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MIRCEA PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA
(1915-2013)

One of the most remarkable Romanian archaeologists is no longer with us. In what the “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași is concerned, he may be deemed the founder of the pre- and protohistory archaeological school of Iași. However, by his prestigious archaeological field research, he was present all over the country. Through his many works, his accomplishments became renown in the international specialty literature. He was well known in Europe and overseas. It is difficult for me to cover in this short depiction both his personality and his tremendous scientific activity. I shall approach them humbly and utterly grateful for his help and cooperation, of which I benefited not once.

Born on the 21th of May 1915 at Galați, Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița came from a distinguished family of intellectuals, his father, a legal counsellor, also being a classical philology graduate. The addition of the name *Dîmbovița* to that of Petrescu is due to his father, who wanted to officially adopt the name of his county of origin. After graduating the high school of Galați (1933), he attended the courses of both the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, Bucharest. With the latter, he was fascinated by prehistoric archaeology, the department being headed at the time by Ion Andrieșescu. Upon the completion of his studies, he became an assistant with the Museum of National Antiquities, where he met Ion Nestor, under whose supervision he defended in 1947 his doctoral thesis – *Contribuțiuni la ultima epocă a bronzului în Transilvania* [Contributions to the Last Bronze Age in Transylvania]. This theme was the corner stone of which would later become, three decades later, one of his main works: *Depozitele de bronzuri din România* [Bronze deposits of Romania] (Bucharest, 1977), followed by the German version, published with the prestigious series *Prähistorische Bronzefunde* (PBF, XVIII, 1, 1978).

Petrescu-Dîmbovița's teaching activity commences with the University of Iași, in 1949, as associate professor, becoming in 1956 professor. Once with the establishment at Iași of the Ancient History and Archaeology Department of the Romanian Academy, he would soon become (1967) the Director of this Institute, position he would hold until his retirement in 1989, a few months prior the well-known events by the end of that year. Petrescu-Dîmbovița has carried out his intense field activity with this Institute, while still teaching classes with the Faculty. He had been already involved, as early as 1949, together with Vladimir Dumitrescu, in the excavations at Hăbășești, the first neo-Eneolithic settlement in

Romania, belonging to the Cucuteni culture, explored and published entirely (1954). The acquired experience allowed Petrescu-Dîmbovița to carry on investigating various sites of the Cucuteni culture, in both the eponymous settlement, furthering Hubert Schmidt's explorations and especially at Trușești (Botoșani county). The latter was printed in 1999 (together with M. and A. C. Florescu), while in 2004, a nonagenarian, he succeeded to edit, still as monograph, (co-authored by M.-C. Văleanu), his own 1961-1966 excavations at Cucuteni-Băiceni.

The editorial space available to me herein is insufficient to either discuss his extensive research activity and the key results it yielded or the gratitude that the Romanian archaeology is indebted to him. I should only mention the excavations he conducted in many regions all over the country, in sites dating from Palaeolithic (he has coordinated the excavation works in the area of the current reservoir at Bicaz, together with C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor), to the Bronze and Iron Ages (Glina, in Bucharest, in Moldova: Foltești, Stoicani, Tămăoani, in Muntenia: Ciolănești din Deal, Teleorman county) or the Early Middle Ages (Hlincea-Iași, Fundul Hertii, Botoșani county). It would be unjust to disregard his many surface archaeological investigations – the so-called “field survey” –, starting with those as a young man, in the Covurlui county (Galați), later developed at large scale in the Central Moldavian Plateau, together with the couple N. and Em. Zaharia.

The knowledge gained over a lifetime is fully mirrored in the many articles published with various journals and specialty volumes in the country and abroad. It is worth mentioning his decision to edit, beginning with 1961, *Arheologia Moldovei*, a journal printed since then regularly, today reaching number 36/2013.

He travelled much. He was involved in many scientific events, of which I shall mention herein only the international congresses of the International Union of the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP), which he attended also as elected member in the Permanent Council: Prague (1966), Beograd (1977), Nise (1976), Ciudad de México (1981), Mainz (1987) and Bratislava (1991). To these also add the many national and international meetings of the historians and archaeologists he did not hesitate to attend, always delivering a lecture discussing his views on the respective topic.

The reward of a life time scientific activity dedicated to archaeology would come by his appointment, in 1991, as a correspondent member of the Romanian Academy and in 1996, as full member. In this capacity, although in his old days, academician Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița was involved in coordinating, together with me, the first volume of *Istoria Românilor. Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate* [History of Romania. A Heritage of Ancient Times], Bucharest, 2001 (the second edition was issued in 2010), under the aegis of the Romanian Academy.

I met Petrescu-Dîmbovița personally, in 1947, when together with my father Radu Vulpe, we visited, on several occasions, the archaeological site at Glina, by the outskirts of Bucharest. He was supervising, at Ion Nestor's initiative, the excavations in the neo-Eneolithic and Bronze Age multi-level site. I was immediately impressed by the almost military discipline of the team and the respect for the precision by which he conducted the works. I remembered this also when publishing certain materials coming from the rescue excavations performed during the 1944 bombardments at Ploiești-“trajă”, where the young Petrescu-Dîmbovița drafted the plans of the finds. This is how he has always been. Tirelessly working. He had become even annoying by his custom to convene his collaborators at most inappropriate hours. He was always behaving extremely serious. They used to even make jokes about his strictness in restraining from the pleasures highly regarded by the archaeologists during excavation works. I would dare to say he was truly ascetic when immersed in his work. He was one of the official reviewers of my doctoral thesis. I learned much from him and I feel honoured to have worked with him in his last years, as I have already mentioned.

Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița's activity mirrors a decade of history of the Romanian archaeology. A discipline which had to withstand the effects of a such dramatic lapse of time like the 20th century. His *Amintirile unui arheolog* [Memories of an archaeologist], published in his last years, contain moments of satisfaction, misfortune and also hope for the future. He was and will remain a landmark of the Romanian archaeology.

Alexandru Vulpe

18. 03. 2014