

Archaeological records regarding the University Square in Bucharest

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Rezumat. *Săpăturile edilitare efectuate în centrul Bucureștiului au permis cercetarea urmelor arheologice ale Mănăstirii Sf. Sava. Construită la sfârșitul secolului al XVI-lea, mănăstirea a devenit sediul Școlii Domnești, iar în timpul domniei lui Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) a dobândit rangul de Academie Domnească. Fundațiile celor două biserici din mijlocul mănăstirii sunt înconjurate de un cimitir și de zidurile construcțiilor care serveau pentru găzduirea călugărilor, pentru școală, pentru prima bibliotecă publică, primul muzeu, o tipografie și multe altele. Lucrarea de față urmărește discutarea sitului arheologic „Sf. Sava” în lumina săpăturilor executate pe Bd. Regina Elisabeta și în Piața Universității.*

Abstract. *Urban public works done in the centre of Bucharest allowed recording the archaeological remains of Sf. Sava Monastery. Built at the end of XVI century, the monastery became the seat of Waivode School and under the reign of Constantin Brancoveanu (1688-1714) gained the rank of Waivode Academy. The base of two churches from the middle of the monastery surrounded by a graveyard, the remains of some buildings in which found a shelter monks, the school, the first public library, the first museum, a typography and many others. The present paper have the purpose to discuss the archaeological site “St. Sava” by the reason of the excavations made on the Queen Elisabeth Boulevard and in University Square.*

Keywords: Sf. Sava Monastery, churches, Constantin Brâncoveanu, University Square of Bucharest, archeological survey, construction phases.

The University Square in Bucharest is a major guiding mark in the topography of the city, marking the meeting place of two large avenues orientated N-S and E-W. Practically it is composed of the roundabout created at the meeting point of important thoroughfares and of the garden with the four statues built in the carpet of grass and flowers in front of the University Palace.

Archaeologically, the University Square set up in the second half of 19th century is placed north of the precinct of the medieval city and historically speaking this looks like an authentic pole of the spiritual life of Bucharest housing today vestiges from the Saint Sava Monastery including also the Royal Academy, the first public library, the first museum the tradition of which is continued by the Museum of Bucharest and in the near proximity the Colțea Hospital with its pharmacy, the oldest of Țara Românească, the Colțea School and typography.

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This inheritance is completed today by the Palace of the National Theatre, built between 1967-1970, on the place often used by artistic circus bands for pitching tents. In the XX century this square was preferred by Bucharest citizens for political and cultural meetings, meetings that before would take place in the Union Square on the Metropoliei Hill or on the Filaret Field.

Most of the archaeological records in this area were found during the restoration of some architectonic monuments and especially during the municipal works for the modernization of the city. The first objective was the restoration of the Sutu Palace built between 1833-1834 by the boyar Costache Grigore Şuţu under the contract he had signed with the Viennese architects Johan Veit and Conrad Schwink [1]. The building, that was about to be demolished, had to become according to the decision of CE of SPB of December 10, 1956 the headquarter of the Bucharest Museum. Before functioning as such, the restoration of the palace was absolutely necessary even if it was placed in the University Square, the center of the capital. In the archives found in the Museum there were a few written documents regarding the deal between the sleeping partner and the two architects, the quality of the works, in some parts unsatisfying for the owner, often redone in the second stage of the interior finishing coat [2]. Besides these documents, there are also other records according to which it is known that in the Saint Sava slum there had been the houses of the chronicler Stoica Ludescu inherited from his grandfather, Seman "Judeţul"², who had that town rank between the years 1594-1626. Later on it was possible to establish the entire line of the owners of the construction and of the large land that was next to the "entrance to the Coltea Monastery" and to the Saint Sava neighborhood taken-over around 1816 by the seneschal Costache Şuţu, as his wife's dowry. In 1833 the young owner decided to have the present palace built. As the written information, although useful, did not completely correspond to the requirements of the restorers, in 1958 they had to start some diggings in the land in front of the edifice [3]. For the work six ditches had to be dug, the first being inefficient because of some leakage of a drain pipe. In the other ditches the healthy, tamped brown ground layer was at -1,62 under the present-day level. It was covered by dark grey ground, combined with coal, leaving the impression of the effect of a fire. The vestiges of a half-timbered house from which we have pieces of glazed plates with annular stands were found in this old layer. The yellow, brown or green glaze as well as a piece of horizontal, unglazed tile found in the layer, seem to be dating from the 16th century. The fourth ditch, parallel with the south part of the palace revealed the wall of a cellar of 0.75 m wide, made of well-burnt brick (29x15.5x4 cm) and solid mortar.

