

Alina Streinu, *Vase antice de sticlă din colecția „Maria și George Severeanu”, Muzeul Municipiului București Seria Colecția „Maria și George Severeanu” III, Cetatea de scaun, Târgoviște, 2019, 264 p., ISBN 978-606-537-447-8.*

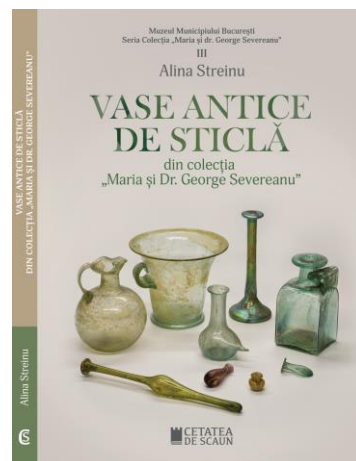
When we think about ancient glass, we tend to imagine the diversity and finesse of the multitude of forms and colours that resulted from the crafty hands of a glassmaker, following the evolution from hammered glass to blown glass. Cups, bowls, pitchers and vials are only a few mentions of these wondrous objects that have become part of collections all over the world.

The present book regarding glassware was written by dr. Alina-Oana Streinu, head of the Ancient and Medieval History Department at the Bucharest Municipality Museum, and author of numerous studies on Early Roman pottery (*terra sigillata*, lamps etc.) and on settlements in Dobruja from the Roman period. Seizing the opportunity of having at hand the artifacts from the “Maria și dr. George Severeanu” collection, she seems to have embarked on a mission to present to a larger audience the beauty and complexity of this collection. As it is the case of many public or private artifact collections in Romania, researchers did not always have sufficient time to publish them thoroughly and they ended up being displayed anyway, albeit without much information. Alas, I believe A. Streinu succeeded in her mission by publishing these excellent glass vessels in a most professional manner.

Streinu's work features an Introduction, three main chapters and ends with a Catalogue, the former being especially useful because it is written in both Romanian and English.

The first chapter, titled “The Ancient Glass-making Industry”, aims to familiarize the reader with all aspects pertaining to glass-making: from production techniques, the nature and chemical composition of different types of glass, trade and marketing of glass objects, the recycling process, all aspects regarding workshops, to the story of the people behind both common and exceptional glass vessels. The author utilizes relevant ancient sources, such as Plinius' *Naturalis Historia*, Petronius' *Satyricon* or Strabo's *Geographica*, to name a few, as well as up-to-date articles and interdisciplinary studies on glass and glass-making.

Chapter II, “The Contents of Glass Vessels”, is a mandatory part of this book, on the grounds that a significant part of the glass vessels acts as packaging for special oils (such as rose, sesame, saffron, juniper, cedar and nard), oil-based perfumes and



ointments. The remaining glass objects had been used as either serving containers for wine, or medical instruments/tools (such as mortars, alembics, spoons and even scalpels). Consulting works such as Celsus' *De Medicina*, Columella's *Res Rustica* or Soranus' *Gynaecia* back up this small voyage into the ancient medicinal practices.

Finally, Chapter III presents us the glass vessels from the "Maria și dr. George Severeanu" collection, split into two large groups: the table ware, transport and storage containers, on one hand; *unguentaria* and small vessels for cosmetic products, on the other. As we can see, both the functional and morphological criteria were used in order to accomplish this. The first category consists of 54 intact and fragmentary vessels: cylindrical/prismatic/spindle-shape containers, jars, pitchers, flasks, a table amphora, cups, beakers and bowls. The second category has 84 objects classified as *unguentaria* (with various shapes), five miniature vessels, two ointment jars, one *kohl tube* and three containers with a side beak (used for refuelling lamps).

Although the book is mostly written in Romanian, the three main chapters have been summarized in English at the end. The illustrations are of good quality and well organized, as to not be too cluttered. This is of tremendous help for both students and researchers when searching for analogies, because it speeds up the process. The Catalogue is fairly well organized, with subcategories and concise object descriptions. As mentioned earlier, it has two versions: a Romanian and an English one, useful for a larger audience.

In conclusion, the author succeeds in presenting the glass objects of the "Maria și dr. George Severeanu" collection as, in her own words, "more than ancient artefacts worthy of being displayed and admired in the showcase of a museum", by using ancient sources and analogies, with the final aim to make it "easy for all interested, both the broad public and specialists" (p. 147) to catch a glimpse of a day in the ancient universe of the Roman age.

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