitarian regime, and the price of the compromises they were forced to make. Those efforts were aimed at keeping Romanian archaeology within the European scientific milieu, and at making it what it is today. Without these efforts, the Institute and its entire infrastructure would not have survived as far as 1989.

In the current number we are also publishing a comprehensive collection of studies entitled *Romanitas Daco-Moesica*, dealing with the Roman-Dacian wars and with the founding in 106 AD of the Roman province of Dacia, 1900 years ago. We take advantage of this to call attention to a historical fact crucial for Romanian history and for the history of antiquity in general. This is the reason for publishing this group of valuable studies, written by well-known authors in the European sphere, at this juncture. The object of such an anniversary should not be regarded as reflecting a need felt nowadays by some, including Romanian archaeologists, to strengthen our own group identity by a kind of projection into the remote past, or to justify ourselves through the legacy of ancient times.

Finally I want to call attention to the new section entitled “*Contributions to Prähistorische Bronzefunde*”, where Anca Popescu discusses again the typological methods used in the study of axes, and attempts a novel interpretation with sociological as well as cultural and historical implications.

I have included in this editorial some critical and common-sense observations, with a view to giving an impetus to the journal’s content and to assist the process of emancipation of Romanian archaeology from the inertia of the past. I want to stress that for the most part the contents of this number have been put together by younger researchers who have been integrated into the editorial board – which itself marks a watershed in the editorial orientation of the journal *Dacia*.

Alexandru Vulpe

The 50th anniversary of the journal *Dacia* gives us a chance to express our gratitude to our predecessors, editors-in-chief and directors of this Institute, as well as to extend our thanks to our current directors who made our journal such a prestigious publication. We are aware of the large responsibility incumbent upon us, which is why, starting with this number, the journal will be open to a wide collaboration with the international scientific community, its editing being entrusted to a young editorial board that is determined to situate itself at the top of current expectations in archaeology, and to preserve the highest professional standards in archaeological research.

The Editorial Board

² See also G. A. Niculescu, *Archaeology, Nationalism and “The History of the Romanians”*, *Dacia*, NS, 48-49, 2004-2005, p. 99-124, where one can find exaggerations that will have to be discussed in the future.