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„Natura pusă în valoare este cultură”
(„Brought out nature is culture”)
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GRIGORE ANTIPA AND ROMANIAN MODERN MUSEOLOGY

IOAN OPRIS

Abstract. Beginning from the signification of the museums and their promotion as models of cultural and civilization distribution, Dr. Grigore Antipa's personality is invoked. The importance of these institutions of collecting, reporting, preserving and restauring the patrimony is underlined by the scientific research. The recognition of the museologists with the teachers led to a new approach of museology – museum pedagogy. The knowledge of the visitors' structure according to age categories and social position and the capability of the museum to satisfy their requests belongs today to the museum marketing.

Résumé. En commençant avec l'importance des musées et de leur promotion comme des modèles de distribution culturelle et de civilisation, la personnalité de Dr. Grigore Antipa est invoqué. L'importance des musées de collecter, de signaler, de conserver et de restaurer le patrimoine est soulignée par la recherche scientifique. L'identification des museologists avec les professeurs a mené à une nouveau abordage de la muséologie – pédagogie muséologique. La connaissance de la structure des visiteurs selon des catégories d'âge et la position sociale et les possibilités du musée pour satisfaire leurs demandes appartient aujourd'hui au marketing de musée.

Key words: museology, conservation, restauration, scientific research, public education, patrimony, biogroups, dioramas.

By its different manifestations and thematic events, the Museum evolved as a symbolic institution in a direct relation with the supporting and representation interests (archaeological, historical, ethnographical, artistic, technical and natural), of promotion research and applied experiments in the economical or social branches¹. National museology, which assured content to the models – represents the exam of social maturity, of the groups of decision and influence, marking both the level of the civic conscience and the culture level reached by society.

Within national museums, theoretical concepts of the fields were shaped, completed and applied – in the academic environment – offering examples to those who founded and organized museums at a regional or local level.

The links of the national museums with the political, economical and social realities allowed a certain classification of precise, representative, eloquent and explained facts which largely grounded the believes, knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of the generations. Being traditionalist and conservative, the museums are and will be considered some vectors of truth and correctness by the general public.

¹ See the bibliography of this issue as well as the representation of the evolution of different concepts, in our papers: *Transmuseographia* (Edit. Oscar Print, București, 2000) and *Muzeosofia* (Edit. Oscar Print, București, 2006).

English translation by Mihaela Barcan Achim.

Education remains always the traditional partner of museums, with all its aspects, especially for high-schools and universities.

Especially in the university environment, museum was always a partner, mainly those of history, art and natural history. Many of the leaders of the modern museology were and are professors who promote the applied research: of archaeology, history, ethnography, art, techniques, natural history, conservation-restoration.

Since the '20s of the 20th century these integrating steps increased efficiently, mostly due to the natural sciences. They cleared new modern directions, focussing on the objects and artefacts of the patrimony, developing the systematic registration, scientific conservation and restoration of the cultural and natural pieces. Even the new terms, museology, museography, found the most frequent place of assertion in the Museum of Natural History².

I approach to some reflexions on the European modern currents by the special case of "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History (Bucharest). It is a case which justifies the efforts of recovering tradition and performing museographic research.

Grigore Antipa, a well-known museologist aware of the value of the field he worked, contributed fundamentally to the inner realization of museology.

He always criticized the leaders who „*tocmai atunci când se cheltuiau milioane pentru construcțiuni de palate inutile, nu se putea găsi nici măcar modesta sumă de 350.000 lei*” (“just when they spent millions for constructing useless palaces, the modest sum of 350,000 lei couldn't be found”) for the Museum of Natural History of the capital of Romania; these powerful circles, limited in understanding, obliged Antipa to a „*cerșetorie neâncetată*” (“continuous begging”) in spite of the fact that the exhibits increased in number and value; he was allowed to employ a technician and two overseers, to whom two assistants were added difficultly⁴.

