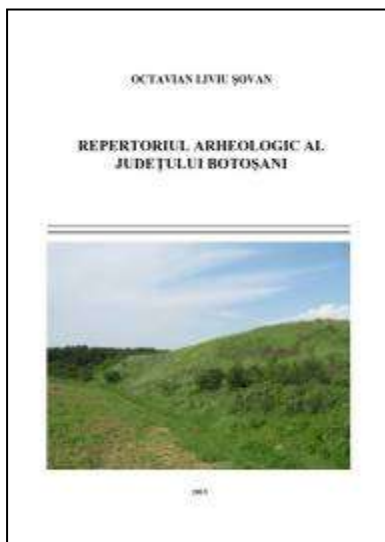


Octavian Liviu Șovan, *Repertoriul arheologic al județului Botoșani*, Pim Publishing House, Botoșani, 2013, 500 p. + electronic version on the attached CD-ROM.



It is almost useless to emphasize more the importance of the archaeological repertories of the counties, as any and all archaeologist, curator, researcher working in the field, as well as any person who had contacts with the archaeology or with the museum activities, are aware of the utmost necessity of such endeavour. From the interest of the local communities in the utilization of the cultural heritage to the care of the government in Bucharest toward the general, nationwide registration of the archaeological sites, there are numerous reasons justifying the elaboration of such large projects. A quick overview of the national repertories will show that the first published was the first edition of Botosani County Repertory (1976), and the most recent one was published by dr. Carol Kacsó – *Repertoriul arheologic al județului Maramureș* (2011); in between there are the repertories of Iași (1984), Cluj (1992), Alba (1995), Mureș (1995), Brașov (1996), Covasna (1998), Harghita (2000), Sibiu (2003), Sălaj (2010) and Hunedoara counties (2005).

The scientific personality of Dr. Octavian Liviu Șovan is both prominent and perfectly framed within the body of the Romanian archaeology of the last four decades. A product of the Iasi school of archaeology (a pupil and collaborator of M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, Nicolae Gostar, Dinu Marin, Dan Gh. Teodor, V. Chirica, V. Spinei, I. Ioniță), thus deeply rooted within both the University and the Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy, dr. Sovan is the author of an extensive body of scientific work: monographs, articles, notes, reports and books, his *opus magnum* being the monograph based on his own excavations, at Sântana de Mureș-Cernjachov site in Mihălășeni, Botoșani County, which left the presses in 2005.

The Archaeological Repertory of Botoșani County, a very demanding, detailed and laborious endeavour, was supported by the County Museum of Botoșani, the National Heritage Institute of Bucharest and the Culture and Heritage Directorate of Botoșani County, being published under the young collection *Bibliotheca Archaeologica „Hierաս” Monographica*, in the 4th issue of the series.

After several attempts fought on the “barricades of the System” Dr. O. L. Șovan succeeded, with the support of Mr. Bogdan Șandric, analyst-archaeologist and GIS

specialist with the National Heritage Institute of Bucharest, to win the war. Thus, the editorial project was funded by the *National Cultural Fund Administration*, which made available the financial resources allowing the printing of the book, at a final price of no consequence whatsoever (8.28 lei = 1.65 EUR).

The Archaeological Repertory of Botoșani County opens with a *Foreword* (p. 1-2) by Professor Vasile Chirica, one of the personalities of the Romanian archaeology, a highly respected specialist of the Southeastern European Prehistory, with a remarkable “calling card” in the field of publishing archaeological high quality, recognized awarded for opening the way for the nationwide registration of the archaeological sites in Romania. Chronologically, his repertory publishing activity consists of: *The Archaeological Repertory of Botoșani County* (1976), by Alexandru Păunescu, Paul Șadurschi, Vasile Chirica, and *The Archaeological Repertory of Iasi County* (1984), by Vasile Chirica and Marcel Tanasachi. With pertinent reasoning, the archaeologist from Iasi underlines the necessity of making a new archaeological repertory for Botosani County, which would complete the research of 1976 stage, the publishing year of the first Repertory.

Nature was generous with the space inhabited by the human communities in the Valley of Jijia River, which overlaps the administrative territory of Botoșani County. This is the reason of a very early start of archaeological research in the 19th century, some finds being reported as early as 1871, y Alexandru Odobescu in his well-known *Questionnaire*. The research emphasized and brought forth a most remarkable continuity of inhabitation, from the earliest times up the brink of modernity, a continuity that is defined by a *uniqueness* of character. This is the land that shows, as reminded Professor Vasile Chirica reminded us, Paleolithic relics, burial mounds, earthen ramparts – *Trajan's Wall*, a large number of archeological monuments of Precucuteni, Cucuteni and Noua cultures, fortifications of various historical eras, Great Migrations, Dark Ages and Medieval relics. There is probably no better saying than the one of Professor Vasile Chirica: “... the geographical space of Botoșani County is truly an open-air museum”.