² A local town judge.

Later, the match wall that buttressed the south wall of the palace central hall was also found. This cellar that belonged to the “big houses” of Stoical Ludescu was 4m wide and had a semi-cylindrical arch, backed by double arches 1m wide [4]. The wall extended 17m under the pavement of the courtyard towards I. C. Brătianu.

Avenue making a junction with another wall orientated N-S. The 1958 survey proved that in the southern extremity of the University Square there had been found 16th century vestiges of modest living over which Seman Județul³ built his houses to be much later replaced by the Sutu Palace.

These observations could be completed following the excavations made also in 1958 by the archaeologist Dinu V. Rosetti near to the Colțea Church which is owed to the spatharus Mihai Cantacuzino between 1701-1702 [5]. The present day church was built at a distance of 2-3 m north of the brick and river rocks foundation of the previous church of Udrea Doicescu’s, the high official killed in the insurgence of the “seimeni” and “dorobanti” from 1655 [6].

The above-mentioned vestiges were found in 1982 by the archaeologists Radu Ciuceanu and Cristian Țico [7] and fully brought to light in 2006 [8] by dr. Gh. Mănucu-Adameșteanu. Their research and diggings had as purpose the renovation of the church, important monument not only for Bucharest but also for the University Square.

In 1958 D.V. Rosetti had dug up two sections, one perpendicular to the sanctuary of the Cantacuzino church, 7.5 m long and 2 m wide and the second, more reduced (4.50 x 2m) that followed the foundation of the south apse of this construction. It was by chance that the first section was expanded to the south side of a pottery kiln which made possible the identifying of the oldest layer of medieval habitation in this south-eastern part of the University Square. The ceramic pieces from the section and the observations regarding the medieval kiln confirm the existence of medieval habitation in the second half of the 15th century and the beginning of the next one [9]. A humble type of living for ordinary people, potters undoubtedly and other handicraftsmen or servants, all beneficiaries of half-timber constructions or perhaps huts over which the houses of boyars or other important townspeople were built in the course of time. Throughout the 16th century the social condition of this northern community of Bucharest changed which was reflected in the registers of some boyars, attendants at the Royal Court, such as that chief magistrate [M1] of the region, Andronache, the first to mark the beginning of the history of Saint Sava church which he had founded as a patron saint.

³ Town judge.

In the same year 1958, when surveys were made in the courtyard of the Șuțu Palace and around the Colțea Church, the professor dr. Gh. Cantacuzino recorded some findings while laying the foundation of a new block of flats on Academiei Street, no. 4.

He found a cellar [M2] that he thought belonged to the S-W corner of the Saint Sava Monaster, a water pipe with triangular protective hose obviously used for a long time, part of which was exhibited in the Bucharest Museum Hall.

The discoveries from Academiei Street, no.4, especially the cellar which Gh. Cantacuzino believed to be from the 16th century, determined N. Stoicescu to place the first stage of Saint Sava Monastery “at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th one” [10]. The argument in favor of a later date is sustained by the charter from April 23, 1619 [11]. Therefore the monastery built by Andronache the chief magistrate is one of the first constructions in this northern extremity of today’s capital.

The archaeological observations made on the building sites of this area confirm the situation. The most frequent proofs are the cellare and the water pipes spreading all over the Univeristy Square.

WATER PIPE 1 was found 22m far from the SE corner of the University Palace façade and -0.60m under the present day pavement. It crossed a layer of dark grey medieval ground 0.15-0.25m thin, being made of hollow tiles protected by double-sloped bricks connected with yellowish mortar and burnt lime. This pipe was providing water to Saint Sava Monastery running from the north to the corner of the present Romanian Commercial Bank.