Grigore Antipa knew the museographic current contemporary to him, distinguishing their specific features and detaching from them by critical opinions. The museologist Schlegel from Leyden's thesis according to which „*un muzeu trebuie să fie o carte deschisă în care vizitatorul să poată găsi totul*” (“a museum has to be an open book where the visitor has to find everything”) did not convince him; the Romanian savant considered that such a perspective „*pe un laic nu poate decât să-l amețească*” (“can stun a laic”) and that from such a presentation he „*nu poate învăța nimic sistematic*” (“he cannot learn anything systematically”) ⁵. Nor K. Möbius's ideas were unknown to him, especially that Antipa visited the museums structured after the German museologist's outlook. Romanian scientist considered more appropriate to a museum purposes the Museum of Natural History of South Kensington – London, the first one with a Darwin hall, where matter systematics

² Be studied the foreword of Prof. Dr. Louis Roule from National Museum of Natural History of Paris for the paper signed by two museologists: A. Loir (curator of the Museum of Natural History of Havre) and H. Legangneu (curator in Paris), *Précis de Muséologie Pratique*, published after the World War I by the General Association of the Curators of the Public Collections of France „Musea”, pp.V-VIII.

³ See, detailed, in Dr. Grigore Antipa, *Muzeul de istorie naturală din București*, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1918, 15 p. text + 16 autotypy plates.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 4.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 5.

was underlined, presenting only “*tipuri alese*” (“valuable types”) in the public collections in order to direct the general public to „*instrucție și popularizare*” (“education and popularization”)⁶.

According to another concept, promoted by the German Georg V. Koch and implemented in Darmstadt, in the museum organized by him, Antipa used the dioramas without painted background, used by the German, and improved them in a way which brought his fame. Also, Antipa knew the organization of the museum of Skansen, in open air, within a zoological park; this kind of museum was considered more biological than ethnographical⁷.

Making a selection of the model of that time, analyzing and comparing them, Antipa chose a very convincing and modern solution for his museum. He considered that the museum „*trebuie să aleagă comorile și frumusețile caracteristice ale naturii acestei țări și să le pună în evidență și trebuie să fie astfel adaptat cerințelor intelectuale și caracterului populațiunii încât să poată obține prin ele un efect cu adevărat instructiv și educativ*” (“has to choose the characteristic treasures and beauties of this country and to point them out and at the same time to adapt to the intellectual need and to the population characteristics so that it can achieve a good educational level”), therefore he proposed and made „*un institut, care pe de o parte să servească cercetărilor pur științifice, și anume în prima linie studiul științific naturalist al țării, iar pe de altă parte să înlesnească cultura populară – în sensul cel mai larg – și învățământul științelor naturale*” (“an institute where a valuable scientific research to be carried on, i.e. the naturalist study of the country, on the one hand, and on the other one to create the contact with the popular culture and the education in natural sciences.”)⁸ (our underlining).

Being a partisan of systematics (*Sine systematica chaos!*), the savant organized the permanent exhibition according to the *natural classification* and distribution on biogeographical groups. What Antipa wanted was to represent aquatic and terrestrial life. Twenty-eight dioramas supported his ideas. The fact that he brought to light the Danubian areas demonstrates once again his deep biological knowledge on all influencing factors⁹. He considered that a museum director’s main target was „*răspândirea cunoștințelor științifice*” (“distribution of the scientific knowledge”), allowing to the general public „*să arunce o privire și prin atelierelor unde se făurește știința*” (“to glance at the science workshops”)¹⁰, in the laboratories of taxidermy and at the investigation equipment. The savant mentioned the contact points for the visitors, considered „*excitante pentru a trezi curiozitatea științifică și ca legătură de unire între interesele primitive ale publicului și cunoștințele științifice pe care voim să le popularizăm*” (“exciting for generating the scientific curiosity and a link between the general public’s primitive interests and scientific data which we want to popularize”)¹¹. For Antipa, the museum is an institution opened to the general public for a deeper knowledge and obvious education. He is one of the first Romanian museologists who only expressed a wish but also he implemented it.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 6.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 8.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem, see especially p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 15.

¹¹ Ibidem.