The *Introduction* (p. 3-8) by the author, Dr. Octavian Liviu Șovan, archaeologist with the Culture and Heritage Directorate of Botoșani County, presents in a careful exposition the necessity, stages and timeline of the archaeological research within the territorial confines of Botoșani (the county formed by splitting the former region of Suceava between the counties of Suceava and Botoșani, following the administrative reform of 1968), the difficulties, expectations and the projected results of the scientific enterprise known as *The Archaeological Repertory of Botoșani County*. The Introduction recounts the historical successes of luminaries like Neculai and Emilia Zaharia and academician Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița, the ones who fleshed out in 1970 the site

registration activity by publishing the much cited *Așezări din Moldova (Moldavian settlements)*, the first archaeological repertory of Moldavia. Paradoxically, the communist „punitive” self-funding policies in the field of culture (1981), which brought the practical end of many archaeological projects and careers, were transformed in an opportunity to the benefit of the field-survey archaeology in the county of Botoșani. Dr. O. L. Șovan, a fighter who was not cowed by a defective system, contributed significantly to the sustenance of archaeology by finding new avenues of funding, based on the “contract archaeology” provided to the now extinct I.E.E.L.I.F. – Botoșani (a state-owned enterprise building irrigation and land-development projects), which made quite large amounts available to the archaeological projects in the county. This explains the existence of dozens of archaeological excavations at that time in the county, involving well-known names of the Romanian archaeology: Alexandru Păunescu, Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița, Adrian and Maria Florescu, Neculai and Emilia Zaharia, Dan Gh. Teodor and Silvia Teodor, Victor Spinei, Vasile Chirica, Maria Bitiri, Mihalache Brudiu, Nicolae Ursulescu, Lidia Dascălu, Dinu Marin, Ion Ioniță, O. L. Șovan, Anton Nițu, Paul Șadurschi, Constantin Iconomu, Constantin Asăvoaie, Maria Diaconescu, Rodica Popovici, Emil Moscalu, Florentin Burtănescu and many, many others. It is worth mentioning that the system was copied by almost all the museums in Romania at that time. The author argues for the importance of continuing the archaeological research after 1989, making a survey of both the results in the field of historical archaeology and the legislation governing the field of archaeological heritage since 2000, pointing out the weaknesses and the strengths, as well as the measures that should have been taken within the institution he was working with at the time, the Culture and Heritage Directorate of Botoșani County.

Some texts are dedicated to technical aspects. The author motivated his choice of the data-sheet model for the repertory, arguing that a very detailed definition of the registered archaeological finds would have been very hard to manage (a point of view regarded as doubtful by certain specialists); thus he selected instead simplified algorithmic data-sheets, providing nevertheless the fundamental data for correct spatial registration and recording of the sites. Even though not all the known archaeological sites in the county were spatially located, despite of the efforts of the survey team, who carried out a large number of on-site visits, surveys and thoroughly researched the bibliography, the data gathered and organized herein have high scientific and administrative value. Regarding the cultural and chronological interpretation of the data, the main reference was the recently published *Tratat de Istoria Românilor* (Romanian Academy’s *History of Romanians*, both editions – 2001 and 2010), while several well-known Romanian scholars were consulted in support: Dan Gh. Teodor, Victor Spinei, Vasile Chirica, Nicolae Ursulescu, Mircea Ignat and

Mihalache Brudiu, whose suggestions and advice contributed to the well-constructed Chronology, which is in fact expounded within the introductory chapter (p. 6-7).

All of the above provide, in the opinion of the author, an overall better knowledge of the archaeological finds and their registration under the protection of the law, as long as these are defined and demarcated by RAN (National Archaeological Register) and LMI (Historical Monuments List).