PIPE 2 was perpendicular on the previous one crossing Queen Elizabeth Avenue towards Colțea, both of them dating from the 17th century [12].

PIPE 3 made also of ceramic hollow tiles like the other ones, was in alignment with Edgar. Quinet Street but heading to the Sărindar Street. It crossed a pit probably made for a hut where pieces of typically enameled Romanian bowls with decorative elements traced in white paint were found and dated as from the 17th-18th centuries.

PIPE 4 NE-SW oriented, running from the statue of Gheorghe Lazăr to that of Spiru Haret’s belonged to the 18th century. It was found under the pavement of Queen Elisabeth Boulevard. The enameled tubular hollow tiles had been covered inside with yellowish gritty mortar and double-sloped bricks.

PIPE 5 found in front of Gheorghe Lazăr’s statue was made of bigger, unprotected hollow tiles, covered inside with greenish thin enamel. The ditch dug for this drain pipe crossed through a layer of debris from the first half of 19th century. As

far as we know, the University Square area was crossed by a water supply-system part of it coming from the future Cișmigiu Park and another from Icoanei Garden or Bucureștioara River. In the 16th century actual habitation was rather limited, even poor.

In March 1964, when the excavation works for the new wing foundation of Athenee Palace Hotel were started at a depth of 6m the reading of the stratigraphic sediments was possible which proved that the first signs of habitation in this place belonged to 18th century [13].

In 1986, on the building site of Metro 2, near Patria Cinema two big cellars of late utility were discovered dating from 18th-19th centuries [14]. Some 17th century houses belonging to the north limit of the city's heart were identified on N. Bălcescu Avenue in front of the National Theatre. A real demographic and edilitary explosion took place at the end of 17th century in the area in and around Mogoșoaia Bridge, Cișmigiu and Bucureștioara River. The princely donations made thus possible the building of houses for the boyars in that area either registered in the written documents or archaeologically referred too [15]. Among such properties were that of Vergo, *vel spătar*⁴ in the slum of Stoica the Priest (Brezoianu, n.n.) according to the muniment dated October 11, 1693 [16], the ones of the police prefect Ianache Văcărescu as confirmed in the muniment from 17 April 17, 1696 [17] or the ones of Pătrașco *vel șetrar*⁵ Brezoianu of 1703 [18] etc.

But the small wooden churches were to be replaced by wall constructions such as the Ienii Church (the first halidom destroyed in the earthquake from March 1977) built in 1724, the Church of a Day built by princess Marica (1702) in the slum of Manea the Priest, the churches Brezoianu (1710), Colțea (1701) [19], Caimata (1730-1731) or Scaune (1703). Owing to these secular and religious constructions the image of the area with the Saint Sava Monastery changed, though a century ago the monastery was on the outskirts of the town. It had been a humble religious place in the times when the Courtly Residence from the banks of the Dâmbovița river was endowed with great monasteries: "Saint Roadside Crucifix" - Radu Vodă, Mihai Vodă Monastery which Paul de Alep on his journey to Bucharest praised as being "big and monumental and with the church having three concave domes" [20]. The same attendant of the patriarch, who had come from the Middle East observed that in 1656 the Saint Sava Monastery was "a small monastery with Saint Sava as a titular saint" [21].

⁴ "Vel spătar" represents the rank of a great boyar, somehow similar to a marshal (translator's note).

⁵ "Vel șetrar" represents the rank of a great boyar, similar to the connetable (translator's note).

We do not know many things about its founder whom G.I. Ionescu-Gion recorded as being a certain “Andronache, the chief magistrate” [22]. Dedicated to “Saint Sava” from the Holy Sepulcher it received this name even if the titular saint was that of “Annunciation”.

Being subordinated to the great Christian centre, Andronache’s monastery was bestowed with a lot of donations from the citizens of Bucharest: small shops, pieces of land for houses, fields, becoming a housing center for the eastern orthodox on pilgrimage to Jerusalem [23].