In his well supported managing theory, Antipa considered that „*un director de muzeu are același scop de îndeplinit ca și un profesor, numai pe căi diferite; și el trebuie dar, întocmai ca și profesorul, să conteze pe psihologia publicului. Pe când însă auditorii unui profesor au cam același grad de cultură și aceleași cunoștințe, așa că el se poate orienta după aceasta în prelegerile sale, vizitatorii unui muzeu aparțin tuturor straturilor culturale și au cele mai variate cerințe intelectuale și năzuințe; și totuși colecțiunile unui muzeu trebuie să fie în stare de a oferi tuturor acestor categorii de vizitatori învățătură și să-i intereseze deopotrivă*”. (“a museum director has the same purpose as a professor but reaching it in different ways, and as the professor, he counts on the public’s psychology. But, the professor’s audience has almost the same culture and knowledge degree so that he can guide after it in his conferences, but the visitors of a museum belong to all cultural level and have varied intellectual needs and aims; but the collections of a museum have to offer to all these categories education and knowledge as well”).

Just for this purpose it is recommended that the „*ca muzeologul (subl. n.) – întocmai ca și profesorul – să caute mai întâi puncte de contact (subl. n.) cu cunoștințele pregătitoare, necesitățile și interesele intelectuale ale vizitatorului, pentru ca în modul acesta să-l poată conduce de la cunoscut la necunoscut și să-l instruiască. Din acest punct de vedere – după cum am amintit mai sus – cel mai bun mijloc este de a pune în evidență și folosul ce-l oferă omului obiectele expuse și a nu lăsa din vedere și întrebuințarea lor practică*” (“museologist - as the professor – to find the contact points (our underlining) with the visitor’s preparing, intellectual needs and interests knowledge in order to lead him from unknown to known world and to improve his culture. From this point of view the best mean is to point out the usefulness of the displayed objects and their practical advantages”)¹².

The usefulness which is associated by the savant with the visitor’s contact seems to us to be according to the new museology. This way modern Antipa requests a new reading of his museological papers which include him within the modern Romanian museologists.

* * *

We did not propose to make an evaluation of Grigore Antipa’s place within the museographic movement of Romania, this subject requiring a deeper approach. Also we did not want to establish a hierarchy in the museography of the 20th century although, obviously, the naturalist savant is one of the first. Further on we want to point out the place of the Museum of Natural History and its founder in the 4th and 5th decades of the last century.

Traditionally speaking, the Museum was subordinated to the Department of Education and National Culture, in different administrative formulas¹³. On the 25th of November 1940, when the iron guard government decided Grigore Antipa’s retiring, for age reasons, the reaction did not delay, so that the Department of the

¹² Ibidem, p. 14.

¹³ At the beginning of the fifth decade, the Under-Secretary of Cultures and Arts of the Ministry of the National Education, Cultures and Arts subordinated directly (according to the Law of 1941), “Grigore Antipa” Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Natural History of Iași, the National Museum of Antiquities of Bucharest and the Museum of Antiquities of Iași.

Superior Education cancelled that decision, allowing to the savant to work further on “without age limit” due to an exception to the law¹⁴.

The law which permitted to the museum to protect its interests and its purposes to be respected is the Deed-law of 1939¹⁵, its staff being jointed to those from the research institutes: of Agronomy, Zootechnical Institute, Geological Institute. Therefore, when it was reorganized in 1941, it was considered that the museum „are îndatorirea, ca **Muzeu Central al țării pentru toate ramurile științelor naturale** (subl. n.), de a aduna, prepara, studia, clasifica, conserva și expune toate colecțiunile de științele naturale, necesare în vederea studiilor și cercetărilor științifice și nevoilor învățământului” (“as a *Central Museum of the country in the field of the natural sciences* (our underlining) has to gather, prepare, study, classify, preserve and display all collections of natural sciences, necessary for the scientific studies and research and for the education needs”)¹⁶. A specification had to be made „ca să nu se facă distincție cumva, după Codul Funcționarilor Publici între personalul institutelor de cercetări și cel al muzeelor” (“not to make a difference between the staff of the research institutes and those of the museums, according to the Code of the Public officials”), the Museum not being only „o expoziție de rarități sau de curiozități, ci un institut cu scopuri bine precizate prin lege” (“an exhibition of rarities or curiosities, but an institute with goals well specified by law”)¹⁷.

The activity of research resulted clearly even from the first Functioning Rule of the well-known museum (1925), from the law of the museums and public libraries (1932) and from the Deed-law no 3495/1939.

