

***INIȚIATIVE ARHEOLOGICE REFLECTATE ÎN PRESA
DE LA MIJLOCUL SECOLULUI AL XIX-LEA.
COLECȚIILE GHICA ȘI MAVROS***

***SOME ARCHAEOLOGICAL INITIATIVES REFLECTED BY THE
NEWSPAPERS FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE XIXTH CENTURY.
GHICA AND MAVROS COLLECTIONS***

Costin CROITORU, Gabriela APOSTU

The scientific world of the Western Europe got moved by the “archaeological enthusiasm” towards the middle of the XVIII-th century. At the beginning of the XIX-th century, Romanian intellectuals got also stirred by a fervent interest for the “historical writing”, for recovering their tradition and their past. At the same time, several cultural and political personalities started to show their interest for recovering and collecting antiquities from the Romanian territory. The article deals mainly with two characters: Mihalache Ghica and Nicolae Mavros. Though they shared a common interest for antiquities, their personal relation was rather one of rivalry.

Their search for antiquities was rather prompted by passion than by scientific interest, none of them being a specialist in History. The way their researches were carried out was purely empirical: after identifying the spots which seemed likely to hide ancient vestiges, they hired people to ransack the site, searching for artefacts. Their interest was limited to the artefacts themselves , totally ignoring the context of discovery. Moreover, only those items that seemed to be of Roman origin were deemed as valuable, everything else being considered as “Barbarian” and disposed. Though their activity led to several scientific achievements, more or less accurate and published in various newspapers and magazines, it hardly can be termed as ‘archaeology’. The rivalry existing between them, prompted each man to intensify his own searches for antiquities in order to surpass the other’s collection and frequently this led to the total destruction of the sites. Moreover, due to several misfortunes, such as the fires that burned the two houses owned by Mavros and the purposeful destruction of his personal documents by his family, in order to hide his connections with Russia or the dissipation of the collections after Ghica’s death, the scientific value of these proto-archaeological investigations is even more difficult to recover.