The monastic dwelling was to win its fame by housing the school set up by Șerban Vodă Cantacuzino, at the beginning of his reign, under his brother’s advice, the steward Constantin Cantacuzino and upgraded into a Royal Academy by Constantin Brâncoveanu [24].

An elaborated bibliography created by Romanian and foreign researchers reflects the role of this prestigious institution from Bucharest the tradition of which has been kept alive by the University of Bucharest up to the present day. Between the 17th and 19th centuries many intellectuals from Wallachia as well as other young people from abroad were trained in this temple of education. Among the material sources kept in high esteem nowadays are “the religious inscription of the Church erected by Vodă Brâncoveanu for the Saint Sava Monastery” [25], some scholars’ tombstones, some other lithic pieces later on completed by the archaeological vestiges found in 1972.

Towards the end of May the same year, on the present day Queen Elizabeth Avenue, the Teleconstruction Company, sector 1, was carrying out some works that meant firstly the excavation of a 1m wide ditch in the south pavement opposite to the front of the University Palace in the space reserved for the statue of Michael the Brave and then of an enclosure-box of 3.35x3.20m next to the alley that goes to the Romanian Commercial Bank [26]. The works were progressing slowly because a thick floor of concrete had to be dismantled. The east side of that enclosure box collapsed over a wall of well burnt brick fixed with white-yellowish mortar, sand and gravel. The ditch proved to be an axis for the two subsequent “Saint Sava” churches known from the documents and from the official royal chronicle but now actually identified on the ground. Their foundations were at 7m distance from the pedestal of the great Voivode’s statue, right under the bus stop for the people riding towards the Rosetti Square. Archaeologically it could be specified that Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu’s construction that we will mark as B2, completely overlapped Andronache’s construction (B1) being much larger than the previous one.

CHURCH 1 (16th -17th centuries) had followed the hall plan, with the sanctuary apse barely visible in that ditch, the south side laid open on a length of 14.62m

(the “E” Wall). The wall made of bricks (25 x 12 x 3,5m) with gritty-yellowish mortar had a lot of fissures. The other two perpendicular walls (the “F” and “D” walls) were 0.90m wide and 1m thick, sizes which the south wall must also have had though uncovered only on its northern half. If the hall plan is unquestionable as the poor resistance of the walls, in 1707 when C. Brâncoveanu was unsuccessfully trying to have the church repaired [27], the longitudinal axis must have been longer than the 14.62m as it is specified now [28].

CHURCH 2 (1709-1870) was delimited to the west by the enclosure box wall excavated in 1972 and to the east by an arched wall 27m long which is believed to belong to the altar. The brick was different from the one used by the predecessors (28x15x3.5) being fixed with mortar made of sand, gravel and quick lime. Obviously, the walls of the Brâncoveanu church are better preserved covering the foundations of the previous one (Andronache’s) which had been cut off at the level of the inferior pavement. Only the transversal walls had been apparent: the “A” wall, the extremity of the western exonarthex, a thick wall of 1.62m, the “B” wall wide of 1.05m designating the narthex, the “C” wall of 102 serving to separate the nave and the “G” wall of 1.30m, that of the apse. All these walls were cut off 1m below the present pavement while the old ones remained at a level of 1.57-1.72m. The foundation of the church was laid starting from a depth of [M3] - 1.60m being very well covered with mortar. Stratigraphically, the princely foundation act is indicated by a stripe of mortar that covers a bed of grey earth that has under it a gross bed of dervish mixed with pieces of brick from the old church. Inside Brâncoveanu’s church materials amassed from the 1970 demolition when an estimation list confirmed the sum of 300 lei “for the demolition of the church” [29]. The foundations which were according to the construction plan of both churches—one of the chief magistrate’s and the other of the faithful Christian Saint Constantin Brâncoveanu’s -as well as the tombs of the nearby cemetery remained stuck into the ground. The box like enclosure previously mentioned excavated in front of the western entrance revealed 12 buried people (Ch.2).

M1-[M4] - Found at -0,85m under the level of inhumation, mature person. The legs had been displaced when laying the foundation for Brancoveanu’s church exonarthex, which proves the tomb, belonged to the previous construction. In the right hand he had a coin.