Obviously, all political and economical tribulations of the Romanian society of the first half of the 20th century had Grigore Antipa as central character when we refer to museums and, especially, to the National Museum of Natural History. After he was appointed director of the Collections of Zoology, on the 1st of April 1893, he distinguished from the very beginning by the decision of cleaning the museum „arzând colecțiile infestate sau compromise și decizând o politică clară de dezvoltare” (“burning the infested or compromised collections and ruling a clear politics of developing”). His activity began with a 9 month expedition in the Black Sea, followed by other expeditions in all regions of the world and „la coastele mărilor și Oceanului, în Europa și America”¹⁸ (“at the coasts of the seas and the Ocean, in Europe and America”). Then he continued „o cerșire fără rușine la toți foștii colegi și prieteni de la laboratoriile din străinătate” (“begging shamelessly from all his ex-colleagues and friends from the foreign laboratories”) getting exhibits, double specimens and even collections which filled the 10 improvised halls from 19 Polonă Street, and to develop the museum patrimony. Therefore, on 25th of February 1903, he presented to the King Carol I and to the president of the Minister Council, Dimitrie Sturza, a memorial for a proper building for a National Museum

¹⁴ See the decision signed by the general Radu Rosetti, as minister, no 020058/29.I.1941, in National Archives – Historical Central Archive, Fond Ministry of Cultures and Arts, file 1119/1941, p. 8.

¹⁵ Published in Official Monitor no 273/24.XI.1939.

¹⁶ According to decision signed by the State subsecretary Eric Otetelișianu, no 42074/27.II.1941, idem, p. 85.

¹⁷ According to the address of “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History to the ministry, no 257/15.II.1941, idem, p. 87.

¹⁸ According to the consistent application (7 p.) sent with no 237/25.XI.1941 to the Minister of National Culture, loc. cit., idem, p. 263.

of Natural History. It has to be mentioned what the prime-minister advised him: „*Să faci un local spațios, dar fără nici un ornament, cu ziduri drepte cu găuri mari numite uși și ferestre; să te ferești să intri pe mâna arhitecților, căci aceștia vor numai palate, așa că ei și avocații duc țara la ruină!*” (“Make a large building but without any kind of adornment, with straight walls with large holes named doors and windows; be aware of architects because they want only palaces so that they and the solicitors led our country to collapse!”)¹⁹. The intervention was not limited only to the advice level, Grigore Antipa getting only 350.000 lei, along 3 years, for the museum building²⁰. The savant informed seriously for this construction: „*Studiaseam deja organizarea tuturor muzeelor din Europa, pe care le-am vizitat cu de-amănuntul, mă pusesem în contact cu toți directorii și cu toți arhitecții care au construit muzee moderne și adusesem un foarte bogat material de schițe, planuri și proiecte. **Toate chestiunile muzeologice le aveam gata puse la punct***”²¹ (subl. n.) (“I have already studied the organization of all museums of Europe which I minutely visited, I have contacted all directors and architects who built modern museums and I have brought a rich material of sketches, plans and projects. **I already had all documentation**” (our underlining). It is clear the programme which Antipa wanted to follow: „*cu timpul un întreg complex de clădiri, spre a se organiza în ele treptat un muzeu complet de Istorie Naturală, cu toate secțiunile sale: Zoologie, Anatomie și Embriologie comparată, Etnografie, Antropologie, Aquarii și Terarii, Oceanografie, Limnologie, Mineralogie, Petrografie, Geologie și Botanică*” (“to build in time a whole complex of buildings, in order to organize a complete museum of natural history, with all its departments: zoology, compared anatomy and embryology, ethnography, anthropology, aquaria and terraria, oceanography, limnology, mineralogy, petrography, geology and botany”) as well as workshops, laboratories and a library, but also an amphitheatre for public conferences with slides and demonstrations²². From the very beginning this project implied a radical and complete separation between the halls for the public and educational collections and the scientific ones, for deposits and laboratories, the last ones accessible only to the scientists. As a matter of fact, the museum was thought not only as an institution of education and popularization, but a central institute of scientific research, „*foarte necesar atât pentru cercetarea problemelor speciale ale țării noastre cât și pentru colaborări internaționale la marile probleme generale științifice, la care prestigiul și menirea culturală a poporului nostru cere să luăm parte tot mai activă*” (“very necessary both for the study of the special problems of our country and for the international collaborations for the great general scientific problems”)²³.

