

REVIEWS

RECENZII ȘI NOTE DE LECTURĂ



Alexandra Ion, *Regi, sfinți, anonimi. Cercetători și oseminte umane în arheologia din România*, Târgoviște Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2019, 213 pp.

Archaeologist and anthropologist, Alexandra Ion was student at the Universities of Bucharest and Sheffield, followed by research studies at Universities of Cambridge, Sheffield, Utica and Helsinki. Now she is a researcher at the Anthropology Institute “Francisc I. Rainier” of the Romanian Academy.

“What are doing the archaeologists and anthropologists behind closed doors, on the field, in the laboratories or in the museums? What happens with the bones of those who died a few thousand years ago as an object of study and how somebody turns into an exhibit at an anthropological exposition? The present book proposes to answer to these questions”. This is a short definition given by the author about her book. But beyond this, “*Kings, Saints, Anonymous. Researchers and Human Bones in Romania*” is a challenging journey whose main heroes are not only the human remains but also those who discover, reconstruct and interpret those discoveries. Miss Ion emphasizes the fact that the human remains represent “a unique opportunity to get in touch with people from the past”, but also stresses out the fact that “the dead are losing their identity and become objects, like any other archaeological material: ceramics, glass, stone.” Using these aspects as starting points, the author in the Introduction entitled “*Anthropologies of the body*” lines out the fact that “the body” is actually modern age invention, more precisely an invention of the 20th century if we take into account the numerous definitions given by Foucault, Elias, Butler etc. Likewise, the scientific process of analysis of the human remains is a social construction depending on the expectations. “Reality is much chaotic than it appears in the final publications. Ask any archaeologist or anthropologist and

they will tell you about the numerous moments when they are full of doubt, uncertain of their interpretations, or frustrated by the quality of the material”.

From this starting point it is natural that the first chapter of the book *The human body between funerary archaeology and osteoarchaeology* is a historiographic journey from the human remains as part of an archaeological complex, with its inventory, medical and physical traits versus the human remains in their social and historical dimensions. Miss Ion uses a parallel construct in the presentation. On the one hand we have the body in terms of: sex, occupation, pathology, life expectancy, occupational markers and on the other hand there are the body in terms of social/cultural anthropology, gender (as different from sex) and philosophy. That is why the author stresses out the fact that there are two different aspects: funerary archaeology and mortuary archaeology....and that is why in modern archaeology there are three main aspects to be investigated: the relation between the biologic and social aspect of the body; the body and the associated archaeological material and the difference between the archaeology of the living and the dead. After these theoretical issues, the chapter turns toward more practical aspects: the relationship between archaeologist and human bones a very well documented “history” of the evolution of the researches from the earliest stage up to the multi-disciplinary approaches when anthropologists gained significant terrain. The final parts of the chapter are dedicated to:” Romanian archaeologist and human bones”, and “The evolution of the osteo - archeological thought in Romania”. Both are long and rather complicated relationships, which suffered significant modifications in the 50-60’s when anthropologists were integrated in the research. “through the physical anthropology studies the passage from the individual is made, these bodies gaining their identity”. Of course another significant modification was after 1989 especially in the area of multi-disciplinary research.

“*Medieval rulers, DNA and scientists*” is the title of the second chapter, which follows the “history” of the remains of Vladislav Vlaicu, Constantin Brancoveanu, Bogdan I, Lactu, Petru I, Roman I and other Wallachian and Moldavian rulers. The beginning was given by the archaeological researches at Curtea de Arges, at the presumed grave of Vladislav Vlaicu.

The aim of the project was to investigate the real identity of the bones and the ethnic origin of the ruler. The project was not singular being inscribed in a larger European trend. Here Miss Ion makes an interesting detour: in a special subchapter: “*not all the dead are equally dead*” shortly presents the fascination of the long gone rules upon the collective memory thus, opening the way toward the most intriguing part: “*Romanian rulers, cumans and genetics*”. Miss Ion’s presentation of the case (which was rather controversial at that time, and ignited many spirits especially of those members of the academic segment who could not apprehend the importance of the project) is rather distant using the *adiatur altera pars* system to perfection. An interesting part of the chapter is dedicated to Constantin Brancoveanu and the “odyssey” of his remains.

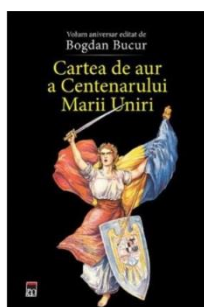
The third chapter: “*The transformation of anonymous bodies in ideal human types. The story of Francisc I. Rainier anthropological collection*”, although is a radical change of pace, presents in three cases the history of the Rainier collection. Actually the collection is the “history of those poor and alone”, in contradiction with the previous chapter. Again the author presents the history of the anthropological collections from the very beginnings (17-18th centuries) up to the 20th century. Rainier, managed to avoid the main eugenic trend of his age and his collection of 3585 human skulls represents an interesting human database. The final part of the chapter is entitled: “*what is the value of a human body?*” in which, beyond the presentation of some interesting (and sometimes gruesome) cases, an invitation to reflection is made.