M2-The skull had been found in an oval grave next to a brick that had the name “Anania” written on it fact that indicated a monk.

M3-Teenager with the legs displaced because of the grave dug for M2. In the ground used for filling the grave there were found a few pieces of a green enameled plate (17th century).

M4-Mature man with the arms close to the body and the hands raised toward the clavicle, a coin on the chest.

M5-Mature person, the skull affected when digging the grave for M1 which overlapped it, proving that this had been buried in 17th century.

M6-Mature man, with the arms and the elbows at a certain distance from the body, with the phalanges turned green because of a very rusty coin on one side of which there seemed to be the lady patron of Hungary. In the filling there were pieces of charred wood.

M7-Mature person whose only remains were the legs.

M8-Mature person, no skull, only from the neck down, the right arm on the stomach, the left one displaced because of M7. A very small, charred coin was the only inventory.

M9-Mature person, re-buried.

M10-Mature person, well preserved. A broken coin was found near his left hand. The left arm was found on the chest while the right one was missing as the grave had been displaced.

M11-Teenager (he/she) buried near M10, hands on the stomach, a 16th century coin and three garment hooks.

M12-Re-inhumed skull near M7 and M8 which could have been the skull of the latter [30].

The 12 tombs were part of the cemetery surrounding Andronache's church and would continue to be used as such during Brancoveanu's reign. The box like enclosure that contained the relics occupied a small piece of ground in front of the exonarthex, being populated with 10 mature Christians, one of them a former monk as that brick with the name of "Anania" on it (M2) indicated and two teenagers. The funerary list includes coins (M1, M4, M6, M8, M10, M11), an inscribed brick (M2), garment hooks (M11), some remains of a coffin.

Burial areas were identified both around the churches and beyond the SW corner of the monastery where the archaeologist dr. Gheorghe Cantacuzino noted similar situations, on Academiei Street, no. 4.

In all its existence, the Saint Sava Monastery passed through at least three long-lasting stages of construction starting with that of Andromache's masonry. Vestiges of some walls and tombs, part of a brick pavement (25x14x3.5cm) that covered the narthex were brought to light and made known.

The second stage owed to Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu started with the construction of the school and with the attempt at consolidating the existent

church walls, a failed attempt as they collapsed. Consequently, a new church was founded between 1707-1709 [31], dates which are actually registered in the religious inscription. This new church, by far bigger, had 1m thick walls consolidated with wooden beams following a transversal plan consisting of the exonarthex (3.5m), the narthex (15.5m) and the nave with the two lateral apses and the semicircular altar inside and polygonal outside. The eastern apse delimited by a thick wall of 1.30m preserves the brick pavement which probably supported the plates [M5] Radu Dudescu, the subprefect mentioned in the letter addressed to the patriarch of Jerusalem, Hrisant Nottara on September 13, 1710. He was informing the pontiff who was interested in Vodă Brâncoveanu's actions that "the building of the holy church had been finished and it did not lack anything, be it painting or plates, catapetasma or other necessary things [32]. A stone house for the typography, a library and museum in the SE corner of the monastery yard were also built on the eastern side as the further plans indicated [33]. But Constantin Brâncoveanu's work was much more considerable including several constructions finished by 1713, such as schoolhouses, a stone gate, a barn, a shelter, a protection wall [34]. At the Saint Sava Monastery there were also "the houses for patriarchs" in the SW corner, the monastic cells, the ecumenic houses. The fire of 1739 damaged the buildings which were later repaired. The one that marked the third stage of construction was Alexander Ipsilanti, the ruler that Nicolae Iorga appreciated as being: "one of our best rulers from the 18th century, if not the best of them all", opinion also shared by a contemporary historian [35].

