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L'UNIVERSITÉ "VALAHIA" TARGOVISTE

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The art of Brâncoveanu's epoch

Editura Macarie, Târgoviste, 1996, contains 224 pages with 32 plates.

Denis CĂPRĂROIU

The issuing of the volume - The Art of Brâncoveanu's epoch- by Mrs. Maria Mioara Georgescu, researcher at "Curtea Domneasca" National Art Museum - from Târgoviste and one from the didactic staff of the "Valahia" University, keen and reputed investigator of the wonderful creations belonging to the Cultural National patrimony, undoubtedly signified an editorial event of the year 1996.

This book, result of some long researches and own remarks upon the diverse aspects of the style in "Brâncoveanu" type epoch, wants to be a welcome synthesis of the "Brâncoveanu" type art, which helps to be made an assembly image of the epoch.

In the first chapter, representing the volume introduction, the author presents the stage of the researches and the purpose of the book, concisely showing how the art of "Brâncoveanu" type epoch was presented in the Romanian historiography, one from the main preoccupation being and the division of the epoch in accordance with the stylistics features. According to these features can be established three distinctive stages:

- the "Cantacuzino - Brâncoveanu" type stage, "classicizable" (the last two decades of the XVII-th century), is the crystallizing period of the "Brâncoveanu" type style, when the traditional fund and the influences received are merged in an indivisible synthesis, which leads to the creation of a style defined as "Brâncoveanu" type style;
- the "Brâncoveanu" type stage "baroque" (the end the XVII-th century and the first two decades of the XVIII-th century), stage of art maximum bloom;
- the post "Brâncoveanu" type stage, which is unfolded after 1720 until the second half of the XVIII-th century, when the legacy of the previous epoch is undertaken by the most important creators both at cult level and popular level.

The second chapter presents the hystorical frame, having four subchapters in which are shown: the situation of Wallachia in the context of the international relationships from the South-East of Europe in the

second half of the XVII-th century and the first decades of the XVIII-th century, the political situation of Wallachia in the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch, the economic-social situation of Wallachia in the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch, the culture of Wallachia in the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch.

The III-rd chapter, the tradition and the innovation in the art of the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch contains five subchapters concerning: the art of Matei Basarab's epoch in the preparing of the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch, the architecture of the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch, the picture, the sculpture and the decorative art of the epoch.

It is remarked the wide initiative of fonder unfolded by Constantin Brâncoveanu beyond of Carpati, at Fagaras, Poiana Marului, Sâmbata de Sus, Ocna Sibiului. The "Brâncoveanu" type foundations creat a real school of architecture, represented by a dense and unitary group of buildings, which materializes a valuable synthesis of the architectural elements from Wallachia, grafted on the constructive tradition from Transylvania.

Concerning the picture, this is mixed up with the remarkable activity of "the School from Hurez", which imposed a real style. Even, the epoch and also the most important achievement of this epoch is represented by the decoration of the complex from Hurez, foundation of a great prestige of the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch.

In the IV-th chapter, containing three subchapters, is defined the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch and its chronological limits, the author dividing it - for the accuaracy of the research - in three stages, especially using the stylistic criterion: the "Cantacuzino-Brâncoveanu" type stages, the "Brâncoveanu" type stages and the post "Brâncoveanu" type stage.

The V-th chapter, The "Brancoveanu " type art at the confluence from West and East, contains three subchapters concerning: the ways of the foreign influences penetration in the "Brancoveanu" type art, the western influence in the architecture, the sculpture, the picture and the decorative artes of the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch, the eastern influence in the architecture, the walls decoration, the sculpture and the decorative arts of the "Brancoveanu" type epoch.

Through the numerous penetration ways of the artistic foreign influences are underlined the relationships with Italy, the direct contacts of some Romanian intellectuals with the western or eastern atmosphere and also with the Italian or Greek intellectuals who have come into Wallachia; the important part of the foreign masters in the spreading of their decorative repertory; the widespread engravings and books printed in the western and eastern world; the contact with the great Greek colony from Venice had used western forms in art, a.s.o.

The last chapter presents the monuments of architecture and the art works of the "Brâncoveanu" type epoch from the district Dâmbovită. The door is finished with a wide selected bibliography which contains general and special works about the "Brâncoveanu" type art, representing together the notes, the technical part of the book.

Finally, can be remarked that the volume represents an exceptional contribution, rounding up nappily the series of the workings about the artistic "Brâncoveanu" type phenomenon and its impact on Romanian culture.