The next chapter is *The Timeline of the Project "The Archaeological Repertory of Botoșani County"* (p. 9-16), by Mr. Bogdan Șandric, one of the most knowledgeable GIS specialists in Romania. Well-balanced, concise and explicit, the text is more than explanatory regarding the objectives and, most of all, the necessity of such work, which required, since its beginnings, a very large volume of not only field work, but deskwork as well, taking into account the complexity and detail of archaeological "hairsplitting" and the correct understanding of the archaeological data in correlation with spatial information. In truth, Mr. Șandric outlined very clearly the fact that the necessity of a new and updated edition of the Repertory was more administrative than scientific, a conclusion we completely agree with after the lecture of the Repertory. We live in a time of permanent motion and rotation, with projects requiring rapid implementation, with constructions that cannot wait, therefore the *quasi-complete* locating, mapping, quantifying and classifying of the archaeological sites is compulsory for the protection of the archaeological heritage. Possessing an adequate general overview of the National Archaeological Register, Bogdan Șandric understands that the archaeological sites must be correctly verified and located spatially, as the precise location of the sites and definition of their geographical coordinates was his job description throughout the duration of the project. Mr. Șandric explains with clarity the tools, the topographic and satellite maps, the orthophotomaps, the GIS system employed, as well as the results achieved. The duration of the project was no less than four years, between 2008 and 2012, an entire team working for the delimitation of the archaeological sites and the digitization of data, the results being contained in: 2D maps, interactive map accessible to any person with minimal PC skills with the well-known ArcGIS software, as well the on-line interactive map, integral part of the same complex GIS project, all of the above meant to simplify and facilitate the knowledge of the details specific to the delimitation and location of the sites included in the text of the Repertory. The interaction of the user with the map is facilitated by the electronic guides included on the attached CD-ROM.

The Corpus of the finds (p. 17-482) is the massif body of the book. It includes, organized based on an established algorithm, the archaeological sites known to the author to date, alphabetically and by administrative unit, including the following data: *locality, RAN code, LMI code, point/place name, cadastre plot, latitude & longitude,*

notes (like within or outside built-up area), *topographic references*, *state of preservation of the site*, *risk factors* (natural, anthropic), *year of discovery*, *name of finder*, *type of research* (ex. field-work, systematic), *finds* (organized in a table, specifying type of find, chronology, culture, cultural stage).

The following chapter is the *Bibliography* (p. 483-498), which is quite large, listing more than 360 titles. The book ends with the *List of Abbreviations* (p. 499).

Without any doubt, I cannot be but subjective in analyzing this work, as I spent my childhood and adolescence mostly on the banks of Bașeu and Prut Rivers, in Suharău, Alba and Darabani. It is sufficient to mention that regretted archaeologist Paul Șadurschi excavated in the village of Suharău, at point No. 7 – *Ruginosul*, an archaeological site located just over the fence from the my grandparents' house. By analyzing this voluminous body of scientific work and, mostly, the manner of its conception, one can assert, without erring much, that what we have here is a one-of-a-kind item in the Romanian archaeology and therefore, before any criticism, this work must be understood. We appreciate that, for the first time, the site location is determined using the GIS application, the fact that the spatial information includes the cadastral data is also a first, as is the outlining of the degradation factors of the archaeological sites. For this reason, from the point of view of the management and protection of immobile heritage, most of the evaluation is positive, as the work is a useful and adequately configured working instrument, serving the interests of the Romanian State, which is represented in the major administrative units (the counties) by the Culture and Heritage Directorates. A second volume could be useful, including as many images (drawings, photographs, plans) of the finds as possible, or reference finds helping the user in understanding the chronology and the cultural sequence of a site by using various criteria. This observation is, in fact, quite right, but, taking into account the projected structure and objective of the Repertory, which is different from the standard, truly archaeological ones, I believe that this is not really an error. However, the large and complex bibliography listed by the author at the end of the book provides significant support to any researcher. Based on it, the user can reference most finds in the text with a various set of articles and book chapters. In the same regard, the lack of archaeological illustration is not an insurmountable barrier, as this can be easily rectified in the future, maybe by Dr. O. L. Șovan himself or his colleagues from Botoșani. Even if I cannot agree to all the chronologies used or established by the present work for the recorded finds, I believe that the finds are well "located", and any specialist, regardless of his/her opinions, understands perfectly the place of the archaeological sites/monuments in the larger context of the history of the Botoșani region.

At present, Botoșani County benefits from a unique archaeological Repertory, which is different from those we've been used to. Its core objective is to serve, first of all, the interests of the State, in its capacity of manager of the mobile and immobile archaeological heritage, of conservator and curator, through its Culture and Heritage County Directorates, its museums and its specialists. The commendable effort expended by Dr. Octavian Liviu Șovan and his collaborators must be respected, understood, continued and expanded, by virtue of the same public interest. We cannot but congratulate the team and regret that, for other counties with large numbers of archaeologists and funding, no Archaeological Repertories were elaborated, although this is the sacred mission of any career in archaeology and of any public institution in this field.

Bogdan Petru NICULICĂ

*The Bucovina Museum, Postal code: 720003,
Suceava, Romania*