As regards the public collections, Grigore Antipa asked his collaborators „*să lase cercetările științifice pe un al doilea plan și să corespundă, în primul rând, cât mai perfect necesității aplicării unui plan sistematic de cultură generală, învățământ și educație*” (“to leave scientific research in the second place and to work on a systematical plan of general information and education”); for this reason the exhibits had to be displayed „*cât mai estetic, atractiv și instructiv*” (“as

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ See in Ioan Opreș, 2000, *Transmuseographia*, Edit. Oscar Print, București, 2000, p. 291-293.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem, p. 263-264.

²³ Ibidem, p. 264.

aesthetically as possible, attractively and educationally”) for the visitors „*din orice pătură socială cât și de orice grad de cultură*” (“of any social and cultural level”)²⁴. According to the savant idea’s, in the public collections only preserved specimens together with sketches and brief descriptions were displayed, being presented as many as biological groups as possible and dioramas. Antipa’s opinion was clear: „*Orice înmulțire a materialului expus, peste tipurile alese, să fie evitată, deoarece constituie o diminuare a valorii educative a colecțiilor și o zăpăcire inutilă a publicului*” (“Be avoid any increasing of the displayed material, over the chosen types because the educational value can be diminished and the public can become confused uselessly”)²⁵.

As regards the scientific collections, they had to correspond „*numai nevoilor de cercetări științifice*” (“only to the scientific needs”), with special pieces, using the entire space, and also with functional laboratories, equipment, library, inventory cards. The savant’s obsession: „*un program sistematic de activitate cultural-educativă sau științifică*” (“a systematical cultural-educational or scientific activity programme”)²⁶, was obvious.

The technical performances of the new museum were brought to light by some technical details: impermeable cupboards to dust and insects; iron showcases crystal glasses, made by the most modern German factory; an initial visiting way of 1.6 km. Necessary many for the showcases were given by Antipa’s foreign colleagues, as well as some extraordinary donations: Naturalized pieces (e.g. gorilla family, okapi, sea elephant, skeleton of *Cervus megaceros*, ethnographical pieces). Grigore Antipa recognized that he followed the English Professor Hoyle’s friendly advice, the president of the Association of the directors of the museums of England: „*prima însușire pe care trebuie să o aibă un bun director de muzeu este ca el să fie un mare cerșetor*”! (“The first feature which a good museum director must have is to be a great beggar”)²⁷. What he had seen in other places he introduced in the new museum: the Golden Book of donors and their names on the labels. After some years after the opening of the museum in the building from „*de la Șosea*” (24 mai 1908) (“from the avenue), when the museum had already 16 halls with zoological and palaeontological exhibits, other 11 halls were added, where minerals, pieces of geology, petrography, anatomy, compared embryology, anthropology, ethnography, oceanography, limnology were displayed. They were opened on 18th of June 1914, the King Carol I, Prince Ferdinand and Queen Maria being present. It was clear that after two decades, the Museum of Zoology transformed in the National Museum of Natural History, whose visitors reached the incredible number of 500.000 per year!

Did this museum deserve to be considered a national cultural institution, especially scientific? Of course it did, as long as, for decades, in it were studied „*mijloacele pentru punerea în valoare a mai multor ramuri de bogăție naturală a țării ca: pescăriile, terenurile inundabile, stufăriile, vânatul etc. Aici s-au studiat câteva capitole importante din Etnografia poporului românesc – între care Pescuiul și toată activitatea pe care o desfășoară poporul nostru în legătură cu apele – și s-a adunat un mare număr de cuvinte populare, precizându-li-se înțelesul*”

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 265.

științific, care au îmbogățit tezaurul lexicografic al poporului nostru și au adus o prețioasă contribuție la alcătuirea marelui Dicționar al limbii române, publicat de Academia Română.