Finally, the fourth chapter: “*Osteoarchaeology as anthropology? Bodies, relics and holly martyrs*” continues the analysis of the central question of this book: what is the value of scientific analysis in understanding past human being? As case study Miss Ion uses the bishop Vasile Aftenie (1899-1950), who died in Vacaresti prison. The case is a “battle ground” between three aspects: archaeological, religious and judicial. Again, the author uses this case for a larger historical presentation of the “forensic archaeology” cases: Katyn, Spain, Argentina, Yugoslavia, an even Romania (the case of the victims of communist terror). The conclusion is: the bodies of those executed became places of memory no matter if we speak

about the early Christian martyrs (discovered at Niculitel e.g.) of those tortured and killed by totalitarian regimes.

Alexandra Ion's book is not only about archaeology or anthropology: it is about an insight of self-acceptance as scientists, and even nation. Easy to read, not too easy to accept some aspects but nevertheless a very modern approach. The book has an exhaustive and up to date bibliography which can be an invitation to further study.

Fábian István



Bogdan Bucur (editor), *Cartea de aur a Centenarului Marii Uniri*, București, Editura Rao Class, 2017, 751 pp.

Apropierea centenarului Unirii a generat o efervescentă activitate în domeniul cercetărilor istorice. Aceasta s-a concretizat mai ales în abordarea, în cheie modernă, a Primului Război Mondial, prin integrarea unor analize precum importanța frontului de acasă, medicina militară sau perspectivele de gen. Dezbaterile generate mai ales în cadrul unor întâlniri cu caracter științific s-au materializat într-o serie de proiecte editoriale sub formă de monografii, sinteze sau studii și articole științifice. În același context trebuie însă integrate și eforturile, deloc puține, de întregire a surselor documentare privind Marele Război și Unirea, care au apărut sub forma unor antologii, veritabile instrumente de lucru pentru cercetători. Un astfel de demers este și inițiativa istoricului Bogdan Bucur, *Cartea de aur a Centenarului Marii Uniri*, cu un cuvânt introductiv semnat de către istoricul Bogdan Murgescu. Inspirat de prima *carte de aur* a Unirii, adică de manuscrisul pe pergament, realizat pentru serbarea primilor zece ani de la Marea Unire, Bogdan Bucur și-a propus să ofere celor interesați posibilitatea de a urmări procesul de formare a României Mari pornind de surse istorice de referință, unele deja editate, altele inedite, culese din fondurile Arhivelor Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Arhivele Naționale ale României sau din cele ale Bibliotecii Naționale.

Volumul este structurat în opt capitole cuprinzând surse istorice referitoare la participarea României la Marele Război, actele unirii Basarabiei, Bucovinei, Transilvaniei, Banatului, Crișanei, Sătmarului și Maramureșului și insula Ada-Kaleh cu România, dar și la încoronarea de la Alba Iulia și celebrarea Unirii în perioada interbelică.

Valoarea științifică a acestui demers este cu atât mai mare cu cât autorul a întreprins o selecție critică a documentelor, cât și prin tipul documentelor selectate. Astfel nu ne aflăm doar în fața unei colecții de documente oficiale precum sunt de pildă decretele regale, jurnalele Consiliilor de Miniștri sau corespondența diplomatică, volumul cuprinzând și surse mai puțin formale, dar cu o însemnătate la fel de mare precum sunt articolele din publicațiile periodice ale vremii (ziare precum *Universul*, *Furnica*, *Transilvania*, *Românul*). De asemenea, de remarcat este și faptul că un spațiu consistent din economia lucrării a fost alocat unor surse istorice vizuale referitoare la evenimentele din anii de război precum și la proclamarea Unirii și a momentului încoronării. Aceste imagini provin atât din surse publicistice, dacă ne referim la reprezentări alegorice ale celor două blocuri militare publicate în *Furnica*, dar sunt și cărți poștale ilustrate. În galeria imaginilor remarcăm și reproducerile fotografice din fondurile Arhivelor Naționale și ale Muzeului Național de Istorie a României, ceea ce atrage atenția asupra reprezentativității acestui gen de surse documentare, în general mai puțin frecventate de către istorici. Între sursele vizuale remarcăm de pildă posterele cu caracter alegoric reprezentând confruntările din timpul războiului, dar și fotografiile din timpul serbărilor încoronării de la Alba Iulia.

Realizat în condiții grafice deosebite volumul se remarcă în primul rând prin calitatea și rigurozitatea documentării, ceea ce impune acest demers editorial ca pe o sursă de cercetare extrem de utilă cercetătorilor, dar și cititorilor interesați de abordarea sau aprofundarea evenimentelor care au dus la formarea României Mari. Prin selecția documentelor, volumul reprezintă, într-adevăr, astfel cum era și intenția declarată a autorului, o invitație permanent deschisă la reflexivitate istorică.

Georgeta Fodor