After 1767, the architectonic complex of Saint Sava functioned exclusively for schooling purposes. During his first reign in Țara Românească, Alexander Ipsilanti (1774-1782) carried out a policy useful not only for the promoting of trades and commerce, but also for the development of education including the Saint Sava Academy [36]. This latter one became the beneficiary of a big building, which the 1852 plan named "the Saint Sava College" and located on the northern side of Queen Elizabeth Avenue. According to a sketch drawn by Alex. N. Vitzu who had attended the college, the precincts stretched over both sides of today's avenue, with the main college building to the north and a smaller house near its western side probably the Episcopal house with the porch facing Academiei Street [37]. In the central area there was C. Brâncoveanu's church in front of which opened the big gate to Academiei Street. In 1852, the Saint Sava School had a western gate [M6] already mentioned and a second one, on the south side, built between the Library and the Museum (as a reversed T) in the south-eastern part. The building for primary education was in the south-western corner extending as far as the south entrance, making possible to get to Ion Ghica Street and farther on to Colțea Street. Two other buildings located on today's Queen Elisabeth Boulevard flanked the first entrance from Academiei Street. The documents certify the fact that Alexander Ipsilanti did not only build the two-

storied School Palace but also other houses for classes, living outhouses during the construction campaign that was ended in 1779 or inherited from Brâncoveanu, such as the church with only one wooden steeple built on the exonarthex [38].

Around the monastery there were houses and other properties that belonged to the persons mentioned previously when the town had bought pieces of land for the improvement of the “Way of the University Boulevard” and of the front garden according to the project made by Al. Orăscu and of Sc. Benisch and approved by Alexander D. Ghica on September 10, 1857. A month later, the key foundation stone of the present University Palace [39] was laid.

Except for the church for which there was initially an intention of being moved from “the place where it was situated” all the other buildings in the area were destroyed [40] being already in a poor condition due to calamities age. In a report from December 3, 1852, the Prince Barbu Știrbei was informed that the buildings housing the library and the museum located near the properties of the boyar Costache Șuțu were “falling down and soggy” [41]. The inspection of the church registered the fact that though it had been “tied with iron rails” it did not make it resistant which suggested the idea of erecting a new church [42]. It was the last building from Constantin Brâncoveanu’s dowry to be demolished as previously mentioned in 1870 when the new University Palace had already become the pride of Bucharest [43]. It was considered as a “Center for Superior Public Education”.

The monumentality of the edifice required that an adequate location be chosen, with a main highway towards Colțea Street and towards Mogoșoia Bridge. The first works were started in front of the University and extended gradually towards the marshes of Cismigiu and farther on. A semicircular garden was arranged with Michael the Brave’s statue in the middle though previously it had been placed at the entrance into the Cișmigiu Gardens. In 1874, the bronze creation of the sculptor Carrier Belleuse was uncovered on the students’ demand. The overlapped foundations of the two Saint Sava churches were left at 7m distance from the statue where they have been ever since. They are the most important vestiges reminding us of the first Academy from Țara Românească in the late 17th century. The present day Queen Elizabeth Avenue and the Univeristy Square stretch over a large part of the former Saint Sava monastery land with the remains of the buildings used as monastic cells, patriarchal and ecumenic houses, cemetery, household accessories, the schoolhouses, the library with 10.000 books, the museum, the typography, the inner wall with gates with stone frames [M7], a highly interesting archaeological inventory.

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- [28] The E wall starts at 1.20m distance from Z.A and at 7.10 m joins Z. F. being unexpectedly cut off at 14.62m.
- [29] Ionescu 1965, p. 111.
- [30] Panait I. Panait, Building site Notebook 28/1, 1972.
- [31] The religious inscription of Saint Sava Monastery indicates the day of the sanctification – July 20, 1709. The stone plaque is at the National Art Museum from Bucharest.
- [32] Hurmuzachi 1936, p. 76.
- [33] 1864, The University of Bucharest 1964, Bucharest, p. 13.
- [34] Stoicescu 1961, p. 295.
- [35] Matei 1982, p. 17.
- [36] Giurescu 1974, p. 65-66.
- [37] Vătămanu 1973, p. 47.
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[38] 1864 University of Bucharest 1964, Pl. XXI.

[39] Ionașcu 1965, p. 105-108.

[40] Ibidem, p. 111.

[41] Ibidem, p. 105, n.1

[42] Ibidem, p. 111

[43] The date of the demolishing of Saint Sava was different: Ionescu 1938, p. 92, gives the date of 1855.