Aici s-au mai studiat, după îndemnul neuitatului Spiru Haret, organizarea colecțiilor didactice pentru școlile secundare, iar în atelierile muzeului au învățat arta preparatoriei mulți institutori și învățători sătești, care au făcut apoi cu elevii lor muzee școlare la sate” (“the means for the evaluation of several branches of natural richness as: fish farms, flooding lands, reeds, game, etc. Here, some important chapters of the Ethnography of the Romanian People, as the Fishing and all our people’s activity with water, as well as a large amount of vernacular words which were gathered, specifying their scientific name, and which later enriched the lexicographical thesaurus and brought an important contribution for the drawing up of the *Dictionary of the Romanian Language* published by the Romanian Academy.

Under the Spiru Haret’s guidance, the organization of the educational collections for the secondary school were also studied, and in the museum workshops many teachers learnt to prepare the material and then founded museum in villages”²⁸.

Thus, Professor Dr. W. Kukenthal – director of the Museum of Natural History of Berlin wrote enthusiastically in “Vorsiche Zeitung”, after he returned from a trip in Romania, that the museum led by Grigore Antipa had 25 times more visitors than that of Berlin, due to „organizării sale sistematice și modului de expunere în grupe biologice și dioramice” (“its systematical organization and the exhibiting method, in biological groups and dioramas”); asking for taking over the invention, he invited his Romanian colleague in Berlin for modifying the exhibition of the German museum. Also, Professor Dr. Albert Penck, the founder of the Oceanographical Museum of the German capital, appreciated the method of dioramic exhibition as well as the botanist Mangin, from the Museum of Natural History of Paris who contributed for the “Grigore Antipa” Museum in receiving the great golden meddle with Etienne Geoffroy de Saint-Hillaire’s effigy from the Societ  Nationale d’Acclimatation de France, on the 10th of April 1932. The ceremony carried on in front of the President of France. Another specialist, Professor Dr. Bashford Dean, director of the Museum of Natural History of New York considered that: „Acest muzeu, care s-a f cut de novo ab novo, poate provoca invidia tuturor biologilor și are nu numai o mare valoare științifică, ci este și un model de organizare și aranjament” (“This museum, which was made *de novo ab novo* can rouse all biologists’ envy and it has not only a scientific value but also it can be an example of organization and arrangement”); also a famous American, Charles Upson Clark, wrote in “*The Great Rumania*”: „un model pentru toată lumea. Cu mult înainte Muzeului din New York, Muzeul din București a instalat animale din Carpați și B lțile Dunării în grupe arăt nd modul lor natural de trai” (“an example for everybody. Much more before the Museum of New York, the Museum of Bucharest mounted animals from the Carpathians and the Danube floodplains, in groups, showing their natural way of living”), dioramic groups being „cele mai deosebite și educative din c te am v zut vreodat ”! (“the most special and

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 266.

educative I have ever seen”!)³⁰. That time, maybe only the Museum of Natural History of Iowa, which had been finished, reached the level of that from Bucharest!

Of the same museum, the director of the paper „*Deutsche Rundschau*”, Rudolf Pechel, thought that „*nu și-a găsit încă perechea*” (“it haven’t found its pair”), and the Academician Emil Perrot considered it „*foarte original în concepția sa; niciun naturalist nu îl ignoră și foarte mulți dintre colegii mei francezi l-au vizitat*” (“very original in its conception; no naturalist ignores it and many French colleagues of mine visited it”), admiring its collections, especially those of fishes of the Black Sea³¹. The same thought also from Dr. Neu from the University of Leipzig who wrote in „*Vierteljahrschrift für Östeuropa*” – in *Bedeutung und Stand der Naturwissenschaftlichen Museen auf dem Balkan und in der Türkei* – enthusiastic and surprised by the modern displaying.

As a consequence of his international recognition, in 1935, Dr. Grigore Antipa was invited at the University of Lisbon for some lessons of modern museology and the president of the Upper Bavaria Land ask him to make an organization project of the Hunting Museum of Bavaria from München, sheltered by the Palace Nymphenburg. Who received such an esteem from Antipa’s contemporaries? Of course, we can add Nicolae Iorga, Dimitrie Gusti, Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș, Romulus Vuia, Vasile Pârvan, Virgil Vătășianu, Marius Bunescu and maybe other two or three. But none of them was so much qualified in the museological approach and a concrete experience in museography!

As regards the museum patrimony, Antipa thought that it had a “huge material” value, being „*o avere a statului de câteva sute de milioane*” (*de lei*) (“a treasure of the state of some hundred of millions (of lei)”) but „*valoarea științifică și culturală este incalculabilă și neînlocuibilă*” (“scientific and cultural value is incalculable and unreplaceable”)³².

Through this „*adevărat tezaur cultural al națiunii*” (“real cultural thesaurus of our nation”) 15 million visitors passed along 34 years (!), this think making Antipa to consider the museum „*unul din stâlpii puternici pe care se rezimă fundamentul vieții intelectuale, morale și chiar materiale al poporului nostru*” (“one of the strong pillars which support the foundation of the intellectual, moral and even material life of our people”)³³.

The solution of the dioramas from Bucharest was taken over by great European and American museums, from Berlin, New York and Chicago, taking into consideration that the Romanian museum distinguished by an new organization and a presentation which „*astfel ca să poată fi înțeles de oricine*” (“could be understood by everybody”)³⁴. Even Antipa declared: „*Putem spune, fără jenă, că un student învață într-o oră, în Muzeu, de 10 ori mai mult decât dacă ar citi o întreagă carte. Și aceasta se aplică la publicul din toate clasele sociale și de orice grad de cultură – de la țiganul nomad până la profesor universitar sau militar superior; fiecare găsește aci posibilitatea de a-și înmulți cunoștințele, privind cu toții aceleași obiecte. Aceasta este tocmai arta muzeologului de a face colecțiunile instructive, de a le face, prin mijloace muzeologice explicative, să vorbească singure publicului*”

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem. Numerically, the museum patrimony increased along 4 decades, from 1,269 specimens to 18,725, reaching in 1941, 200.000 specimens.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 268.

(“Without modesty we can say that a student learns in the museum during an hour 10 times more than he would have read a entire book. And this is valuable to the public of all social and cultural levels – from the nomad gypsy to the university professor or military officer; everybody finds here the possibility of improving his knowledge, watchin these objects. This is the museologist’s art, of creating educational collections which talk to the public by museological means”)³⁵. The savant considered that by the large number of visitors, the Museum „are un efect cultural ca cel puțin câteva sute de școli, aceasta, cu atât mai mult, cu cât aci nu învață pe de rost din carte, ci vede tot și reține, căci la majoritatea oamenilor memoria vizuală e mai dezvoltată” (“has a cultural effect as some hundreds of schools, at least, because here the people do not learn by heart from a book, but they see and memorize, considering that the visual memory is more developed in most of the people”)³⁶.

On Grigore Antipa’s true fellowship and kindness were proved by his behaviour, without these two features he couldn’t be imagined. Iosif Lepși’s case is the right example in this respect³⁷. In 1927 he was employed technician by Antipa. Later he was recommended to manage the museum of Basarabia (1932-1940). He made this in very difficult conditions. But under these difficult circumstances he succeeded in creating a limnological station at Vâlcov³⁸. After he accepted the position from Kishinev, Lepși remained with the lowest scientific position on which he was re-employed in Bucharest after the difficult situation created by the occupation of Basarabia by the Soviet troops. This professional outclassing added to the lost of his library, manuscripts, collections and laboratory, reaching „complet sărăcit din cauza refugierii” (“the complete poverty because of the refuge”). This was „o dureroasă umilire pentru un cărturar care are peste două decenii de intensă și neîntreruptă activitate științifică” (“a painful humiliation for a scholar who carried on an uninterrupted scientific activity for over two decades”)³⁹, in a difficult financial position of supporting a 5 members family, out of which two were students.

On the 22nd of November, Antipa asked for the recognition of the scientific degree and the position of chief of department, respectively as a university professor, titles which were established by the Deed-Law no 3495 (published in the Official Monitor no 273/24th of November 1939, art. 13)⁴⁰. The structure of the museum, approved for the year 1941 included 14 jobs: 3 chiefs of departments (Dr. Victoria Iuga, Dr. Mircea Paucă and Dr. M. Băcescu), a technician of gradation I (Dr. Iosif Lepși), a master in material preparation (Max Bleich), a taxidermist (Ion

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ See our presentation in *Transmuseographia*, ed. II-a, Ed. Oscar Punt, București, p. 295, 2003, note 94. I add to the well known data on the savant’s life the following: for 19 years, secondary teacher in several schools, and at the “Aurel Vlaicu” High-School of Orăștie, and held his PhD exam in 1923 with a thesis which brought him the title of doctor in zoology and geography. In 1926 he received the prize of the Romanian Academy. Between 25th of October 1931 and 5th of March 1932 he was at a documentary trip at the University of Berlin, the accommodation being on his own expenses.

³⁸ According to Dr. Iosif Lepși’s application for the position of chief of department, București, 22.VII.1941, loc. cit., supra, p. 23.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Legislation validated the position of museum curator with the title of lecturer, and that of the chief of department with university professor, the leadership of the “Grigore Antipa” Museum of Natural History supporting the application by the address from la 22.VII.1941, nr. 97 to the Minister of National Culture, loc. cit., p. 22.

Ciobanu), curator, mechanic, doorkeeper and 5 persons for maintenance. After Grigore Antipa's intervention, the position was recognized for Lepși.

With a reduced annual budget (between 1.500 and 10.000 lei), but with an excellent modern organization, National Museum of natural History of Bucharest was at the same level with the greatest specialized institutions, the number of visitors reaching those of the British Museum! The founder of the museum inspired an attitude of respect within this institution. He was excepted for retiring by the Deed-Law no 3571/30th of October 1937. He seldom looked for resting as in the summer of 1941 when he asked for a short leave of absence at Braşov, convinced by „căutarea sănătăţii – care a suferit mult în cursul acestui an prin multiplele neazuri și chiar pericole de la acest muzeu” (“the health state – which suffered a lot of troubles and even perils from this museum”)⁴¹.

Just for this reason, fully aware of he had to explain what was the museum to whom he dedicated his entire life, starting from zero, Grigore Antipa was firm in front of the projects which could have damaged the institution: „Nu intră în atribuțiunile mele de a mă pronunța asupra intereselor superioare de stat care ar dicta necesitatea de a aproba o asemenea măsură (de demolare, n.n.) al cărei efect ar fi de a distruge o instituție culturală, atât de folositoare populației și tineretului studios din țară și atât de apreciată în străinătate” (“It does not concern me the superior state interests which might dictate the necessity of such a decision (of demolishing, our note) whose effect would be the destroying of a cultural institution, so useful to the people and young men of our country and which is so appreciated abroad”)⁴².

The savant which wrote and talked on the museologists and museology followed extremely well clarified criteria. For him, as a biologist and museologist the systematics and its organization requests was the essence: „Sine systematica chaos!”⁴³.

GRIGORE ANTIPA ȘI MUZEOLOGIA ROMÂNEASCĂ MODERNĂ

REZUMAT

Pornind de la semnificația instituțiilor muzeale și promovarea lor ca modele de răspândire a culturii și civilizației este invocată personalitatea savantului român Grigore Antipa. Rolul acestor instituții de colectare, înregistrare, conservare și restaurare a bunurilor de patrimoniu, este precizată în continuare prin cercetarea științifică pe care trebuie să o dezvolte ca bază a celorlalte funcții muzeale. Dezvoltarea laboratoarelor de conservare - restaurare - taxidermie este de aceeași importanță cu aceea de relații publice - programe conduse tot de specialiștii din muzeu. Asimilarea muzeografului cu dascălii de la catedră a dus astăzi la noua latură muzeologică – pedagogia muzeală. Cunoașterea structurii pe categorii de vârstă și statut social a vizitatorilor, înțelegerea interesului acestora și pregătirea muzeului pentru a răspunde așteptărilor acestora fac parte din ceea ce astăzi se numește marketing muzeal.

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⁴¹ See the approved application of 9.VII.1941, loc. cit., p. 146. The perils appeared just in the winter of that year, when the Museum was damaged during the iron guard rebellion.

⁴² In the address no 237/25.XI.1941 to the Minister of the National Culture, supra, p. 263.

⁴³ With convincing details in „Muzeul de Istorie Naturală din București” by Dr. Gr. Antipa, director, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1918, 15 p. text and 16 autotypy plates.